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# The Honors College Phenomenon

Peter C. Sederberg  
University of South Carolina

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National Collegiate Honors Council



# NCHC Monograph Series

## The Honors College Phenomenon

Peter C. Sederberg, Editor



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# THE HONORS COLLEGE PHENOMENON

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# INTRODUCTION

**PETER C. SEDERBERG**

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

After a number of years of strenuous discussion, The National Collegiate Honors Council Executive Committee endorsed a statement of the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” in the spring of 1994 (Appendix A). That year, as the newly appointed dean of the South Carolina Honors College, I attended my first national conference. Not having participated in the earlier dust up over that document, I began asking, somewhat naively, whether the organization should attempt something similar with respect to the emerging phenomenon of the honors college. I recall suggesting to Bill Mech at the 1995 conference that perhaps the NCHC should pursue such a task, and he smiled benignly and recommended that I take it on.

Over the next decade, I began participating in panels on the honors college phenomenon, and each year the sessions grew larger as more schools considered moving in this direction. I participated in two presidential task forces charged with conducting a survey of existing colleges and drafting a set of basic characteristics. Neither of these accomplished this goal, so in some frustration, at the 2003 conference, as my annual presentation at the inevitably scheduled panel/workshop/roundtable, I developed my own set of characteristics of a fully developed honors college. As punishment for my presumption, Norm Weiner appointed me chair of the third presidential task force on honors colleges.

During the next year, our task force devised and conducted a survey of honors colleges affiliated with the NCHC and refined a proposed statement of the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” (Appendix B). We presented the results of our survey and the recommendations we developed at the 2004 conference and submitted our report to the Executive Committee. They gave preliminary approval to our recommendations and final approval in June 2005. At the 2004 conference, I ran into Bill Mech. I reminded him of his earlier remarks to me and reported that it took me nine years, but I did it. So much time had elapsed that he had no recollection of our 1995 exchange.

Following the tradition of no good deed going unpunished, Jeff Portnoy then asked me to assemble a monograph that would address the various facets and issues of honors colleges, especially those raised by our survey. I proposed an organization for this volume and

## Introduction

assembled a distinguished and experienced set of contributors. Most of us gave preliminary presentations on our topics at the 2006 conference in Philadelphia, and this book represents the refinement and some restructuring of our presentations at that time.

One enduring, and perhaps endearing, characteristic of the NCHC is its commitment to pluralism. We recognize that excellent honors educational opportunities can be cultivated across the diverse settings of American higher education from two-year community colleges through large, comprehensive research universities. We find somewhat less diversity among honors colleges, but the emphasis must be placed on “somewhat.” The essays in this volume reflect this diversity, and I hope that a wide variety of readers will find something of relevance to their particular context and status.

Like Gaul, this collection is divided into three parts. The first part provides two introductory perspectives on the honors college phenomenon. In “The Genesis of an Idea,” Ted Humphrey provides a philosophical/historical reflection, drawing on his experience at Arizona State University, for the growth of honors at his school and how the idea of an honors college emerged rather organically from the more general honors experience. In the second essay, “Characteristics of the Contemporary Honors College,” I provide a descriptive analysis of the survey conducted in 2004. This analysis illustrates the range of honors colleges, but also reveals some elements of a dominant model. These core elements informed the development of “The Basic Characteristics of the Fully Developed Honors College.”

Part II contains several case studies of different institutional settings. Alexandria Holloway describes the innovative honors college developed on four campuses of Miami Dade College. Her case study illustrates that an institution that deserves the appellation “college” can be developed in settings outside the typical university. Larry Andrews, in contrast, uses the honors college at Kent State to illustrate the standard model of an honors college within a multi-collegiate university. Nancy Poulson’s essay outlines a third path, that of an essentially autonomous, free-standing honors college affiliated with the larger Florida Atlantic University. Finally Rosalie Otero reminds us that a highly developed honors program may be the most appropriate model for a particular university, in her case, the University of New Mexico. Her argument carries particular weight in circumstances where an administration proposes simply a change in name rather than a significant augmentation in programs.



Otero's essay serves as a good transition to Part III, *Stories of Creation and Recreation*. Bob Taylor's essay, "How to Create an Honors College," describes his experience in leading the transition from program to college at the University of Vermont. His insights should prove especially valuable for those directors whose institutions are contemplating similar changes. Every positive story has its opposite. Donald Publius synthesizes a variety of flawed choices into a cautionary tale: "How not to Create an Honors College." I am sure many readers will feel confident that no such events could ever transpire on their campuses.

While the pieces by Taylor and Publius address issues most relevant to those contemplating making the transition to an honors college, the next two address concerns of greater relevance to the mature honors college. My essay, "Sustaining Vitality in the Established Honors College," explores some answers I found to the question, "Now what?" that followed after I realized that we had essentially accomplished the original vision for the South Carolina Honors College. In "Following in the Footsteps of the Founders," Davis Baird explores the combination of opportunities and challenges that face a new dean who takes over a well-established honors college. Finally, providing a literal bookend to Ted Humphrey's opening historical essay, Gary Bell presents his recommendations for the "Five Pillars of College Creation."

Whatever their stage in developing an honors college—initial speculation, implementation, fulfillment, or expansion—readers should find experiences and insights relevant to their concerns.

I also wish to thank Jeffrey Portnoy for his careful editing on the manuscript, as well as the members of the Publications Board who gave their comments on and support for this project.

PCS  
August 2008



# **Part I:**

# **Background**



# **CHAPTER 1:**

## **THE GENESIS OF AN IDEA**

**TED HUMPHREY**  
**ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY**

Among the most heated and fabled of all Arizona's political campaigns is the 1958 referendum on whether Arizona State College at Tempe should become a university. The referendum's relatively narrow victory to change the name and status of what in 1885 had begun as the Territorial Normal School and had gone through numerous name changes during its then nearly seventy-five year history marks a turning point in the state's pattern of growth and economic development.<sup>1</sup> The referendum's provisions included a stipulation that the newly created university would provide honors education,<sup>2</sup> a provision that reflected awareness of ASU's relative academic weakness, a nascent national honors educational movement, and the pattern of the state's best students matriculating at the already well-established University of Arizona.<sup>3</sup> Providing honors education, however, was the part of the referendum to which the institution dedicated the least attention and resources during the first twenty-five years of its existence. Honors education existed on the books—in 1983, each of ASU's nine colleges listed an honors program among the opportunities it offered students—but it received no institutional resources. In 1983 only two colleges, Arts and Sciences and Public Programs, had any students enrolled in their honors programs, and among a total undergraduate student body of more than 28,000, only one hundred twenty undergraduates participated, and then briefly and cursorily, taking only a year-long freshman seminar and rarely continuing through to the thesis. Arizona State University was quite ordinary, altogether representative, with regard to the focus on and allocation of resources to honors education at public institutions. At the institutional level, honors education existed as a sop, a program in name only whose existence was intended to indicate a commitment to academic integrity and excellence.

In the mid-nineteen eighties, Arizona—not just Arizona State University—had to assure the state's college-age students that they could receive an excellent undergraduate education at the state's public universities. The majority of strong students who did remain in Arizona matriculated at the University of Arizona, but even with that, only about twenty percent of the state's top five percent of high school graduates remained in state, and only fifteen percent of its National

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Merit Finalists were choosing one of our universities for undergraduate education. Few of the former and none of the latter were choosing to come to ASU. This pattern of matriculation presented a long-term problem for the state and its universities. First, our faculties had to aim their courses at modestly talented students, a fact that in itself has important implications for the overall quality of education. Second, Arizona, which had always depended on other states for an educated work force, was permanently exporting its most precious natural resource, human talent. The vast majority of undergraduates settle permanently within a radius of one hundred twenty-five miles from the institution where they pursue their undergraduate education. They do so even if they complete a graduate or professional degree. This phenomenon is well documented, and given Arizona's geography, every institution its top students were choosing, public or private, was more than one hundred twenty-five miles beyond the state's borders. Arizona's strongest high school graduates were leaving the state to pursue bachelors degrees, never to return.

Although many states have prestigious public universities, many also found themselves either in Arizona's situation or, at least, with a number of universities that failed to offer fully adequate opportunities for well-prepared, talented, and ambitious undergraduates. In that situation, everyone loses: talented students, the institutions and their faculties, and supporters of public higher education. The challenge for these states is how best to attract, organize appropriate opportunities for, and graduate talented students who can then compete effectively with those who have gone to that small number of institutions we traditionally identify with the highest-quality undergraduate education. These top institutions accommodate only a small fraction—less than two percent—of each year's graduating high school seniors. Consequently, if these are the only institutions prepared for or capable of offering appropriate educational opportunity for strong students, then our entire educational network systematically functions unjustly relative to talented individuals and fails to meet our society's need to produce and maintain an educated citizenry. This latter failure is the crux that public higher education must address effectively.

Democracy, the founding fathers of this nation and the others in the Americas repeatedly tell us, requires an educated citizenry. Indeed, education is the first exigency of republics, not only with respect to their economic development, but, more importantly, in regard to their maturation as nurturers and protectors of human potential and moral integrity. The relationship between a free, democratic society and

education is so tight as almost to be mutually implicative. That is, one cannot have a society of self-governing citizens without a well-educated populace; nor can one have a broadly based well-educated populace without properly conceived and executed public education. Although education may well create a certain kind of elite, it cannot be confined to an elite. The role of public education, in particular, must be to nurture a citizenry with the capacity to create and sustain a democratic society. Had we to rely on private universities, those to which we look as paradigms for the richest education of our most talented young persons, we would not have sufficient educational resources to meet our society's needs, nor could we be assured that the members of our society had access to such educational opportunity as would allow them to seek the life fulfillment they desire. This line of reflection leads to thinking about honors education, especially as it might be organized at large public institutions.

Honors education has, as those aware of its history in the United States know, existed since the 1930s. It began famously at one of our now most prestigious small liberal arts colleges, Swarthmore, when, considering its student body and reputation, the institution's leadership and faculty determined that it had to do two things at once, namely, offer its best students a richer educational experience and, in doing so, enhance its reputation for academic excellence. Working with a relatively small student body in the context of a talented faculty and good facilities, both of which improved over the years, it achieved these goals.

Driven more by faculty than institutional administrations, public universities in the mid-1940s began to focus on the needs of academically talented and well-prepared ("superior" in the language of the time) students, increasing numbers of whom were matriculating at institutions that were not by tradition regarded as models of academic excellence. In the main, faculty offered courses with enriched reading and writing requirements, more open to discussion among students and faculty, and focused on one or another canon of great books, organized either historically or topically. They were strategies for enriching an undergraduate education more than for shaping and structuring it. They were strategies for accommodating students who in the normal course of events were either at or planning to attend a given institution than for attracting those students who might not otherwise consider the institution. They were strategies more focused on individuals or small groups of students than on bringing the students and the resources of the university together for their mutual benefit.

## Chapter 1: The Genesis of an Idea

Although by 1980 a few universities had created honors colleges, those colleges tended to have anomalous structures; for example, the honors college at the University of Missouri was embedded in its college of arts and sciences and thus lacked full academic standing relative to other collegiate units. Nonetheless, those colleges, similar to their more commonly denominated peers, honors programs, abided by the fundamental organizational mandate for honors education then and now, namely, to adapt themselves to the specific character and needs of the campus. In the early 1980s, directors of honors programs, particularly at large public universities, confronted issues of how to position their programs to play a more central role on their campuses and meet the needs of a greater proportion of their students, particularly those who were not majoring in arts and sciences fields, the traditional focus of honors education.

Their further challenge was to secure adequate resources to mount the programs they envisioned so that they did not have to rely on volunteer labor from their friends and colleagues. Ironically, many of the most effective honors directors had been so successful at convincing faculty to offer courses for strong students voluntarily that they created the illusion that honors education did not need a positive commitment of resources from the institution. Honors could be done on the cheap. Honors education was not integral to the institution's mission but simply existed at the margins. On the one hand, the institution benefited from honors education as a function of the success of those students who participated in it, and faculty felt satisfaction from working with strong students, even if doing so did not bring normal institutional support and recognition. On the other, as faculty committed to honors education were working to meet the needs of students and dedicating time, talent, and personal resources to thinking their way through what constitutes an honors education and how to implement it more effectively on their campuses, campus administrators were paying it lip service in terms of supporting it with faculty and other necessary resources. Neglecting it so was relatively easy, because, for the most part, the honors directorship was an entry level administrative position and subordinate to either a disciplinary dean or associate dean; that is, the position was not situated so as to speak directly to those with responsibility for resource allocation. Finally, as a percentage of state budgets, public universities in the 1980s were continuing to deal with diminishing fiscal support and were thus searching for ways to eliminate expenditures, not add to them.



Another challenge honors directors confronted was their isolation in collegiate silos. Embedded in colleges of arts and sciences, honors directors found it difficult to convince either students or faculty in other disciplinary colleges to participate in or organize honors courses: engineering colleges, whose faculty consistently argued that their disciplines were by their very nature honors programs; business colleges, whose faculty claimed honors was irrelevant from a practical point of view; or fine arts and architecture colleges, whose faculty argued that the kinds of expression they value are different from those honors programs nurture.

Nonetheless, because of increasing demand for higher education among high school graduates and the relatively static size of the perceived elite institutions and increases in private university costs, more and more highly qualified students were actually matriculating at public universities, thus offering their faculty members greater opportunity for teaching at the highest levels. Overall, the time was ripe for reconceptualizing the nature, role, and organization of honors education in our public institutions: 1) Of what does an honors education consist? 2) What role should honors education play in the life of a public institution? 3) Where, administratively, should universities house honors education? The process of thinking through these issues constituted the avenue by which honors education entered into the mainstream of public higher education.

Many individuals questioned the legitimacy of honors education at public institutions on the grounds that institutional sanctions and overt funding for it differentially advantages one group of students, creating an elite. Some saw this eventuality as particularly egregious inasmuch as it could have the effect of diverting one student's or one group of students' tuition and fees to the benefit of other students. This argument would have greater force were prior examples of such funding diversions not already part of the accepted practice of universities, for example, in systematically differential teaching responsibilities and class size depending on disciplinary tradition and exigency and in providing appropriate services for students with demonstrated special needs, such as athletes. Given the public university's mission to provide higher education for those prepared and otherwise capable of benefiting from it, developing appropriately conceived and rigorous course work for able and ambitious students has a clear claim to legitimacy.

Able and ambitious students are, surely, one of the university's diverse, special needs populations; again, we charge our public universities with providing society with an educated citizenry and with

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leadership for it. We have, as a social body, committed to the well-being of all, an obligation to provide support for each individual's full actualization of her potential. This principle must be fundamental in a democratic republic. We have in the last thirty years been hampered in acknowledging our need to offer differential public support for strong students because we have come increasingly to view education as a private good, as something the individual personally and privately acquires and uses. This view further underlies our tendency to reduce overall public support for higher education and charge college goers high tuitions and, often, user fees for special services. But education is not simply a private good. To be sure, those who have it enjoy the fruit of their labor; however, they are not the only ones who benefit from their education. In fact, education is also a public good. Education refines us and has the general effect of making us more sociable. It nurtures our creativity and allows us to contribute more fully and richly to the economic and cultural commonweal. These reasons underscore why those in the Americas have argued so consistently and forcefully for publicly supported higher education.

As I suggest in the foregoing, the early practitioners of honors education regarded it primarily as a kind of subject matter, that is, as a classically based education in the Great Books, organized either historically or topically. Such a conception has much to recommend it. First, a Great Books education can nurture a valuable comprehension of human history and humanity's developing sense of the ends of human life and society. It can nurture strong analytic skills and the ability to express oneself clearly and gracefully. These abilities are educationally foundational, to be sure. Focusing solely on them, however, can also create a trap for advocates of honors education, namely, such focus inherently devalues and ultimately excludes numerous disciplines, particularly given the organization and role of the public university in the United States. The Great Books conception of honors education necessarily, if inadvertently, excludes much of the sciences, if not mathematics and scientific method, engineering, business, and fine arts, a grave error, particularly if one looks to the role of the latter disciplines in contemporary culture. Nor does asserting that educating engineers, business persons, and artists in the Great Books refines them in desirable ways resolve the situation. So asserting has two alienating implications, first, that education in the Great Books is inherently superior to other forms of education and second, that to be well and truly educated, one needs to encounter the Great Books. From the point of view of working effectively with one's colleagues throughout the university,

those are implications one does not want to have to defend. They hinder the honors director's prospects for effective interaction with his or her colleagues.

If we cannot define honors education in terms of its subject matter, how can we conceive and define it? For a number of complex reasons, I came to think of it in terms of the habits of mind we were engendering by emphasizing the importance of the Great Books tradition. This perspective makes the reason for focusing on the Great Books the development of specific intellectual dispositions, most importantly, the abilities to read, think, and discuss core issues of human experience analytically and disinterestedly. Further, the Great Books are models of good and effective writing. Although the Great Books provide invaluable insight into human nature and values, into the reasons for and goals of social existence, they are yet more valuable as examples of those habits of mind that give rise to humanity's self-understanding and attempts to progress to a more fulfilled state. Thus, it seems to me, honors education is better served by taking the Great Books as paradigms of certain habits of mind than as the particular repositories of human wisdom that all must master.<sup>4</sup>

To establish broadly based faculty support for the honors enterprise, especially at institutions where professional and technical colleges have a strong presence, the concept of honors education must be broadened so that faculty in all disciplines can participate. One can retain a certain emphasis on the Great Books, of course, simply by building it into a required freshman or sophomore course that forms a small core curriculum for all participants. On the other hand, I have never fully comprehended why we believe competence in the Great Books is more important as core curriculum than, for instance, mathematics through elementary differential equations and statistics or foundational courses in the physical, life, and social sciences. This conception seems a bias born of the background of the faculty who have typically directed honors programs. Although establishing a broader core curriculum would require substantial organization and institutional commitment of resources, it could, by signaling respect for the disciplines involved, elicit greater participation from a broad spectrum of faculty. Moreover, one has difficulty defending the claim that someone without knowledge of mathematics and science is well educated.<sup>5</sup> If one focuses on the methodological and value-laden aspects of engineering, business, and other such disciplines, the habits-of-mind conception of honors education is relatively easy to promulgate among faculty, and the honors educator's primary exigency becomes one of

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identifying the disciplinary courses most appropriate for focusing on those matters so as to deepen and enrich students' understanding of the challenges they will face as practitioners of and theoreticians in them. Such course work is stimulating for both faculty and students. Again, in stringent budgetary times building such curricula is difficult, but that is a technical issue subordinate to generalizing honors to the university disciplines in their entirety.

The other curricular issue that consistently poses a barrier to honors education across the campus is the bachelors honors thesis. Here, once more, the problem arises from the traditional Great Books view of the thesis as an analog and lesser version of the kind of Ph.D. dissertation that students in the humanities write. Those documents are performances appropriate to their field, and one simply has no reason not to think of the undergraduate thesis as, in general, a guided, independent performance appropriate to the discipline in which the student is seeking a degree: a recital for the music major, design project for the architect or engineer, or business plan for the business major. Perhaps each of these performances requires a written component, but each can be every bit the equivalent of a Great Books thesis in terms of allowing the student to demonstrate an appropriate degree of disciplinary mastery and competence. The nature of an honors education, therefore, should lay the foundation for involving all the disciplines in it and for moving from a disciplinarily embedded program to a college that organizes honors opportunities for the institution as a whole.

Developing a structure for an honors college, though, presents further challenges because, clearly, one cannot use disciplinary colleges as analogs. First, one has given up the disciplinary view of an honors education. Second, honors colleges should not strive to replicate in whole or part the institution's faculty. Doing so is not only economically inefficient, but also undermines the principle that the institution's existing resources are sufficient to mount adequate educational opportunity for the able and ambitious student. As I was working through this problem, I used the graduate college as my closest analog, that is, a unit whose primary role was to serve disciplinary units in seeking and meeting the needs of a specific group of students, but that left specific disciplinary subject matter issues up to the disciplinary units, all the while encouraging and working with them to determine precisely what methodological issues and habits of mind they most need to nurture in their students and which courses can most effectively do so.<sup>6</sup>

Using this analogy and pursuing this strategy conformed best with another guiding principle that I used to lay the foundation for

institution-wide participation in honors, namely, that honors education is a normal expectation and responsibility of the faculty. University faculties have a wide range of instructional, research, and service responsibilities, and to think that among them offering able and ambitious students appropriate coursework and mentoring is somehow beyond the boundaries of their normal responsibilities is indefensible. They are core to the university's mission, particularly the mission of those universities whose very inception was intended to enhance the commonweal. Honors education must flow from institutional commitment. The moment one allows institutional officers, from the president to department chairs, to regard it as an add on, as standing beyond the core mission, one has lost the game, and honors recedes to the status of the volunteer work of the interested and willing and something done on the cheap, for example, with nominal faculty buyouts. If one embeds honors education in the methodologies and habits of mind of the disciplines, the latter have every reason and responsibility to offer it from their existing resources.<sup>7</sup>

Given this inclusive conception of honors education, the college dean faces the challenge of characterizing the college's organizational activity. This task consists of three parts: first, to attract and bring together identifiable cohorts of able and ambitious students who commit themselves to the project of becoming educated members of a democratic society; second, to help them understand that they are pursuing an education for life, citizenship, and career, in that order; and third, to create a set of curricular and co-curricular opportunities that can provide such an education, that is, to organize the resources of the university for those students' benefit. In sum, the honors dean's job is to provide the campus with cohorts of superb students and to make sure the campus opens its resources to them.

From the moment the Arizona Board of Regents created ASU's honors college, its mission was clear.<sup>8</sup> Then President J. Russell Nelson said to me only moments later, "I would like some Truman Scholars," and when, shortly thereafter, he asked me to accompany him on a recruiting trip and I protested that I had other work to do, he said, "I would really appreciate it if you would rearrange your schedule." I knew what my task was. Creating a successful honors college is a matter of paying attention to inputs—attracting strong students, offering appropriate curriculum, and creating essential beyond-the-classroom opportunities—and outputs—nationally competed recognitions of quality, graduate and professional school placement, job placement, and, finally, alumni satisfaction with their undergraduate experience, ultimately

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measured by their willingness to support with time, talent, and treasure the college and university. The tasks are straightforward, no mystery whatsoever.

From the beginning, I knew that I had to recruit students and that I would be held accountable for their achievement. Until the college's creation in 1989, ASU did not attract significant cohorts of strong students; for example, among an undergraduate student body of 28,000, we had no National Merit Scholars and few of the top five percent of the state's high school graduates, nor was the record of its graduates particularly distinguished. They rarely went to the top graduate and professional schools in their disciplines and in a 105-year history, Arizona State University had only two Rhodes scholars, one Marshal scholar, and a handful of Fulbright scholars. No culture of aspiration and excellence existed within the undergraduate student body. Our student body was largely commuter, with no points of congregation for any group of students except for members of fraternities and sororities. Not only did we need a visible gathering place for honors students, but we needed a residential home for them. This we secured immediately. By the end of the college's first year, it occupied the only centrally located residence hall on the campus, and, just off the library, it became a symbol for the campus. It was immediately filled to capacity, and within five years, one could see statistically that if an honors student lived even one semester in that residence hall, he or she was far more likely to finish the honors curriculum than a student who had not had the honors residential experience. The statistical differential was stunning, more than sixty percentage points. This finding led us to seek expanded housing, and we moved to a complex, still within the campus core, with rooms for 850 students, slightly more than our incoming freshman class, with facilities for faculty, administrative and student services, and instruction. Such a facility is, at an institution of ASU's type, essential for creating visibility and a culture of excellence. On the one hand, having such a facility makes the college visible in the very way that disciplinary units are visible, and, on the other, it provides potential and present students with the same sense of place they have at smaller, stand-alone colleges. Further, such space provides the college with some of the trappings of permanence.

Ultimately, however, an honors college, even if it mounts a small selection of courses exclusive to its students, depends on the disciplines to educate the students it attracts. No matter how great a sense of community it may engender in students, the college can, from an academic perspective, be no stronger than the university it serves and that

serves it. The dean must work with the disciplines to create appropriate course offerings, faculty mentoring programs, and, finally, opportunities for students to participate in faculty research. Without these, students will not have a shot at admission to the strongest graduate and professional programs, nor can they compete successfully for national fellowships. Again, the key is culture creation. The institution must acknowledge that honors education is a proper part of its mission, one that requires and merits resources; disciplines must understand that they have an essential role in honors education and commit themselves to it; and prospective and present students must see that they can fulfill their life dreams from that place. Recruiting, educating well and appropriately, and successfully placing students upon graduation become a feedback cycle through which the honors enterprise sustains itself.

One note of caution: when I came to honors education, I noted two characteristics among honors directors. The norm was that the directorship was an entry-level administrative position and that directors served relatively short terms, five years or less. I also noted that the strongest honors programs had long-term leaders, normally more than ten years, often more than twenty. The latter conforms to the pace at which universities develop. They are large, slow ships whose courses change only in wide sweeps, not on ninety-degree turns. As I have presented it, the honors deanship is not an entry-level administrative post, nor is it for the faint of heart, nor the short-termmer whose primary focus is administrative advancement. Honors leadership is for those who are committed to changing institutional culture and the long-term well-being of young persons and society.

I have sketched in the foregoing a conceptual process through which one honors college came to fruition. Local conditions differ, and implementation of the process will differ from place to place, but I believe the conceptualization, the idea, will be common. The keys are emphasizing high-quality undergraduate education as both a personal and a public good, identifying strategies to be disciplinarily inclusive, and inculcating in faculty and students that honors education creates a vanguard for the institution and society, not an elite.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>In a story typical of the culture of the US West, the Arizona Territory created both its normal school and territorial prison at the same time, with the school being placed in Tempe and the prison in Yuma; the wisdom of the time proclaimed that Yuma had won and Tempe lost the political infighting.



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<sup>2</sup>Some interesting assumptions underlie such a provision, among them that the institution would attract some exceptional students and that the newly created institution would or could not in the normal course of its educational program provide adequately for them.

<sup>3</sup>The referendum was part of an emerging battle between southern and central Arizona for control of the state's resources.

<sup>4</sup>As a matter of disclosure, I was educated in the Columbia Great Books tradition and continue to value it.

<sup>5</sup>Of course, the Great Books do include important works of science, e.g., Newton's *Principia* and Darwin's *Origin of Species*. But I know of few instances in which the faculty members who have taught them as part of a Great Books program have focused on the science in them as science, developing, for instance, the calculus in the discussion of Newton's ideas.

<sup>6</sup>At ASU disciplinary faculty initially displayed greater interest in graduate curriculum than in the honors undergraduate curriculum in part, at least, because the former attracted advanced students who have the same passions and who can provide relief from undergraduate instructional responsibilities. Over time, disciplinary faculty valued honors students for their brightness and enthusiasm and their ability to contribute to research projects.

<sup>7</sup>Given these conceptualizations and arguments, we were able to implement honors education not only throughout the disciplinary colleges on ASU's main campus in Tempe, and these included Engineering, Public Programs, Business, Fine Arts, Nursing, and Architecture, but also on ASU's other campuses, each with a mission differentiated from the one in Tempe. Attracting the Barrett Honors College's students became a matter of pride for the disciplinary units and came to be integrated into the university's report card for the performance of disciplinary units.

<sup>8</sup>In making the transition from an honors program to an honors college at ASU, we carefully followed a well-defined process so that no one could call the new unit's legitimacy into question. First, we brought in a well-established, nationally recognized member of the honors education establishment, C. Grey Austin of Ohio State University, to review our curriculum, facilities, and personnel and report directly to the university president and the Arizona Board of Regents. Second, we sought and received the approval for creating the college from the Academic Senate and the Council of Deans. Finally, we submitted the review, proposal, and approvals to the Arizona Board of Regents for its authorization to create the college. We pursued this



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process with malice of forethought. Many honors colleges have come into existence as a function of a simple fiat. That fact suggests that those units can cease to exist as a function of fiat. Our strategy was to create as many stakeholders as possible in hope that should someone decide to decommission the college, he or she would have to follow a well-defined process. We wanted to ensure that the college would have an acknowledged role in the institutional mission.



# **CHAPTER 2:**

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONTEMPORARY HONORS COLLEGE**

### **A DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF A SURVEY OF NCHC MEMBER COLLEGES\***

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#### **Introduction**

Every year the number of honors colleges across the country increases. Most of these new colleges emerge out of preexisting honors programs, an origin that suggests that the change reflects an interest in raising the public profile of honors education at a particular institution. Sometimes this transformation entails only a cosmetic name change; other times, institutions take the opportunity to review what they are providing in honors education and how they might enhance it.

The Executive Committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council recognized that the NCHC ought to take a strong interest in this phenomenon. If an institution is simply gilding the name, then “honors college” becomes a devalued misnomer designed as a marketing strategy and intended to mislead potential applicants into believing that something new exists where, in fact, substance remains unchanged. Passive acceptance of this trend also does a disservice to those exceptional honors programs that resist playing the name change game because they deem that their program as it stands serves their institution well. Nonetheless, four-year programs at universities face increasing competitive pressure to enter the collegiate game.

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\*During the spring and summer of 2004, the NCHC Ad Hoc Task Force on Honors Colleges constructed and distributed an extensive survey on honors college characteristics to 68 self-identified honors colleges affiliated with the NCHC. We received replies from 38 of those surveyed, three of which indicated they were incorrectly identified as a college. The relevant response rate, then, is 54%. We consider the results of this survey suggestive but not scientifically conclusive. The illustrative statistics in this chapter are drawn from the survey. This article was originally published in *JNCHC* 6.2 (2005): 121-36.

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Unfortunately, until recently the game lacked a referee. In the absence of some commonly agreed-upon criteria, honors administrators often found themselves in a weak negotiating position when asked, or required, to make the name change. If anything goes, then normal institutional inertia means nothing will change *except* the name.

Similar concerns motivated NCHC to develop “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” over a decade ago. Rumors of the conflict over these guidelines echoed down the years and made people reluctant to engage in a similar debate over honors college. Unlike honors program, however, an honors college is a particular subset of the larger species and is neither relevant to nor desirable for all institutional settings. Nonetheless, those institutions that have made or are contemplating the transformation ought to be expected to engage in more than a rhetorical change.

Consequently, in November 2003, then NCHC President Norm Weiner reconstituted the NCHC Ad Hoc Task Force on Honors Colleges and charged it with the task of developing a draft set of “The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” for discussion at the 2004 National Conference in New Orleans.<sup>1</sup> This draft was accepted by the Executive Committee in November 2004 and formally endorsed as modified at their June 2005 meeting. The task force also reported on their survey of existing honors colleges affiliated with the NCHC and assessed the extent to which certain characteristics were widely shared among putative honors colleges. What follows is a preliminary descriptive analysis of the findings of this survey.

### Methodology and Limitations of the Survey

Our survey was limited in a number of ways that necessarily infuse our conclusions with a degree of tentativeness. The most basic issue involved determining our survey population. We considered trying to identify all the entities that are self-declared honors colleges, whether or not they were affiliated with the NCHC. Given our limited time and resources, this task proved daunting and ultimately impossible to implement. In addition, we concluded that even if we could identify something that would pass for the whole population of honors colleges, we should not give non-affiliated institutions a voice at this stage of our deliberations. We decided, then, to survey those NCHC members who were listed in the national database as possessing honors colleges.

While this decision gave us a manageable sample of 65 schools, subsequent problems arose in conducting the survey. First, the list was not

accurate. Ultimately, we found that some colleges we knew to exist were not included on it. Others that were on it actually did not have honors colleges. And, finally, some of the contact information was incorrect. Through several iterations we addressed all of these problems to some extent, but still we know that we overlooked some affiliated honors colleges, and to these we apologize.

We ultimately surveyed 68 institutions, 38 of which replied. Three of these did not have colleges and were not included in our sample, leaving 35 responses from an adjusted total of 65 surveyed colleges or a response rate of 54%.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, our 35 responses must be seen as a subset of a subset of a subset.

Our survey was hardly a perfect instrument. Its size, twelve pages, made it unwieldy and intimidating. We went through multiple revisions of this instrument, all of which made it longer. While initial drafts were designed to have easily quantifiable responses, the ultimate instrument included a fair number of open-ended questions that, while providing rich information, defy simple summary. We have gathered considerable information, not all of it pertinent to our central mission of identifying common characteristics of self-described honors colleges. Although subsequent studies of this phenomenon may find this additional information interesting, some busy deans probably put the lengthy survey aside and never replied despite repeated pleadings.

Moreover, although we pre-tested the survey on the committee members, we did not catch all the questions that turned out to be confusing to the respondents. In reviewing the returned surveys, we realized that some questions, especially the more open-ended ones, elicited non-comparable responses.

As primary author of this preliminary report, I focus on the information that is directly pertinent to the core mission of the task force: drafting the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College.” I intend what follows to provide further context for our recommendations. Time constraints prevent me from doing any statistical correlations. On occasion, though, I will point out some that are obvious from inspection of the descriptive data. For example, larger universities tend to have larger honors colleges.

Our survey was divided into three major sections and a concluding set of questions. This report follows a similar structure.

## **Organizational Structure and Relative Institutional Standing**

Quality honors programs exist in diverse settings, and their particular characteristics reflect this diversity. When an entity describes itself as a college, however, it claims to be something more than a program, either directly or by implication. The recruitment rhetoric of most honors colleges often invokes the image of the best of both worlds. And what worlds are these?—typically a comprehensive research university and a small, four-year liberal arts college. The very word “college” summons up images of greater organizational complexity, programmatic diversity, physical identity, size, and resources than would be commonly associated with a program. In our survey, we wanted to test the validity of these implications.

Most honors colleges exist within the setting of a comprehensive university. To have an honors college at a four-year college runs counter to this obvious association, just as in the case of a small college re-labeling itself a university. Indeed, 91% of the respondents to our survey are part of a comprehensive university. The other 9% are at four-year colleges that have some graduate programs. Unsurprisingly, the universities vary in size and complexity. For example, the number of distinct colleges comprising the university ranges from 4 to 23, with a mean of 8.8.

Honors colleges, though, relate to their university setting in different ways as indicated by the answer to a question on their overall structure:

- 68.6%: Centralized overlay structure of university undergraduate programs.
- 14.3%: Freestanding college, with own faculty and curriculum.
- 5.7%: Decentralized coordinating structure providing an honors core overseeing departmentalized honors.
- 11.4%: Other

A dominant form exists, but this does not mean other forms are not legitimate colleges. Questions arise, however, about the minority forms. First, can independent colleges take full advantage of the resources of the wider university of which they are a part? Second, how much coordination actually exists in a decentralized structure? Do common standards, for example, exist across the confederacy of programs?

Even comprehensive universities vary significantly in the size of their undergraduate student body and the size of the honors college. Of our sample, undergraduate population size is distributed as follows:

|                |    |
|----------------|----|
| < 10,000:      | 11 |
| 10,000-19,999: | 9  |
| 20,000-30,000: | 9  |
| > 30,000:      | 6  |

Similarly, the honors colleges also vary in size. The range of total honors population extends from 150 to 2700; the size of the incoming freshman class ranges from fewer than 100 to 700. Distributions are as follows:

| Honors College Size |    | Honors Incoming Class Size |    |
|---------------------|----|----------------------------|----|
| < 500:              | 10 | < 100:                     | 5  |
| 500-999:            | 13 | 100-199:                   | 11 |
| 1000-1499:          | 6  | 200-299:                   | 8  |
| 1500-1999:          | 3  | 300-399:                   | 5  |
| >2000:              | 3  | > 400:                     | 5  |
| NR:                 | 1  |                            |    |

We expected to find some common motivations for creating an honors college, and we did. For example, fully 80% of our respondents indicated they arose out of a pre-existing honors program, suggesting an institutional motivation to raise the public profile for what already existed on their campuses. Second, 25 colleges (71.4%) indicated that the primary initiative for establishing the honors college arose from the top administration. Third, confirming our impression that the trend toward establishing honors colleges is relatively new, 21 colleges (60%) have been established since 1993.<sup>3</sup>

In addition, substantive motivations for establishing a college were also widely shared. Among the dominant reasons given are:

- 100.0%: Recruit stronger students
- 91.4%: Improve overall campus academic quality
- 88.6%: Improve the quality of honors educational opportunities
- 85.7%: Raise the profile of honors within the institution

Other motivations, like fund-raising, curriculum innovation, and the promotion of service learning, inspired around 60% or fewer of the respondents.<sup>4</sup>

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Claiming the appellation “college” also implies a certain level of institutional status different from that of a program and equivalent to other colleges in a university:

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| The administrative head of a college is a dean:        | 77.1%              |
| The academic rank of the head is full professor:       | 91.2%              |
| The head reports to the provost/academic VP:           | 82.8%              |
| The head is a member of the Council of Academic Deans: | 82.8% <sup>5</sup> |
| The head is a 12-month appointment:                    | 82.8%              |

We also attempted to ascertain whether colleges reflected a greater degree of organizational complexity. This query was not particularly successful. Responses were widely distributed. Unsurprisingly, it appears that organizational complexity reflects size, not the structural status of the honors college. Subsequent mining of our data, along with comparisons between large university honors programs, may confirm this hypothesis.

Some of the other attributes of a fully developed college within the contemporary university, however, are not so widely shared among our sample. For example, only 20 (57.1%) had an alumni organization, and even fewer (17; 48.6%) possessed a full- or part-time development officer. Because of the relatively recent emergence of most of these colleges, the lack of these two positions may not be surprising. Given that the motives for establishing a college often include seeking greater visibility and identity, we predict that the numbers sharing these characteristics will rapidly increase.<sup>6</sup>

Like most honors programs, honors colleges possess student honors councils (94.3%) and faculty oversight committees (88.6%). Interestingly, a significant minority of honors colleges (42.8%) co-exist with other honors-type programs. Commonly, national scholarship competition programs are housed within the honors college (74.3%). Other programs, like undergraduate research (48.6%), major campus scholarship programs (37.1%), and service learning (31.4%), are less frequently placed within the honors college. None of these characteristics appears to be strongly associated with honors colleges as opposed to honors programs in general.

One major motive for creating an honors college is to improve recruitment of top students; therefore, we might expect that attention would be paid to admission standards. All the respondents claimed total or significant control over admissions standards and processes. Less than two-thirds (64.7%), however, enhanced admission standards



when they became a college, and 22.9% do not have a separate application.<sup>7</sup> These data point to a potential problem that anecdotal evidence suggests has occurred. Without tight control over the admission process and enhanced standards, the publicity push accompanying the inauguration of an honors college (trumpet flourish) may lead to a surge in enrollment that at least temporarily overwhelms available resources.

Finally, in this era of increased accountability, we expected to find that the performance of honors colleges, like other academic units, is increasingly assessed. Thirty colleges (85.7%) reported being assessed in terms of courses and faculty; 28 (80%) on the basis of student performance; and 20 (57.1%) on the basis of their advisement processes. Twenty-six colleges (74.3%) reported producing an annual report.

## Resources and Facilities

If we presume that an honors college presents itself to the world as something more than a program, then we should expect that the transition from program to college would entail an increase in resources. In addition, echoing again the common recruitment refrain the best of both worlds, we might also expect that an honors college would possess an enhanced physical identity reflecting the notion that it replicates a small liberal arts college within a wider university setting.

The most obvious way of addressing resource issues is through the budget. Unfortunately, this question was less than satisfactory. Our primary question inquired about the size of the operating budget, excluding any teaching faculty lines, but including staff. Some perceived this query as sensitive, resulting in a “no response” rate of 22.8%. In addition, the data appear contaminated to some extent by non-comparable responses. Perhaps the best way of getting at something valuable is to look at the colleges’ per capita budgets where possible, recognizing we may be using two fuzzy numbers (estimated student population and estimated budget). In particular, some colleges clearly were including scholarships they support in their operational budget. When I could not break down a college’s total budget, I excluded it from the analysis. Consequently, the survey produces only 23 reports that may provide something equivalent to a *per capita* operating budget number.

The average per capita budget was \$596/student. The range was \$83 to \$1,855. Only four colleges had a per capita budget of over \$1,000; 8 had budgets of between \$500 and \$1,000; and the remaining 11 were below \$500. The largest per capita budget was reported by a college of

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270 students, the smallest by a college of 600. However, the other three colleges reporting operating budgets of over \$1,000/student each had student populations exceeding 1000. Apparently some relatively large colleges enjoy significant support.<sup>8</sup> Alternatively, relatively tiny budgets of some colleges raise the question of how they can live up to expectations created by their appellation.

Another, somewhat ambiguous, measure of resources involves faculty lines controlled directly by the unit. Obviously, a freestanding honors college will possess a significant faculty budget, and their own faculty will provide most of their courses. Twenty-one colleges have no faculty lines, and a number of those reporting faculty included adjunct faculty hires. Half of those reporting faculty lines also indicated that their own faculty covered 20% or less of their courses. The debate over relative benefits and costs of owning faculty versus drawing on the wider university for honors instruction exceeds the scope of this study. However, we should note that significant faculty lines inevitably involve an honors college in the promotion and tenure process.

In addition to the standard university budgetary allocation, an honors college may draw on two other sources of significant funding: college fees and endowment income/private donations. Only five colleges reported imposing fees on their students, ranging from \$15 to \$125 per semester. The two colleges with the highest fees generate over a quarter of a million dollars a year. Given the current fiscal climate, we expect more honors colleges and programs to consider this option.<sup>9</sup>

Ironically, given the extensiveness of our survey instrument, we failed to inquire about annual fundraising and the amounts generated for the colleges. We did inquire about endowment. Twenty-five colleges (71.4%) reported at least a small endowment. Endowments vary significantly in size, ranging from under \$100,000 to over \$25 million. The distribution of those reporting endowment size is as follows:

|                               |   |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Under \$500,000:              | 8 |
| \$500,000 to \$1 million:     | 5 |
| \$1 million to \$5 million:   | 4 |
| \$5 million to \$10 million:  | 2 |
| \$10 million to \$25 million: | 2 |
| Above \$25 million:           | 2 |

In recent years, honors colleges have attracted major gifts; indeed, sometimes the gift itself is the primary motivation for establishing the college. These figures do not tell the whole story, of course. For

example, naming gifts to colleges are often heavily earmarked for merit scholarships. At least one college with an endowment of less than \$1 million was the indirect beneficiary of a recent gift of \$20 million to endow a named merit scholarship program for non-residents. Moreover, a heavily earmarked endowment, while supporting critical activities like merit scholarships, may co-exist with relatively small operating budgets. Of the 22 colleges reporting the percentage of earmarked endowment income, 12 (54.4%) indicated that 90 to 100% of their endowment income was dedicated.

Our survey attempted to drill down a bit into the budgetary status of responding colleges. For example, 21 colleges reported compensating departments offering honors courses. Such compensation is generally viewed as a way of developing an honors curriculum that entails small-enrollment classes. The compensation budgets varied from \$20,000 to approximately \$1 million. The rate of compensation per course ranged from \$800 to a high of \$7,000. Several colleges reported negotiating a sliding scale of compensation, presumably reflecting the difficulty of extracting a desired honors course from a unit. Unsurprisingly, compensation budgets tended to correlate with the size of the college. The three largest budgets of \$1 million, \$600,000, and \$400,000 were in colleges of 1700, 1100, and 1900 students respectively.

We also inquired about what other activities honors colleges supported out of their budget. The most widely shared services are the following:

- 91.4%: Student travel
- 77.1%: Student research
- 77.1%: Publications
- 71.4%: Student council activities
- 68.5%: Honors course enrichment
- 60.0%: Senior thesis expenses

One last budget probe attempted to ascertain to what extent the budgetary position had improved with the establishment of the college. We received a fair number of non-comparable or non-responses. Eight schools reported more than doubling their budget, but the time frames for doubling ranged from 3 to 40 years. Three colleges reported increases of between 50 and 100%, and another five reported increases between 25 and 50%. Seven colleges, however, reported increases of less than 10%, and one replied that its budget was actually reduced. This reported absence of budgetary support by nearly

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one-third of those responding raises troubling questions about the reality behind the rhetorical transformation from program to college in many universities.

The desire for increased visibility for honors, internally and externally, drives the transformation from program to college, and we expect that the transformation in name should be physically embodied on campus. Moreover, since honors colleges claim to offer the best of both worlds, those existing within universities with a significant residential undergraduate population might be expected to offer honors housing opportunities.

The physical plant of honors colleges in our survey substantiates these expectations, at least to some extent. Although only a minority (16) possess their own building and the others (19) reside in a suite of offices in a larger building, not too much can be drawn from these data. For example, being confined to a dilapidated house on the fringes of a campus is not self-evidently better than a renovated suite in a centrally located building. Gratifyingly, none of our respondents indicated that they were located in “cave next to the boiler room.” However, some attributes commonly associated with a college were not so widely shared:

45.7%: Honors student lounge/reading room

40.0%: Honors IT center

37.1%: Honors class/seminar rooms

Honors residential opportunities are widespread: 91.4% of the colleges reported having some residential component, and 26 (74.3%) indicated housing opportunities existed across all four years. The extent of these opportunities varied. For example, 11 colleges (36.7%) reported that fewer than 25% of their freshmen were housed in honors residences. Of the 28 reporting some housing opportunities for continuing students, 18 (64.3%) housed fewer than 25% of these students. We must be careful about drawing too strong a conclusion from these data because factors not accounted for in our survey, such as the percentage of the overall student population living on campus and the attractiveness of non-honors on- and off-campus housing opportunities, would affect honors residential demand.

In conclusion, our respondents indicate that the transformation from program to college generally contributed to improved facilities. Of the 31 answering our summary question, 24 (77.4%) indicated a “great” improvement while 5 (16.1%) agreed that some improvement occurred. Only two reported “little or no” improvement.

Generally, then, as universities transformed their honors programs into colleges, they made some effort to put their money where their mouth is. However, we cannot ignore that eight of the colleges reported little or no increase in their operating budget. Is this a large or a small number? It depends on what is being counted. Following Kenneth Stamp, we might ask whether “8” would be a large or a small number if we were counting beatings over a lifetime.

## **Educational Opportunities, Requirements, and Recognition**

Structure and resources, while important aspects of an honors college, are, after all, only means to an end. For many institutions the goal is recruitment success alone. If that can be achieved with merely a bump in publicity budgets, we suspect some universities have aimed no higher. We should, nevertheless, demand more substance behind the gloss of a new brochure. More should be expected from the students, and more opportunities should be provided to them. The comparison we invoke, implicitly when we label ourselves a “college” and explicitly when we use the common phrase “the best of both worlds,” is with a quality liberal arts college. Such a comparison should not be invoked casually.

The nature and quality of student experience are difficult to capture through our survey instrument; we can only approach such experience indirectly. Specifically, we asked how many honors courses were offered each semester; of these, what percentage were straight honors sections (not embedded in a larger non-honors course); whether they provided honors curricular opportunities across all four years; and, if so, what percentage of their total offerings were upper division. In this way we hoped to ascertain to what extent honors colleges offered more opportunities than a well-developed lower-division honors program.

Given the range in size of the participating honors colleges, we expected to find a significant variation in the number of courses offered each semester:

|                        |    |
|------------------------|----|
| More than 100 courses: | 5  |
| 75–99 courses:         | 4  |
| 50–74 courses:         | 4  |
| 25–49 courses:         | 11 |
| Fewer than 25 courses: | 11 |

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A better way of assessing the significance of honors course opportunities is to divide the total student population of the honors college by the number of honors courses offered per semester, providing a kind of “Index of Opportunity” (IO) somewhat akin to a student/faculty ratio. The variation remains significant, but now the data reveal that several of the larger honors colleges actually provide a fairly limited number of curricular opportunities for their students while one of the smallest, albeit a freestanding college, has the most. The IO distribution is as follows:<sup>10</sup>

|               |    |
|---------------|----|
| Less than 10: | 4  |
| 10 to 20:     | 17 |
| 21 to 30:     | 5  |
| 31 to 40:     | 6  |
| More than 40: | 3  |

Since lower is better in this case, some colleges are clearly offering a great many more curricular opportunities than others. Overall, though, at least 60% (21) seem to be doing quite well by this measure. Also significant in this regard, 24 (68.6%) report that at least 90% of the courses they offer are freestanding honors courses, not embedded sections.

We also expect that honors colleges should offer course opportunities across all four years, and a significant majority (82.8%) of our respondents do so. We also inquired, though, what percentage of their total honors offerings were upper-division courses. Here the response was more mixed. Of the 29 schools claiming four-year opportunities, 14 (48.3%) indicated that 40% or more of their courses were upper level, but 9 (31%) offered 20% or less. When these nine are added to the six that reported no upper-division offerings, we have evidence that a significant percentage of our total (15 or 42.8%) can make only a limited claim or none at all to comprehensive curricular opportunities.

Honors curricular opportunities come in a variety of flavors. Among the more popular are these:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Honors courses for general education requirements: | 97.1% |
| Honors senior thesis/creative project:             | 94.3% |
| Honors independent study:                          | 80.0% |
| Special-topic, upper-division honors seminars:     | 74.3% |
| Special-topic, interdisciplinary honors seminars:  | 74.3% |
| Honors individual contracts in regular courses:    | 68.6% |

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Undergraduate research courses:                | 62.8% |
| Experimental honors courses:                   | 62.8% |
| Honors major/minor level courses:              | 60.0% |
| Honors study abroad opportunities:             | 57.1% |
| Special, lower-division honors core:           | 57.1% |
| Special-topic, lower-division honors seminars: | 48.6% |
| Honors internships:                            | 45.7% |
| Service-learning courses:                      | 37.1% |
| Embedded or honors increment courses:          | 37.1% |

Honors colleges collectively offer a wide variety of opportunities, but again some colleges offer nearly the entire range while others do not. We are particularly interested in those opportunities that should flourish at an honors college within a larger research university—undergraduate research. Nearly all of the colleges (94.3%) reported directly supporting undergraduate research opportunities. This figure became somewhat less impressive when broken down into the numbers engaging in specific forms of support:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Travel support to make research presentations:         | 81.8% |
| Undergraduate research/scholarship recognition events: | 69.7% |
| Grants for senior thesis/project expenses:             | 63.6% |
| Undergraduate research assistantships/fellowships      | 51.5% |

Perhaps the ultimate indicator of collegiate status involves the conferring of degrees. With the exception of the freestanding honors colleges, most, usually all, of the students in the overlay honors college model earn their degrees from another unit, like Arts and Sciences or Business Administration. Only six of the colleges responding indicated offering their own degree as an option. However, three of these seemed confused by the question. Nonetheless, honors colleges seem uniquely positioned to foster interdisciplinary degrees, in particular, and might be encouraged to aspire to develop such opportunities.

Finally, as programs move to claim honors college status, they could also take the opportunity to increase what they expect from their students. We earlier noted that of the 34 schools responding to this question, 22 or 64.7% enhanced their admission standards. Unfortunately, we failed to inquire whether they also enhanced what was required to earn their particular honors distinction after the students matriculated.

## Chapter 2: Characteristics of the Contemporary Honors College

We did ask about current standards. Generally, the minimum GPA needed to earn the honors distinction ranged from 3.0 to 3.5, although one school reported a range of distinctions, with the highest requiring a 3.8. We had two unclear responses. Of the 33 remaining, a significant majority required a GPA above 3.25 (24 or 72.7%).

Most of us would agree, however, that the GPA is the least significant attribute of the honors distinction awarded by our programs and colleges. We believe our students earn their distinction by challenging themselves in more demanding honors courses and seminars as well as by other distinctive requirements. We approached this issue from a number of different angles. We inquired about the minimum number of honors credits needed to earn the basic honors distinction. Although not all answers were clearly comparable (for example, the freestanding college is an outlier, requiring its students to take 85% of their work in the college), we are able to make several revealing comparisons.

First, excepting the freestanding college, the range of honors credit hours required for their distinction extended from 18 to 45, although a significant majority of respondents (24 out of 33 or 72.7%) require between 21 and 30 honors credits. Only three colleges require fewer than 21 honors hours, and six require more. We should recall, though, that the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” suggest that a fully developed program should require that 20 to 25% of the student work be in honors, and “certainly no less than 15%.” None of the honors colleges report fewer than 17%, although six fall below 20% required honors credits and another 15 fall in the 20 to 24% range. Nine colleges require 25 to 29% of their student’s work be in honors and four require 30% or more.

Second, we inquired what other requirements were associated with earning the primary distinction, thus enabling us to identify some other common expectations honors colleges hold for their students. While hardly definitive, these additional requirements hint at some commonalities although they establish no overwhelming identity:

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Senior thesis/project:                                 | 65.7% |
| Honors selective seminars:                             | 57.1% |
| Core of specific courses (e.g., Great Books seminars): | 51.4% |
| Liberal education distribution of honors courses:      | 34.3% |
| Service learning:                                      | 8.6%  |



The most commonly shared requirement is a senior thesis or project (65.7%). How good a showing is this? Again, the implied comparison is with a fine liberal arts college, most of which require a senior thesis or project to graduate.

## Summation and Conclusions

In summation, we asked the respondents to identify the major consequences of becoming an honors college.<sup>11</sup> The following consequences were commonly identified:

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Enhanced stature for the head of the college:       | 85.7% |
| Enhanced stature among the faculty:                 | 85.7% |
| Enhanced organizational position in the university: | 82.8% |
| Enhanced recruitment:                               | 77.1% |
| Improved facilities:                                | 77.1% |
| Increased budget:                                   | 74.3% |
| Enhanced academic programs and opportunities:       | 74.3% |
| Enhanced standards of admission and retention:      | 60.0% |
| Increased size of student body:                     | 57.1% |
| Enhanced scholarship opportunities:                 | 45.7% |

Finally, we polled our survey population on three issues confronting NCHC. Given the importance of these debates, we provide the complete distribution of response:

Should honors colleges be expected to pay higher dues?

|        |           |
|--------|-----------|
| Yes:   | 9 (25.7%) |
| Maybe: | 4 (11.4%) |
| No:    | 21 (60%)  |
| NR:    | 1 (2.8%)  |

Should NCHC develop "The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College?"

|        |            |
|--------|------------|
| Yes:   | 27 (77.1%) |
| Maybe: | 2 (5.7%)   |
| No:    | 5 (14.3%)  |
| NR:    | 1 (2.8%)   |

## Chapter 2: Characteristics of the Contemporary Honors College

Should the NCHC accredit honors colleges?

Yes: 11 (31.4%)

Maybe: 5 (14.3%)

No: 15 (42.8%)

NR: 4 (11.4%)

So what can we conclude? First, although honors colleges come in a variety of sizes and shapes, by and large they represent a fairly distinctive subset of the overall membership of the NCHC. Second, this subset is growing in number, a trend likely to continue, even accelerate. Third, despite the presence of a minority of honors colleges that appear underdeveloped in comparison with their peers, most of the colleges surveyed emerged out of programs that were already fairly well developed and were then substantively enhanced on becoming colleges. Fourth, the respondents strongly supported the idea that the NCHC should offer guidance as to what becoming an honors college might entail. Basically, I think the survey reveals that the transformation should mean more administrative status, more resources, more facilities, more programs and opportunities, higher admission standards, and higher expectations of students.

The survey, then, provides support for the Executive Committee's decision to endorse "The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College." Their decision, I believe, serves a number of purposes. First, it stands as our organizational recognition of a distinctive trend in higher education where the NCHC has a legitimate organizational interest, even obligation. Second, it provides guidelines for those institutions contemplating making such a change in announced status. Third, it embodies a set of criteria against which existing honors colleges can measure themselves and that they can use as leverage within their own institutions to gain additional support. Fourth, it will assist prospective students in making informed discriminations among the institutions they are considering. For all these reasons I think the NCHC has taken a significant step in its maturation as an organization by endorsing the "Basic Characteristics" appended to this volume. (See Appendix B.)

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>The members of the committee are Cheryl Achterberg, formerly Penn State (now Ohio State); Gary Bell, Texas Tech; Jill Ghnassia, Western Carolina; John Madden, Cerritos College; Rolland Pack, Freed

Hardemann; Peter Sederberg, South Carolina (Chair); and Peter Viscusi, Central Missouri State.

<sup>2</sup>In 1992-1993, committee member John Madden surveyed 23 self-identified honors colleges for his 1993 NCHC report "What is an Honors College?" He had 19 responses. Of the 23 in his initial cohort, 16 remained on the 2003 NCHC list of Honors Colleges, and 10 of those replied to this survey. Of the other 7, 3 are no longer members, 2 are apparently programs, and 2 should have been surveyed but were not.

<sup>3</sup>In other words, nearly two thirds of the colleges we surveyed were not in existence when John Madden conducted his survey.

<sup>4</sup>The motives mentioned in the 1993 Madden study were to promote cohesion in the curriculum; increase visibility for honors; showcase the university's excellence in undergraduate education; facilitate independence; and provide more opportunities. His study asked an open-ended question, whereas ours provided a list. Given the different techniques, the responses appear fairly consistent.

<sup>5</sup>Being a dean makes a difference. They all served on the Council of Academic Deans. The others did not.

<sup>6</sup>At the South Carolina Honors College, we did not create a formal alumni organization until our seventeenth year; the assignment of a part-time development officer occurred two years later with the inauguration of the University's first major capital campaign.

<sup>7</sup>The survey attempted to gather data on admission standards, and these revealed rather wide disparities. For example, minimum acceptable SAT scores ranged from "no minimum" to 1350. However, only three schools reported a minimum score of 1300 or above. High school GPA minimums also ranged from none to 3.6 (un-weighted). Fewer than two thirds of the honors colleges reported using essays (61.8%), letters of recommendation (57.1%), or activities/leadership (54.3%) in their admissions review process.

<sup>8</sup>Madden reported two "super-budgets" of over \$2,000/capita and two others in the \$1,000 range. None of these four are respondents to this survey. My suspicion is that these high figures from 1993 reflect substantial scholarship budgets. For example, one college responding to our survey reported a budget that unadjusted for scholarships equaled over \$2200/student. Once scholarships were backed out, the number fell to \$368/student.

<sup>9</sup>The South Carolina Honors College increased its fee to \$200/semester for 2005-2006, generating close to a half million dollars per annum.

<sup>10</sup>A lower number is better because dividing the total number of honors students by the number of honors courses/semester produces this index.

## Chapter 2: Characteristics of the Contemporary Honors College

<sup>11</sup>Madden asked a similar question in his 1993 survey. He grouped the responses into three broad categories:

Respect, visibility, recognition, etc: 10 mentions.

Autonomy, power: 7 mentions.

Funding, recruiting: 7 mentions

# **Part II:**

# **Alternative Models**



# **CHAPTER 3:**

## **THE HONORS COLLEGE IN A TWO-YEAR COLLEGE SETTING:**

### **MIAMI DADE COLLEGE**

**ALEXANDRIA HOLLOWAY**  
**MIAMI DADE COLLEGE**

#### **Introduction**

Miami Dade College (MDC), like many community colleges, serves a diverse population of students with various needs, skills, and goals. MDC, an urban, multi-campus, non-residential college, is recognized as one of the most outstanding community colleges in the nation. With more than 165,000 students and eight campuses, it is also considered the largest single institution of higher learning in America. The mission of the College is to provide accessible, affordable, high-quality education that keeps the learner's needs at the center of the decision-making process. The College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and offers undergraduate study in more than 200 areas and professions. At MDC, student success is a priority.

#### **History**

In 2001, the College President, Dr. Eduardo Padrón, proposed a vision initiative that would retool the college's existing honors programs. The purpose of this initiative was to attract academically gifted students who met stringent eligibility requirements comparable to those of Ivy League colleges and who typically pursued education at four-year colleges and universities outside the local community; to provide a focused, nurturing, and challenging academic environment for high-achieving students; and to offer a stimulating alternative for interested faculty. Envisioned as an incubator for greatness, The Honors College in essence, would provide a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum in a supportive environment where goal-oriented, academically gifted students explore new ideas, discuss global and environmental concerns, engage in inspired creativity and intellectual collaborations with experienced faculty members, and participate in study abroad and culturally enriching

### Chapter 3: The Honors College in a Two-Year College Setting

experiences. As an end result, this new initiative would bring about a perceptual change of the College by students as well as the community at large. A dean was appointed to lead the establishment of The Honors College, and immediately, several committees and academic councils began extensive research and review of best educational practices.

The task was now to set this vision in motion. With consultants from the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), a college-wide faculty Curriculum Committee designed a two-year curriculum for The Honors College that would allow students to engage in challenging, creative, and analytical work. An Admissions Committee determined entry, retention, and graduation requirements for students in The Honors College. Entry requirements were established: a combined SAT score of at least 1200 (Verbal/Critical Reading and Math) or a composite ACT score of 26, or a grade point average of 3.70 weighted or unweighted with assessment scores at college-level skills as evidenced by the SAT, ACT or Computerized Placement Test (CPT). At least a 3.5 grade point average and completion of 60 credits with a minimum of 36 credits in honors-designated courses would be required for graduation from The Honors College.

As The Honors College was set to admit its inaugural class in the fall of 2002 and the curriculum was being developed, student recruitment strategies, requests for budgets for scholarship and operational allocations, marketing plans, faculty assignments, and logistics were being implemented simultaneously. To facilitate an aggressive recruitment effort, college recruiters were asked to forward directly to The Honors College the names of any new applicants who met eligibility requirements. Testing officers and college advisors referred potential honors college students to The Honors College. In addition, a list of high school graduating seniors who held a 3.7 grade point average and above was purchased from the College Board. Application packages, including a letter of introduction, the application, and a brochure, were mailed to each potential student. High school counselors from local public and private schools were invited to a luncheon program. There, a detailed description of The Honors College, its curriculum, benefits, personnel, and long-term objectives were introduced. Each counselor received application packages and a promotional item from The Honors College.

To promote the program in the community, The Honors College executed a strong marketing campaign, which included print and media coverage. Other marketing strategies included interviews on various local television and radio programs, newspaper ads, posters,



banners, and signs, along with frequent visits to honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes at feeder high schools.

Finally, faculty were recruited and required to complete an eight-hour Faculty Certification Workshop prior to teaching in The Honors College. The workshop was designed to familiarize faculty with the honors mystique and characteristics of the honors student; to clarify the academic foundations upon which The Honors College was established; to describe and apply characteristics of honors within specific courses; to discuss supplementary strategies and enrichment opportunities to augment learning; to analyze, observe, and articulate student performance; and to build collaborative communities among colleagues to foster scholarly discussions, shared resources, and repositories for faculty enrichment. The workshop, averaging approximately fifty new faculty participants annually, continues to be offered each semester for interested faculty.

The application process was more involved than the standard MDC application. In addition to the MDC application, a separate application to The Honors College, an official high school transcript, three letters of recommendation, and an essay were required. All qualified students were invited to interview before an admissions committee. A team of faculty, staff, and The Honors College directors representing all the MDC campuses completed a series of assessments and interviews that resulted in the selection of the inaugural class of The Honors College. This pilot group was located at the Wolfson Campus and consisted of 75 students, an equal distribution of recent graduates from local public and private high schools and second-year students who were currently enrolled in MDC. Among this inaugural group were international students from Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

In its second year of operation, The Honors College retained the sophomore students and admitted 75 new freshmen at Wolfson Campus. Seventy-five new freshmen were also admitted at two other campuses, the North Campus and the Kendall Campus. By 2005, The Honors College had a presence on three of Miami Dade College's eight campuses (Wolfson, Kendall, and North) with a total enrollment of 400 students.

The most recent addition to The Honors College was the dual language program in Spanish and English, which was launched on a fourth campus, InterAmerican, in the fall of 2006. Designed in response to industry demands, the dual language program would ensure that students are truly bilingual in their ability to write, read, and speak proficiently in both languages. Each semester, some courses

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are taught entirely in English and some, entirely in Spanish. Colloquia programs and leadership courses are presented in Spanish. Faculty members who teach in the honors dual language program are required to be proficient in Spanish and use appropriate textbooks and resources.

As exciting as it is to work primarily with The Honors College students, it became obvious that other bright students were, for various reasons, choosing to remain in the regular academic environment. Demands of work and family, an inability to devote the necessary time to the honors community, or other issues placed limitations on some of these students. Therefore, additional honors courses were made available through The Honors College to provide an opportunity for non-honors college students to participate in rigorous coursework and graduate with honors. Interested students must meet eligibility requirements and obtain authorization from the campus honors director or department chair. Similarly, the Honors Option Projects (HOPS), although limited, is an individual contractual agreement between the student and the professor that describes the level of intensive work worthy of honors credit that is to be conducted during the course of the semester. The students must attend all classes and complete the terms of the agreement.

### Structure

The Miami Dade College's Board of Trustees demonstrated its support and enthusiasm by approving the reorganized structure of The Honors College and the appointment of a Dean to oversee and lead the work of the College. An honors director is assigned to each campus and reports directly to the Dean of The Honors College. Each director manages one of the location sites and works collaboratively to ensure college-wide consistency. The directors have responsibility for the academic, student, and administrative affairs on their individual campus and work with the campus leadership teams on their campus to promote student success, visibility, and inclusion in campus programs and activities. Directors communicate with department chairpersons to develop course schedules and to finalize faculty selections for courses. Together, with The Honors College faculty, plans for college-wide initiatives, programs, colloquia speakers, and enrichment opportunities are devised. Independently, directors advise students on academic, career, and transfer options; register students for courses; monitor students' academic eligibility status; and convene honors faculty meetings. In most

cases, the directors also serve as co-advisors to the campus chapters of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society and as coordinators of the Honors Recognition Awards Program ceremony for that campus.

Historically, Miami Dade College is organized by disciplines and schools. Each discipline is headed by a discipline convener or school director who reports to one academic dean and, thus, one campus president. Each discipline or school is under the auspices of one campus so that all faculty within specific disciplines, college wide, have input in defining program needs, competencies, and learning outcomes assessment procedures. This structure ensures that students experience consistency in resources and standards. Similarly, The Honors College is housed at the Wolfson Campus and is under the auspices of the Wolfson Campus President. Faculty who teach for The Honors College remain in their primary department and are allowed to select up to one-fifth of their load from The Honors College schedule. They must select honors courses prior to selecting courses in their assigned discipline department. Annually, two faculty members per campus are assigned to serve as Lead Faculty, and they act as liaisons between faculty and the campus director. They program speakers and presentations for campus colloquia and special events, initiate discussions with students and faculty regarding student performance, listen to student concerns, and chaperone student travel when necessary.

The general education curriculum is offered through a series of linked learning communities. Where applicable, honors college students are grouped into one of three cohort communities that foster collegiality, enhance the scholarly dynamics within the group, and establish a format for effective cooperative learning. Students are required to take six credits in leadership courses: three credits are designed to enhance their leadership qualities, to augment the development of personal skills, and to participate in one or more community service projects; and three credits are to research, review, and complete documents needed for the preparation of transfer applications to baccalaureate-granting institutions.

## **Budget**

The Honors College has a complex and substantial budget that includes funding designated for student scholarships, operational expenses, and student enrichment. The budget is administered in several different ways. Operational funds are dispensed from institutional funds and are allocated like those to other College departments. The

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Dean of The Honors College administers the funds and distributes them among the directors of the four campus locations.

The Honors Fellows Award is available to students admitted to The Honors College. This award is one of the College's most prestigious scholarships, covering the full cost of in-state tuition, fees, books, and a stipend. The Fellows Award is renewable for one additional year if The Honors College requirements are met.

### **Recruitment**

Several recruitment strategies are utilized by The Honors College to attract qualified first-year students. Directors at each campus are assigned to public and private high schools within the feeder pattern from which they recruit students. Directors have established relationships with high school counselors, and they schedule school visits each semester to speak with high school administrators, faculty, honors classes, and AP classes in auditoria setting or individually. Directors also attend community-sponsored college fairs for major universities, where they showcase The Honors College to students who may be considering other colleges and universities.

In addition, Miami Dade College has a team of recruiters that also visits high schools. The recruiters are very much aware of The Honors College. They promote it during recruitment campaigns and encourage interested students to apply. The Testing Departments maintain publicity materials, posters, and applications in their area. Students who score within the range of eligibility are referred to The Honors College.

The Honors College now recruits only first-time college students and emphasizes retention of the first-year students by encouraging them to maintain positive relationships with faculty members and by providing leadership roles on campus. The second-year students also serve as mentors for the first-year students.

### **Facilities**

Every effort is made to maintain uniformity throughout The Honors College because it functions as a unified entity that sustains a presence on four campuses. Because of the uniformity of the programming and the facilities and because MDC is a non-residential institution, students typically enroll at the campus most readily accessible from their residence.

Each campus has a designated suite for The Honors College that includes a reception area, campus director's office, a computer laboratory with approximately twenty computer stations, a peer-tutoring classroom, and a designated conference room. The conference room is used for applicant interviews, faculty meetings, advisement, registration, preparation of small-group projects, and presentations by university recruiters and community service agents. While the dean's office is officially located on the Wolfson Campus, each of the campuses has an office area designated for the dean as well as for visiting or itinerant faculty to hold counseling sessions with students and faculty.

## **Administrivia**

The Honors College is centralized through one campus, the Wolfson Campus. The program is administered by the Wolfson Campus President, The Honors College Dean, and the four directors who are housed individually on the four participating campuses. The support personnel on the campuses include a full-time secretary, part-time clerical workers, and one or more student assistants.

The Dean of The Honors College, as a member of the college's Academic Leadership Council comprised of all academic deans and the College Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, participates in the academic decision-making process for college-wide and campus matters. The Dean has college-wide responsibility for The Honors College and is the internal and external representative for The Honors College. Campus Directors report directly to the Dean of The Honors College. Each director works collaboratively with the campus administrators to ensure visibility and inclusion at that location. Campus directors cooperatively manage the campus programs and plan and implement honors curriculum, course schedules, and activities. Directors perform a myriad of tasks: coordination of curricular changes, development of course schedules each term, advisement and registration of students, and participation in campus events and programs as warranted.

Almost every department has some interaction with the students, faculty, and staff of The Honors College. For example, the Student Services area is involved in recruitment, financial aid, registration, admissions, testing, and student life. The administrative areas maintain equipment and remodel facilities, perform campus service functions, and expedite contracts. Media Relations and Public Affairs assist in marketing and promotional packaging. Community Service departments provide activities and contacts for service-learning projects. The

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list is endless. The Honors College staff maintains administrative relationships with the college and campus communities. The directors attend management meetings and organize the annual academic honors awards day on their respective campuses. Communication with the individual department chairs on a regular basis is an essential part of the director's responsibilities. This aids the smooth coordination of annual course offerings and faculty selections.

The Honors Advisory Committee consists of the Lead Faculty members, leadership instructors, directors, and dean. This group meets annually to review curriculum, evaluate the program, and discuss areas for improvement. A campus subgroup of this committee meets monthly during the academic year with faculty members to discuss curriculum, student progress, and areas for improvement. The only permanent members of this group are the dean and directors.

The Honors College is affiliated with several honors organizations, including the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC), the Florida Collegiate Honors Council, and the National African American Honors Program. Student organizations affiliated with The Honors College include four chapters of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society, Phi Beta Lambda (PBL) Business organization, and Model United Nations. Honors students demonstrate exemplary leadership skills as presidents of many campus organizations, such as Student Government Associations, local chapters of Phi Theta Kappa and Phi Beta Lambda for business majors, Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers Computer Society, Psi Beta National Honor Society in Psychology, Service for Peace, and the LIT Club. In addition, they are editors and writers for Miami Dade College's award-winning literary magazines (*Miambiance*, *Urbano*, and *Metromorphosis*) and the school newspapers (*Catalyst*, *Metropolis*, and *Falcon Times*).

Of notable mention is The Honors College's affiliation with the Intensive Study Program of the Salzburg Seminars in Austria. Annually, forty students, along with the presidents of campus student government associations, participate in a ten-day intensive symposium on global citizenship or the environment. Another twenty students travel to Washington, DC, to participate in the Honors Leaders on Leadership Seminar sponsored by the Washington Center, and yet another twenty travel to the natural environment of Narrow Ridge, Tennessee, for a weeklong residential program on sustainability and earth literacy.

One of the most significant aspects of The Honors College is the personalized attention given to students. Students are advised about their academic choices, progress, career goals, and transfer options. Each semester, the director guides students individually through the course selection process, approves schedule changes, and discusses post-Miami Dade College plans and possibilities.

## Demographics

In fall 2007, The Honors College admitted 300 freshmen, an increase of about 5% over the previous year. The office of Institutional Research prepared a demographic profile of those entering students, who were joining the nearly 200 sophomores continuing in the program. A complete report is currently posted on the Miami Dade College web site; however, highlights taken from that report are included here:

- A majority of students are Hispanic (79%), followed by Black Non-Hispanic (11%) and White Non-Hispanic (16%); sixty-five percent are female;
- The average age is 19; the youngest is 15 years old, and the oldest is 28 years old;
- Spanish is the native language of half of the students (51%);
- Students reported speaking over 22 different languages;
- More than half of the students are U.S. Citizens (59%); the remaining are from 23 different countries, with Cuba, Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, and Colombia being the most common;
- Most of the first-time-in-college students continued their education immediately after graduating from high school (96%);
- Average high school grade point average for admission is 4.28, and the average SAT score is 1263;
- A majority of the new students are graduates from Miami-Dade County public high schools (74%), with 45 different high schools represented; 9% are graduates from Miami-Dade private high schools, with 14 different schools represented, and 17% are graduates from out-of-county schools or were home-schooled;
- Students are listed as majoring in 43 different programs, with Pre-Bachelor of Arts (20%), Biology (20%), and Business Administration (10%) most frequently chosen.



## Essential Components of The Honors College

The foundation of The Honors College has six pillars: a challenging curriculum, a community of scholars, personalized counseling and advice on registration, career and transfer opportunities, competitive scholarships, and cultural enrichment. Mirroring the College's curriculum, the successful completion of an Associate in Arts degree requires 60 credits, of which 36 credits are general education courses and 24 credits are electives. The Honors College requires 36 credits in honors-designated courses.

Students in The Honors College enjoy academic and social interactions with college faculty and staff, perform a minimum requirement of twenty hours of community service annually, and attend enumerable cultural arts events. Through required Colloquia and the *Miami Business Roundtable* forums, they also meet prominent world figures, such as Lech Walesa, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Leonel Fernandez; medical professionals; politicians; and international business and entrepreneurial leaders. Students have attended the Latin Grammys, the Grand Prix, Cirque du Soleil, Miami Book Fair International, Miami International Film Festival, the Bodies Exhibition, the King Tutankhamen exhibit, symphonic concerts, operas, ballets, and art exhibitions. Students have participated in study travel experiences in Spain, France, Thailand, South Korea, Bangladesh, and China and have participated in regional and local honors conferences as well as conferences hosted by the National Collegiate Honors Council, National Institute of Organizational and Staff Development (NISOD), Phi Beta Lambda, and Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society. Students have often served as delegates to the National Model United Nations Conferences in New York, attended Leadership Seminars at the Washington Center in the nation's capital, and received certification for Business and Dining Etiquette Seminars with the Protocol Centre™. Over 200 students have completed the Salzburg Seminars in Austria. Individualized plans of study, interactions with mentors and discipline professionals, generous scholarships, travel-study opportunities, transfer counseling, and assistance with completing applications for university admission and scholarships, nationally and internationally, are benefits. While leadership opportunities, enrichment activities, and the Honors Fellows Award, which consists of the financial equivalent of in-state tuition, fees, a book allowance, and stipend, are significant benefits, students cite the scholarly community as the most important attribute of The Honors College.



## Curriculum

The Honors College's curriculum leads to the Associate in Arts degree with a minimum of 60 credits, 36 core and 24 electives. As part of their learning routine, the students investigate, analyze, summarize, persist, practice disciplinary techniques, prioritize their time, and seek help when necessary. Students enrolled in The Honors College must demonstrate mastery of the coursework by having fully comprehended the subject as evidenced through the delivery of oral and written presentations as well as by earned grades.

Revision of content in the leadership courses was undertaken in 2006. After realizing a need for consistency and greater skill development, faculty added specific competencies to the course syllabi that would require students to engage in and further strengthen their individual written, conversational, presentational, and debate skills. Additionally, students are required to complete a minimum of twenty hours in service learning correlated with a particular instructional subject. Beyond that, many students accumulate additional hours as volunteers. Through classroom discussions, participation in Colloquia, submission of reflection essays and journals, enrichment events, as well as national and international travel, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of their academic subjects and expected learning outcomes.

Within the 60 credit degree program, students are required to complete at least 36 honors credits that can be earned in one of three ways:

- A course offered through The Honors College and available only to Honors College students;
- An honors-extended course designed to pair regular students who qualify with a 3.5 GPA and Honors College students, who tend to select this option, particularly in their major disciplines;
- A regular MDC class that allows for completion of an Honors Option Project Contract (HOPS).

Students wishing to earn honors credit in a regular course may complete a contractual agreement with the professor within the first few weeks of the class. A mutual agreement describes the project and the terms of the honors assignment and must be approved by the student, professor, department chairperson, and campus honors college director. The student must attend all classes and complete the project.

Students outside The Honors College can only receive honors credit if they have a 3.5 GPA and enroll in an honors-extended course or

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request an honors contract (HOPS) from the campus director or course instructor. Honors courses are richer than regular courses because of the nature of the population. The students enrolled in these classes make classes interactive and truly engaging for both the students and the instructor. The sections are not intended to be extra work but more interactive, challenging, and engaging for all. Generally, project-based learning is encouraged for analytical classes.

### Learning Outcomes

Specific learning outcomes are expected of all students as a result of their matriculation in The Honors College. The outcomes have been identified and developed by a faculty committee, are confirmed through focus groups, and are reevaluated annually. They are consistent with outcomes established by the College. Stated in measurable terms, the expected learning outcomes are provided to faculty to ensure coverage and consistency, and they are assessed regularly. Results of the most recent assessments indicate the following:

- Students are meeting the expected outcomes within the two-year period;
- Portfolio content requirements should be more clearly defined and adhered to;
- Frequent and periodic reviews of portfolio and other forms of presentational skills should be implemented and assessed at designated time periods college wide.

### Retention

Another method of assessment includes an analysis of the retention rates. According to the *Annual Report for 2004–2005*, a major concern was the sharp attrition rate of students who were dismissed as a result of grades earned in a particular class on two of the campuses. Those students would have been included in this year's report; however, since they were dismissed before their second year, a significant enrollment decline was reflected in the 2004–2005 report. A management change and subsequent absence of a campus director may have had a negative impact on the retention rate at another campus. Further, factors other than academic grades may have contributed to students' leaving the program. These factors included repatriation; extended work hours; and personal, family, and health issues. The decline in second-year

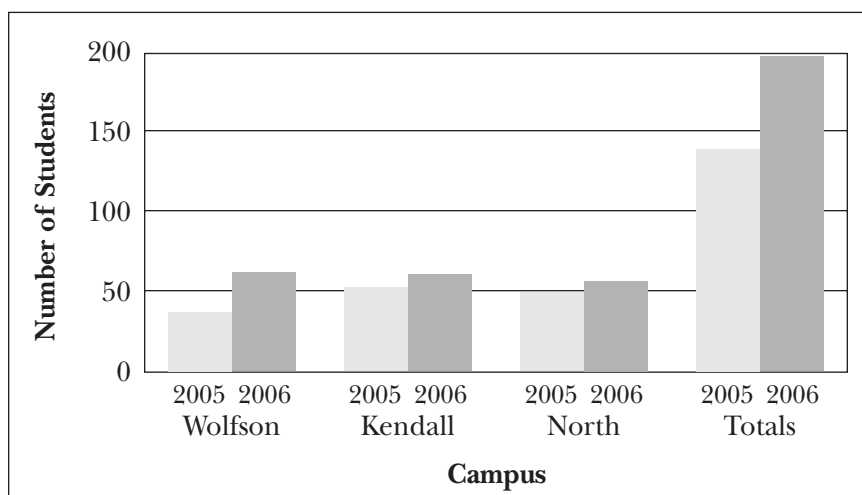
returning students is significant in that the overall retention rate for 2005 was less than in past years. The expectation, however, was that the number of first-year students would remain constant and that the projection of higher retention rate would closely align with past years. The chart below compares retention rates by campus for the past four years.

**Four-Year Cumulative Retention Patterns, 2003–2006**

| <b>Campus</b> | <b>2003</b> | <b>2004</b> | <b>2005</b> | <b>2006</b> |
|---------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| Wolfson       | 89%         | 91%         | 66%         | 90%         |
| Kendall       | 85%         | 92%         | 81%         | 92%         |
| North         | 85%         | 84%         | 74%         | 92%         |
| InterAmerican | N/A         | N/A         | N/A         | 87%         |
| <b>Totals</b> | <b>86%</b>  | <b>89%</b>  | <b>74%</b>  | <b>91%</b>  |

By campus, there appears to be a significant increase in retention as evidenced by the number of returning students in 2006. Wolfson Campus suffered the greatest loss in the number of students returning in 2005 but actually showed the greatest gain in retention in the number of students returning in 2006.

**Comparison Chart of Continuing Students in 2005 and 2006**



## Chapter 3: The Honors College in a Two-Year College Setting

Retention efforts were the focus of the Dean, campus directors, and Honors College faculty on each campus. In an effort to improve student retention, several strategies were implemented, including holding regular meetings to compare and discuss students' progress and intervention strategies. Faculty are more involved and provide greater support. For example, monthly faculty meetings are held to give faculty and the director insight into the progress of individual students. Both positive and negative academic behaviors are included in these discussions. Students identified as having problems academically or socially are discussed in conferences by two or three other professors. In most cases, students having problems with one professor or in one course also had problems in another. This strategy allows faculty to better determine the problem, to isolate the problem earlier, and to work in conjunction with the campus director in offering appropriate solutions to reverse the situation. Further, lab hour schedules are extensive, and peer tutors are assigned to help students. Students are also encouraged to visit faculty more frequently during office hours to discuss their academic progress and projects.

In addition to the positive student feedback provided by students to faculty, students also participate in focus group surveys that are conducted on each campus to ascertain the level of student satisfaction with The Honors College. Results of required student feedback questionnaires are analyzed, typically revealing that students are satisfied with the level of academic rigor and the environment, the context and content of course assignments, and the fact that faculty are knowledgeable about their subjects and demonstrate the relevance and relationships of the subject to life and learning. Students indicate appreciation for the out-of-classroom experiences, student/teacher interactions, and the personalized advisement and support extended through The Honors College.

According to focus group surveys held on each campus, students in general are pleased with their experience at The Honors College. They are especially pleased with the sense of community and family, with administrators and other students, and with the scholarship package.

### **Orientation, Colloquia and Certification**

Each year, a two-day Orientation Program is conducted for the incoming freshmen students. The program familiarizes students with the College and its operations and prepares them for a new and

challenging experience. Students interact with faculty, directors, and community leaders and are paired with sophomores who serve as peer mentors.

Biweekly colloquia are scheduled on each campus. They consist of lecture demonstrations on global issues or programs that feature interactive sessions for self-development. Each faculty group, along with the campus director, solicits input from students and identifies topics and speakers for the colloquia. Further, at least three events during the year are planned for college-wide gatherings of students: a Sports Field Day, the Holiday Gala, and one major program featuring a keynote speaker or showcasing exemplary presentations, research projects, or performances by students.

The Honors College continues to offer Faculty Certification workshops each term for faculty who desire to teach honors courses. Certified faculty members represent all disciplines and all campuses. Currently, nearly 280 faculty are certified college wide. Faculty may and do select courses on campuses other than their home campus. A biannual faculty retreat brings the MDC-wide honors faculty together in order to review and to plan curricular, programmatic, and creative initiatives for The Honors College. One example of an innovation resulting from these workshops is the “I Have a Dream” Project at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School in Miami’s inner-city community. Honors College students enrolled in an English 1101 course are taught off campus at the local elementary school. In addition to meeting the competencies and learning outcomes of this course, Honors College students serve as mentors and tutors to the elementary students in this urban school. After school, the elementary students are also allowed to observe the college classroom in session. The rewards of this exchange have generated enormous benefits to both groups.

While MDC honors students begin in a community college, they all plan to transfer to a four-year institution. Our records show that MDC Honors College students have transferred to and successfully graduated from Amherst College, Barnard College, Boston College, Columbia University, Cornell University, Georgetown University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Howard University, Middlebury College, New York University, Northwestern University, Savannah College of Art and Design, Smith College, Stanford University, Tufts University, University of Chicago, University of Texas at Austin, University of Virginia, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wesleyan University, Yale University, and all the universities in the state of Florida.

## **Challenges and Benefits of Becoming an Honors College**

Overcoming the negative perceptions of the general public continues to be one of the most serious challenges faced by honors administrators. High school counselors and some high school students believe that a community college education is second rate. An increasing number of community leaders, including public servants, government officials, doctors, judges, teachers, bank presidents, and public school administrators, have self-identified themselves as community college graduates, thus giving credibility to the positive experiences to be had in a community college. Further, graduating students who transferred from The Honors College to universities serve as successful models for the community college. The College also faces the challenge of retention with regard to the perception that some freshmen students have about the community college experience. Ignoring the transition process from high school, some students believe this to be the equivalent of a 13<sup>th</sup> grade and fail to perform academically and with seriousness of purpose.

Notwithstanding its challenges and ups and downs, creating an honors college program can be perhaps one of the most rewarding experiences in one's professional career. The benefits are innumerable and are enjoyed by all constituents. For the student, the primary benefits will be the financial scholarships awarded; the small, interactive classes; the scholarly community; and the enrichment opportunities. For faculty, the benefits include the assurance of an engaged student population, the challenge to apply new knowledge, and the additional opportunity for collegial interactions with other faculty. Administrators benefit with the return on investments or by having a proven number of successful graduates over a short period of time, a contented faculty, and exemplary student representatives. The entire community benefits from receiving over 10,000 hours in cumulative service-learning projects. Ultimately, the advantage to The Honors College and the community is the prestige of having provided accessibility to a local institution that prepares its academically gifted students at an affordable cost.

## APPENDIX:

### **Miami Dade Honors College and the NCHC Guidelines on the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College**

A quality honors educational experience can occur in a wide variety of institutional settings. When institutions embark on a transition from program to college, they face a transformational moment. Although no one model defines this transformation, the National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes the following characteristics as typical of a successful honors college.

- ***A fully developed honors college should incorporate the relevant characteristics of a fully developed honors program.*** Yes. Based on the criteria established by NCHC, The Honors College at MDC incorporates a challenging curriculum, smaller classes, substantial budget for operation and scholarships, impressive facilities, extensive extracurricular opportunities, sufficient staffing, collegial faculty, comprehensive recruitment and marketing initiatives, and other fundamental characteristics of a fully developed honors college.
- ***A fully developed honors college should exist as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate university structure.*** Yes. The Honors College at MDC, just as many other academic programs, is viewed as a separate school. With a presence on four campuses, it is a single unit reporting to a single dean at a single campus. Every effort is made to ensure consistency in its operation, curriculum, facilities, budgets, staffing, programs, and enrichment activities.
- ***The head of a fully developed honors college should be a dean, reporting directly to the chief academic officer of the institution and serving as a full member of the Council of Deans, if one exists. The dean should be a full-time, 12-month appointment.*** Yes. The Honors College is headed by a dean who serves with all deans as a full member of the College-wide Academic Leadership Council. All deans hold a 12-month appointment and report to a campus president.
- ***The operational and staff budgets of a fully developed honors college should provide resources at least comparable to other collegiate units of equivalent size.*** Yes. The Honors College's operational budget, compared to other college-wide units of equivalent size, may be perceived as greater because it provides operational costs for four sites, scholarships,

### Chapter 3: The Honors College in a Two-Year College Setting

enrichment activities, study travel, public relations, recruitment, and task points for faculty development. Based on the size of The Honors College, the budget for staff is considered comparable.

- ***A fully developed honors college should exercise increased coordination and control of departmental honors where the college has emerged out of such a decentralized system.*** Yes. All honors-designated courses, including honors college courses, courses for non-honors college students, honors contract courses, and honors recognition programs are coordinated through The Honors College. In almost every instance, campus directors are responsible for their individual campus Honors Day Convocation Programs and serve as co-advisors to Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society.
- ***A fully developed honors college should exercise considerable control over honors recruitment and admissions including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the honors college should be by separate application.*** Yes. The admissions process, which consists of a separate application and an interview, is handled through the main office of The Honors College at Wolfson Campus. While supported by the offices of the registrar, financial aid, admissions, testing, international students, and new student center, applicants are referred for admission. Annually, enrollment is limited to 75 students per campus.
- ***An honors college should exercise considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty.*** Yes. The Honors College controls its policies and curriculum; however, while all honors faculty must complete The Honors College's faculty certification workshop, the faculty selection process is conducted by the United Faculty of Miami Dade College (Union).
- ***The curriculum of a fully developed honors college should offer significant course opportunities across all four years of study.*** Not applicable. The Honors College of MDC is only available in the Associate in Arts Degree. The complete curriculum requires a minimum of 36 general education credits and 24 electives. Of the 60 credits necessary for graduation, students in The Honors College are required to complete a minimum of 36 (55%) credits in honors-designated courses, usually general education courses completed via nine credits per term. All students are required to maintain a portfolio.
- ***Where the home university has a significant residential component, the fully developed honors college should offer substantial honors residential opportunities.*** Not applicable. While MDC is a large, non-residential, eight-campus institution, it is considered a single institution with a



single mission. There are, however, many opportunities in The Honors College, through involvement in study travel, enrichment, service learning, and organizational memberships to realize the benefits of a scholarly community.

- ***The distinction awarded by a fully developed honors college should be announced at commencement, noted on the diploma, and featured on the student's final transcript.*** Yes. The Honors College graduates at each of the four different campuses lead the processional and receive regal recognition during the commencement ceremony. They are donned in purple stoles, medallions, honors cords, and additional paraphernalia (PTK, Jack Kent Cooke, All USA, New Century Scholars, and Rangel Scholars) where appropriate.
- ***Like other colleges within the university, a fully developed honors college should be involved in alumni affairs and development and should have an external advisory board.*** Not applicable. The Honors College does not have an external advisory board. Generally, ideas and recommendations are sanctioned by, generated from, and approved by the College President and the MDC Board of Trustees. The Honors College is currently involved in alumni affairs and development through the MDC Foundation. Students in The Honors College are frequently tapped for public relations and marketing campaigns. Additionally, second-year honors college students are invited to attend as guests, and simultaneously, first-year students are asked to serve as volunteers for the annual MDC HALL of FAME Alumni Gala. The Foundation Board has consented to sponsor an Alumni Speakers Series for colloquia throughout the year, featuring alumni who have achieved prominence around the globe in their field.
- ***The establishment of an Honors College should entail a significant enhancement of core physical facilities.*** Yes. The Honors College is headquartered at the Wolfson Campus; however, each campus has The Honors College located in a prominent and visible area with adequate facilities that include reception areas, offices, computer labs, peer-tutoring room, and a conference room.
- ***A fully developed honors college should offer an opportunity for an interdisciplinary degree program to supplement standard departmental majors.*** Not applicable. The Associate in Arts Degree is the only degree offered to The Honors College students at Miami Dade College. Students are exposed to a liberal arts curriculum and in addition, are allowed to complete courses suggested within areas of concentration that will allow for a seamless university transfer.



# **CHAPTER 4:**

## **THE MULTI-COLLEGIATE UNIVERSITY SETTING: KENT STATE UNIVERSITY**

**LARRY ANDREWS**  
**KENT STATE UNIVERSITY**

Honors colleges at four-year universities comprising multiple colleges—and often graduate programs—vary depending on institutional culture and traditions. They tend to be centralized, four-year programs, but in some cases they may be focused in disciplinary colleges either from the outset or following a two-year general education honors core. They are usually, but not always, open to all majors. Sometimes a university honors program may be functioning as a college in everything but name. Hence a disclaimer: Although the description of my own honors college that follows is, I believe, similar to that of many others in universities and expresses most of the newly formulated “Basic Characteristics of Honors Colleges,” it is not the only model for such settings.

### **Institutional Setting: Kent State University**

Kent State University is an eight-campus state university in Northeast Ohio with slightly selective admission at the Kent Campus. Amid a total of nearly 34,000 students across all campuses, the Kent Campus enrolls about 17,000 undergraduates and offers over 270 majors, 93 master's programs, and 21 doctoral programs. Honors at Kent State began in 1933 with a structure similar to that of others in that first wave of honors programs following Frank Aydelotte's initiative at Swarthmore College in the 1920s: guided independent reading and a senior thesis. Building on a continuous tradition, an expanded university-wide Honors Program was formed in 1960, and our Honors College was established shortly thereafter in 1965 as one of the first three or so in the country (following Oregon in 1963 and Michigan State in 1964).

The context for the creation of an Honors College at Kent State was a decade of concerted growth through the establishment of a number of Ph.D. programs and an ambitious research agenda. Following its

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beginnings as a normal school in 1910 through its creation of a College of Arts and Sciences and attainment of university status in the 1930s, the institution was ready to move into competition with other doctoral universities in the state in the 1960s. Many new faculty members with a research orientation were hired; just in my own English Department, I was one of eight new faculty hired in 1969 as part of building the fledgling doctoral program. Establishing an Honors College seemed a natural concomitant on the undergraduate level of the new emphasis on research prestige. The original proposal also argued the need for identity and community among superior students previously scattered among departments and a status commensurate with the value the university placed on nurturing the abilities of such students. What followed in short order was an expansion to a four-year curriculum, including a cornerstone sequence; honors residence halls; a scholarship allocation; independent admissions decisions; an office; and an expanded staff.

### College Characteristics

In its 43 years of college status, the Honors College has steadily grown in all ways—enrollment, staff, funding, space, reputation—and enjoyed reasonably strong support from the upper administration, colleges, and departments. We hosted the NCHC annual conference in 1978, and the previous four deans and I have been active in the organization. The current structure of the college includes a centralized, comprehensive curriculum and support for about 1,160 students at the Kent Campus and to some extent for an additional 200 or so students at five satellite honors programs at our regional campuses. Our mission is to recruit, challenge, and support students of high ability and motivation for the university. Our pedagogy, our advising system, and our living-learning community serve as models for many of the values represented in the university's strategic plan, such as academic excellence, engaged learning, undergraduate research, experiential learning, and service to the community. Through the years the Honors College has also taken on a significant number of non-honors duties for the university, such as supervision of the general education, diversity, and writing-intensive requirements; the University Teaching Council, which funds a conference and teaching development travel and projects and selects non-tenure-track teaching award recipients; the dual-enrollment program for high school students; the artist/lecture series; Honors Week; AP/IB score assessment and processing; student preparation for prestigious external fellowship competitions; and leadership for institutionalizing undergraduate research.

## Operational Characteristics

The **staff structure** of the Honors College comprises a dean who is a full-time administrator, five professional staff members, 2.75 clerical staff, two graduate assistants, and a shared development officer. We have no faculty of our own, but the dean occasionally teaches an honors course on a voluntary basis. The professional staff, graduate assistants, and dean serve as advisors to the students, who enjoy priority registration. Honors advising appointments are mandatory before students can register, and currently the advising loads of the full-time professional staff are stretched to the limit at about 170 students apiece, partly as a result of two record-breaking freshman classes of over 300 and an increase in retention. Staff members have informal coordinating titles encompassing their major responsibilities: Recruitment, Scholarships, and the artist/lecture series; Admissions, Study Abroad, and AP/IB analysis; Curriculum, Thesis, Budget, and Office Supervision; Advising and Communication; Alumni Relations and Student Affairs. An advisory Policy Council consists of 12 faculty members and 12 students. Collegial decision-making and professional development support are hallmarks of our workplace culture.

The **curriculum** is designed to engage the students in honors work every year, with an overall requirement of eight courses/experiences. The majority of the 60–70 sections per semester are honors versions of the university's general education requirement courses. Graduation "with Honors" requires completion of a 10-credit-hour senior thesis; graduation as an "Honors College Scholar" recognizes completion of the eight courses. The only specifically required course is the two-semester Freshman Honors Colloquium (8 credit hours), which replaces freshman English and has a 37-year history of success. To remain accessible to all majors, we have learned flexibility; we are more about options and opportunities than about rigid requirements. The curriculum also includes interdisciplinary seminars, courses in majors, mixed honors/non-honors sections, add-on contracts, individual investigations, a community service option, senior portfolio, and learning contracts for study abroad and other off-campus study programs.

Honors **faculty** members are supplied by their departments, which consider honors teaching a university value, a morale-booster for faculty, and an opportunity to recruit majors. A fund of \$56,677 is budgeted to share with departments for providing courses, averaging about \$500 per section. The fund also allows for the purchase of a new course or the rescue of an existing but threatened course, usually at higher cost.

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Many faculty members have long experience in honors; most are tenure-track, but a good number are full-time, non-tenure-track faculty. We have a say in faculty selection and can exercise veto power or cancel a course if a suitable faculty member is unavailable. Faculty members new to honors have a one-hour orientation session with the curriculum coordinator and dean that includes key points from the Faculty Handbook. Faculty development workshops are held every year, and Freshman Colloquium instructor meetings are held each semester; both focus on specific issues as well as having an open agenda for discussion. Instructors are allowed modest financial support for field trips, class food, or DVD purchase for our library. A small allocation from the university library also encourages faculty to order materials of wider interest. Teaching is evaluated through a special honors form with open-ended questions in addition to the mandated university form. For those who consent, summaries of the evaluations are placed in binders in the lobby for students to consult. Instructors also complete an evaluation form about the class and the student performance. For 18 years we have presented a Distinguished Honors Faculty Award based on student nominations.

The 2007–08 honors **budget** is about \$550,000, of which personnel salaries consume a little over \$500,000, the remaining accommodating current expenses. An additional \$1.2 million is available from various sources to award in scholarships each year. The aggregate total of scholarship endowments is about \$1.1 million, yielding over \$50,000 per year in income. These endowments have been built up gradually over two decades, some of them created out of accumulated small- to medium-sized donations. Our largest single donor has, in stages, established an endowment of \$485,000 for study-abroad and thesis scholarships. Fundraising appeals have been directed primarily to our 5,000 alumni although we have also received, and continue to seek, modest underwriting support for special projects from the local business community. Attentive stewardship, good alumni relations, and special projects such as the adopt-a-thesis-student program have, with the considerable help of development officers and the phone center, produced significant growth over the years. An Advisory Board helps with communications and fundraising.

The bulk of the honors allocation for **scholarships** is expended on renewable scholarships for incoming freshmen as part of our recruiting mission. About two thirds of these students receive these scholarships, which range over several levels from \$1,500 to full in-state tuition, currently at about \$8,000 per year, with an additional four May 4 Memorial

full-ride scholarships. The university's Founders Scholars program also serves our students well. Only a few of the freshman scholarships, such as the Creative Artist Awards or the physics scholarship, are restricted by major. Other honors scholarship support is designated for transfer students, minorities, study abroad and other off-campus programs, and thesis work. The endowed study-abroad scholarships offer \$1,500 in addition to the normal merit scholarship we offer for that purpose, typically \$500 per semester. The thesis fellowships offer \$1,000, and increased in number from 9 to 18 in 2006–2007.

Having enjoyed residence halls and office space in varying capacity since the 1960s, the Honors College achieved its first consolidated **living/learning center** in 1989 with the help of a state Program Excellence Award grant. This center included three residence halls, lounge, library, computer lab, and offices. Another milestone came in 2006 with our move to a centrally located, newly constructed facility attached to a residence hall complex. It comprises a 230-bed, 100% honors residence hall plus part of a second attached hall, and a 10,000-square-foot center that includes four seminar rooms, library/lounge, kitchen, offices, workroom, and a spacious reception area, as well as ample storage.

Keeping in touch with our **alumni** is always challenging, but the strong bonds between students and honors advisors and faculty often prompt alumni to take the initiative in keeping us up to date on their contact information and accomplishments. We routinely send those who are two years and five years out from graduation a "Where Are You Now?" query, and periodically we conduct a comprehensive alumni survey. Our Honors Alumni Chapter is active, makes connections with current students, sponsors events and service projects, and has won an award for outstanding chapter. We bestow a Distinguished Honors Alumni Award each spring at our annual Senior Honors Brunch.

Spreading the good news about honors occurs partly through annual **publications**. These include *Colloquy*, an anthology of best writing from the Freshman Colloquium; *On Our Own*, a booklet of reports from all individualized projects such as independent study, community service, study abroad, conference presentations; and *Adventures in Research and Creativity*, a thesis profile booklet. These publications are distributed to administrators, trustees, advisory board, faculty, students, and donors and are displayed at recruiting events. Other stories about honors appear in website pages, brochures, fundraising case statements, newspapers, and annual assessment plan reports.

### **Benefits of Being Collegiate**

Although I began teaching in honors 35 years ago and served on our policy council before becoming the fifth dean for 14 years, the immediate results of gaining college status in 1965 now seem shrouded in the mists of time. Clearly the increase in independence and prestige was a major benefit. No longer under the aegis of the College of Arts and Sciences, the program gained a dean reporting directly to the Provost and participating with equality on the council of deans. As mentioned earlier, college status also brought gains in curriculum, scholarship funds, facilities, residence halls, enrollment, and staff.

At the same time, as a college transcending the disciplinary boundaries of the other colleges, the Honors College became an attractive site for a gradually increasing number of university-wide responsibilities. The earliest of these was the high-school early-admission program, later a state dual enrollment program; over the decades this responsibility became increasingly complex and even onerous, until we were relieved of this duty in 2006. Shortly after the tragedy of the May 4, 1970, shootings on campus, an experimental curriculum available to all students was established and placed in honors. This program has actually decreased in size and complexity in the years since. When the university devised a new general education program in 1982, honors was viewed as an unbiased home for it following the turf wars that went into creating the course menu. This program responsibility grew in the late 1990s with additional Diversity and Writing-Intensive curriculum requirements for all students to the point that it is now a major responsibility of the dean.

Also in the 1990s we voluntarily undertook sponsorship of the University Teaching Council, coordination of external fellowships preparation, and other duties mentioned earlier, only a few of which have recently been negotiated away from us. Such non-honors duties consume some energy in clerical and professional staff support. In some ways these added assignments enhanced the visibility, authority, and prestige of the College, but resources were not always adequate to the tasks, especially as honors enrollment and projects increased without a growth in staff in 25 years. Thus a direct effect of college status has been growth in service to the institution through an unusual number of non-honors responsibilities—sometimes taken on to save the costs of new administrative offices—that we have accepted as good citizens but not without ambivalence.

The only loss following college status has been a diminishing sense of community, but this is more the result of enrollment growth than



college status per se. We have nearly quadrupled our enrollment since achieving college status with about 300 students. Achieving a sense of intimate community, even with a living/learning facility, is no longer possible. As is the case of most large-university honors programs and colleges, community is achieved through subcultures defined by interests, classes, living space, majors, and even campus organizations. Our new facility has revitalized our community simply because honors students are seeing more of each other in a 100% honors residence hall, 25 classes in our four seminar rooms, and a spacious library/lounge that, because of our central location, is a hangout between classes. Our new student organization has been planning various social events, but our numbers are simply too large to engage students fully in single events or activities. Our longing for the small community of 100 or so students, all engaged and bonding with each other, is fulfilled now only in our five regional campuses programs, where such communities thrive.

On the other hand, the porous boundaries of our community at the Kent Campus help deflect charges of elitism and the perception that honors is a separatist enclave. We reflect the diversity of the large university, and we nurture our students' participation in whatever campus community or honors subculture to which they wish to attach themselves. Thus we have compensated to some extent for the inevitable loss of intimacy as we have undergone the typical transformation into a large honors college.

In sum, the gains from college status have far outweighed the losses.

## **Challenges and Frustrations**

I have to say that our Honors College has enjoyed considerable prestige and support at our institution, heightened in 2006 by our move to the center of campus in a new facility. For the purpose of recruitment, scholarship funding has been increased every year. We have no difficulty securing a large, sometimes even too large, freshman class. Enrollment growth has stretched staff advising loads to the limit. The challenge of maintaining an outstanding honors college amid so many non-honors duties has been partially alleviated by some recent shifts of responsibility, with more in the offing. Ongoing challenges of diversifying the student population, keeping in touch with our alumni, telling our story externally, and fundraising require ever more staff time to be as successful as we wish. In a curriculum with many options and a way to keep our students engaged with honors until graduation, we have

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difficulty persuading as many students to undertake the senior thesis as we would like. Despite offering financial support for off-campus study, we have difficulty in persuading more Northeast Ohio students to study abroad. Current-expense money is tight, but with care we are able in some years to carry forward any remaining balance in our budget.

A particular need currently is a budget increase in our fund to allocate to departments for courses. Several key courses have been lost or endangered, and mounting new interdisciplinary, team-taught courses as part of normal faculty workload is difficult. Hiring more faculty remains a high university priority, but this is a slow process, and some departments are suffering a shortage of the sort of faculty we especially desire for honors teaching. A significant challenge is the dean's need to spend more time in fundraising and donor stewardship.

Our vision for the future is a matter of change in degree, not kind. We will work to expand our endowment, to increase the number of students studying abroad and completing a thesis, to recruit more minority and international students, to increase our support for departments, to stabilize enrollment, and to heighten the spirit of community among students, faculty, and staff. Our long experience, the longevity of our staff members' tenure, the value bestowed on us by the institution, and above all the success of our students form a solid base upon which we will continue to build. We find that our experience demonstrates convincingly the value of college status at a large, multi-collegiate university.

## APPENDIX:

### **Kent State and the NCHC Guidelines on the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College**

A quality honors educational experience can occur in a wide variety of institutional settings. When institutions embark on a transition from program to college, they face a transformational moment. Although no one model defines this transformation, the National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes the following characteristics as typical of a successful honors college.

- *A fully developed honors college should incorporate the relevant characteristics of a fully developed honors program.* Yes.
- *A fully developed honors college should exist as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate university structure.* Yes.
- *The head of a fully developed honors college should be a dean, reporting directly to the chief academic officer of the institution and serving as a full member of the Council of Deans, if one exists. The dean should be a full-time, 12-month appointment.* Yes.
- *The operational and staff budgets of a fully developed honors college should provide resources at least comparable to other collegiate units of equivalent size.* Yes.
- *A fully developed honors college should exercise increased coordination and control of departmental honors where the college has emerged out of such a decentralized system.* Not applicable; the College did not emerge from a decentralized program.
- *A fully developed honors college should exercise considerable control over honors recruitment and admissions including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the honors college should be by separate application.* Yes.
- *An honors college should exercise considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty.* Yes.
- *The curriculum of a fully developed honors college should offer significant course opportunities across all four years of study.* Yes.
- *The curriculum opportunities of the fully developed honors college should be relevant to all the undergraduate majors and degrees of the institution.* Yes.

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- *The curriculum requirements of a fully developed honors college should constitute at least 20% of a student's degree program. An honors thesis or project should be required.* Yes, but the thesis is optional.
- *Where the home university has a significant residential component, the fully developed honors college should offer substantial honors residential opportunities.* Yes, we have our own residence hall.
- *The distinction awarded by a fully developed honors college should be announced at commencement, noted on the diploma, and featured on the student's final transcript.* Yes. Students are recognized at commencement and on the final transcript, but not on the diploma. We have a separate certificate for students completing an honors thesis.
- *Like other colleges within the university, a fully developed honors college should be involved in alumni affairs and development and should have an external advisory board.* Yes. We have our own alumni chapter, a shared development officer, and an external advisory board.
- *The establishment of an Honors College should entail a significant enhancement of core physical facilities.* Yes. We have independent office space that has grown over 42 years.
- *A fully developed honors college should offer an opportunity for an interdisciplinary degree program to supplement standard departmental majors.* No. But such a program is available elsewhere on campus.

# **CHAPTER 5: THE FREESTANDING HONORS COLLEGE: WILKES HONORS COLLEGE AT FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY**

**NANCY KASON POULSON  
FLORIDA ATLANTIC UNIVERSITY**

## **Institutional Setting**

Florida Atlantic University is one of eleven public universities in the state of Florida and is classified as Research Intensive. The Florida Board of Governors and FAU's Board of Trustees provide governance to the institution. When it welcomed its first students in 1964, given the strong articulation agreements with area community colleges, FAU was the first university in the United States to offer only upper-division and graduate programs. By 1984, however, the rapid population growth in south Florida necessitated providing access to freshmen and sophomores as well. FAU is a regional university that serves a six-county area (Broward, Indian River, Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach, and St. Lucie Counties), which spans over 140 miles and has a population of more than five million people.

The main campus of FAU is located in Boca Raton, but through the years the university has expanded and now has seven campuses throughout the region. The university has ten different colleges: the Graduate College; the Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters; the College of Engineering and Computer Science; the Barry Kaye College of Business; the College of Education; the Charles E. Schmidt College of Science; the Charles E. Schmidt College of Biomedical Sciences; the College of Architecture, Urban and Public Affairs; the Christine E. Lynn College of Nursing; and the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College. FAU offers 82 undergraduate programs and 93 graduate programs to over 25,000 students reflecting the cultural diversity of its service region. Although most colleges offer programs on several different campuses, the Wilkes Honors College is located exclusively on the John D. MacArthur campus in Jupiter.

## Chapter 5: The Freestanding Honors College

In 1991, prior to the creation of the Honors College, FAU established a lower-division honors program based on the Boca Raton campus but open to students from any of FAU's colleges. The Honors Scholars program has a competitive application process and accepts a maximum of 35 students each year.

The genesis of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College of Florida Atlantic University is unusual. Unlike most honors programs, the Honors College at Florida Atlantic University was not created out of a faculty, Provost's, or President's initiative. Rather, the Florida State Legislature created it and provided over a period of several years special legislative funding that went into the university's base budget. The idea for the creation of the freestanding Honors College came from a campus vice president at FAU, Bob Huckshorn, and a Florida State senator, Ken Jenne, who were alarmed by the number of academically talented Florida high school seniors who were leaving the state for their undergraduate education. A historical analysis of the statistics indicates that of every four Florida high school graduates who enroll in universities outside of Florida, only one returns to the state after college.

The concern over this brain drain motivated Huckshorn and Jenne to propose the creation of a special honors college that would offer a challenging educational curriculum unlike the honors opportunities that were available at the other public universities in the state at that time. The proposal was given money for a planning study during the 1995 legislative session, and additional start-up funding was allocated in 1996. During the 1996–97 academic year, the university advertised for the Honors College's Founding Dean, and hired William P. Mech in the fall of 1997. Mech immediately began to hire admissions staff and recruited the five founding faculty who started in the fall of 1998 when the new campus was still under construction and without students. Their main task was to design a creative undergraduate curriculum that would be attractive to academically talented students and provide them with a unique educational context that would engage them in undergraduate research.

### College Characteristics

The Wilkes Honors College is a stand-alone college that is on an equal footing with the other nine colleges within FAU. The college's chief administrative officer is the Dean, who reports directly to the Provost. The Dean is an equal participant in the Council of Deans and in the Provost's Council.

The Wilkes Honors College is still growing. When the college welcomed its inaugural class of 72 students in the fall of 1999, there were 16 tenure-track faculty members and an Associate Dean. For the fall of 2006, we anticipated that the college would have approximately 400 students and 36 faculty members. Within the next few years, the college will reach full build-out and have over 500 students and about 50 faculty to maintain a 10:1 student to faculty ratio.

The Wilkes Honors College's mission statement, which is located on the college's web site <<http://www.honorscollege.edu>>, affirms:

The purpose of the Honors College is to offer students a liberal arts education of the highest intellectual and scholarly standard. As a public institution, we open our doors to those seeking a challenging, yet affordable, learning experience equal to that of the most selective colleges and universities. Small class size, rigorous requirements, and an emphasis on interdisciplinary study anchor a community of dedicated faculty and a talented, diverse student body. We value our special responsibility of public service, and recognize that this responsibility extends not only to the people of Florida but also to the nation, the global community, and the natural environment.

In addition, the faculty created Guiding Principles for the college:

- To offer a liberal arts education of the highest quality
- To attract outstanding students from a wide array of backgrounds
- To build a dedicated and diverse faculty recognized for its excellence in teaching and research
- To link teaching, research, and service in order to convey, expand, and apply knowledge
- To promote breadth of knowledge, encourage depth of understanding, and bridge disciplinary divides
- To respect differences and recognize their educational value
- To cultivate critical thinking in the classroom and beyond
- To introduce students to the challenge of original research and discovery
- To produce global citizens through international, area, and environmental studies

The Wilkes Honors College's mission statement and guiding principles complement the university's vision for the future: "Florida Atlantic

## Chapter 5: The Freestanding Honors College

University aspires to be recognized as a university of first choice for excellent and accessible undergraduate and graduate education, distinguished for the quality of its programs across multiple campuses, emulated for its collaborations with regional partners and internationally acclaimed for its contributions to creativity and research.”  
<<http://www.fau.edu/strategicplan/vision.php>>

### Administration

When the Wilkes Honors College opened for classes in the fall of 1999, the administration of the college was handled by the Dean and the Associate Dean. As the college grew, in May 2001, we created three Co-Chairs to assist with administrative duties; their responsibilities were divided by disciplines: Humanities, Social Sciences, and Natural Sciences. As the college continued to grow, we added two twelve-month, full-time, out-of-unit Chairs.

The college also has its own Office of Admissions, separate from Florida Atlantic University's Office of Admissions. Although the Wilkes Honors College's Office of Admissions collaborates with the university's admissions, we do our own recruiting to attract the academically talented students we seek to matriculate. Our Director of Admissions has four admissions professionals who are assigned to different regions of the state, visit high schools, participate in college fairs, and handle communications with prospective students from their assigned regions. In addition to the university's application, students are required to complete a supplemental application to the Wilkes Honors College that includes two letters of evaluation, a graded writing sample, and a résumé. Two clerical staff members monitor the completion of each application, which is reviewed by an Admissions Committee.

In addition to the seven Admissions professionals, the Wilkes Honors College also has a Director of Academic Affairs, a Director of Student Affairs, a Budget Director, and a Director of Development whose position is split between the college and the campus. We have an Assistant Director for the Biology Lab and an Assistant Director for the Chemistry Lab, as well as four support staff in the Dean's Office.

The college is fortunate to be able to take advantage of the professional resources located on the Jupiter campus in areas such as the library, financial aid, financial services, computer support services, campus recreation, student government, health services, career counseling, students with disabilities, international student services, registrar, and cashier, among others.



## Faculty

Another hallmark characteristic of the Wilkes Honors College is that, unlike traditional honors programs that borrow faculty from disciplinary departments and are not involved in the hiring process, all of the faculty at the Wilkes Honors College are hired, promoted, and tenured in the college. To be clear, our faculty do not belong to a disciplinary department nor do they teach non-honors college courses. Just as in the other colleges at FAU, our faculty developed college guidelines for annual evaluation, third-year review, and promotion and tenure. The tenured faculty comprise the college's promotion and tenure committee, and after that committee evaluates candidates' portfolios each year, successful candidates at the college level are then sent on to the university-wide promotion and tenure committee. Not having departments within the college facilitates creative interdisciplinary curricular initiatives.

## Curriculum

The curriculum offered at the Wilkes Honors College has several unique components. When the college was first conceived, the early consultants recognized that offering the wide breadth of curricular offerings available throughout the university would be impossible and recommended that the honors college focus on offerings in the liberal arts and sciences. Therefore, the Wilkes Honors College does not offer programs in engineering, nursing, business, education, architecture, and urban and public affairs.

All of the students who attend the Wilkes Honors College receive a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences. The curriculum is divided into an interdisciplinary core that has conceptual areas such as "Culture, Ideas and Values" and "Social and Behavioral Analysis," in addition to disciplinary components such as Mathematics and Literature. Additional graduation requirements include courses in Environmental Studies, International Studies, Foreign Language, Writing in the Disciplines, and special team-taught Interdisciplinary Critical Inquiry Seminars on topics such as "How and Why We Age" taught by a psychologist and a biologist; "Literature and Imperialism" taught by an English literature professor and a historian; "Ethnomathematics" taught by an anthropologist and a mathematician; and "Da Vinci: the artist, the scientist" taught by an art historian and a cell biologist.

## Chapter 5: The Freestanding Honors College

In addition to the core and graduation requirements, students select a concentration in a particular field of study. They may choose from traditional disciplines offered such as Anthropology, Biology, Chemistry, Economics, English, Mathematics, Philosophy, Physics, Political Science, Psychology, or Spanish. Another option is to choose one of the interdisciplinary concentrations such as American Studies, Pre-Med, Environmental Studies, International Studies, Latin American Studies, Law and Society, Interdisciplinary History, Interdisciplinary Mathematics, or Women's Studies. Students also have the ability to design an individual concentration in which they may combine several areas into a coherent program of study with the approval of a faculty committee. Examples of individually designed concentrations include: "Law and Economics," "Medical Chemistry," "Twentieth Century Intellectual Traditions," Psychobiology," and "Law and the Environment." All students are required to write a senior thesis, which is a collaborative effort between the student and the major professor, and has already resulted in the publication of numerous co-authored articles.

### **Budget**

The State of Florida Legislature approved the creation of the new honors college and agreed to provide stair-step funding to Florida Atlantic University's base budget over a period of several years in order to get the college up and running. When the Wilkes Honors College welcomed its inaugural class of students, the college's 1999–2000 budget was approximately \$3.5 million dollars, with close to \$2.5 million designated for salaries and benefits. Since that time, the college has relied on enrollment growth dollars and the growth of the endowment to fund new faculty lines. The college's 2006–2007 budget will be approximately \$4.9 million, with close to \$4 million for salaries and benefits.

### **Endowment**

From its beginning, the Honors College established that every student who matriculated in the college would be given a scholarship based on the strength of his or her academic record. As a result, the college raised funds for a scholarship endowment. In 2001, the Honors College received a major gift to create the Henry Morrison Flagler scholarships, which are awarded to five incoming freshmen each year.

There are a total of twenty Flagler scholars at any given time. The scholarship pays for any tuition that is not covered by Florida Bright Futures, four years of room and board, and four summer enrichment experiences including an Outward Bound experience the summer before the freshman year, a non-profit internship the summer before the sophomore year, a corporate internship the summer before the junior year, and a study abroad program the summer before the senior year. The value of the Flagler scholarship exceeds \$55,000 during the four years.

In 2001, the Honors College also received a major donation to name the college the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College, most of which went to the scholarship endowment. Since 1999, the college has raised approximately \$26 million. During the 2006–2007 academic year, the Wilkes Honors College will award close to \$1.2 million in scholarships, with over \$900,000 of that figure funded by the endowment.

The Wilkes Honors College established an external Advisory Board that is comprised of twenty-five distinguished members of the local community. The Advisory Board meets once a month during the academic year. The mission of the Advisory Board is to promote awareness of the college to the community, to develop interaction between the college and the area community, and to encourage measures that will affect the continuing success of the college. Among the most active subcommittees are the Speakers Forum committee, which brings high-profile outside speakers for fundraising events, and the Community Relations committee, which hosts discussion dinners with faculty and community members as well as promotes the college to local legislators and town councils.

## **Physical Plant**

About the same time that the State of Florida Legislature authorized the creation of the new honors college at Florida Atlantic University, ground was being broken to build a new FAU campus on a 135-acre parcel in Jupiter that was donated by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. The campus was designed with a master plan to harmoniously complement Abacoa, the New Urbanism development in which it is located. Abacoa is anchored by Roger Dean Stadium, which now is the spring training facility for the Florida Marlins and the Saint Louis Cardinals, along with a town center that boasts restaurants, shops, and condominiums. Several residential neighborhoods border the campus with townhouses as well as single-family homes, and across the street from the campus is a public golf course.

## Chapter 5: The Freestanding Honors College

The first phase of campus construction included a campus administration building with a 250-person auditorium, a library and classroom building, an Honors College residence hall, a dining commons and a specially designed 20,000 square-foot building that was built for the Honors College and houses the Dean's suite, a conference room, thirty-one faculty offices, six sixteen-person classrooms, a chemistry/physics lab, a biology lab, a research lab, a computer lab, and a suite of offices for Honors College Admissions.

A second Honors College residence hall opened in the fall of 2001, and the dining commons was expanded. Thanks to a private donation to the Honors College endowment, in 2002, we opened a two-building fine arts complex that totals 10,000 square feet. One building houses the Hibel Museum of Art, and the other is the Hibel Fine Arts building with studio art classrooms and faculty offices.

The campus has continued to grow significantly. FAU opened a new College of Education Building and a new Library building in 2004. The former Library and Classroom building became the Student Services building and is the location of the Burrow, a student lounge, bookstore, and cyber café with recreation amenities.

As part of the Wilkes naming gift, in 2005, the Wilkes Honors College opened the 10,000-square foot Wilkes Psychology building, which contains a classroom, psychology labs, and faculty offices.

Also in 2005, the Lifelong Learning Society opened a complex of buildings including a 500-seat auditorium, and the first 40,000 square foot science building was opened to be the temporary home of the Scripps Research Institute. A second science building opened in the fall of 2006 and will also be the temporary headquarters of the Scripps Research Institute as their permanent campus is built on 30 acres of FAU's Jupiter campus. When Scripps vacates the current facilities, Wilkes Honors College scientists will occupy a significant portion of the state-of-the-art science building.

### **Benefits of Being Collegiate**

Since the Wilkes Honors College did not evolve out of an existing honors program, clearly nothing has been lost from a preexisting program. The advantages of being a stand-alone college are tremendous in that we have total autonomy over hiring decisions and the curriculum. That all our students earn the same degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences, gives our faculty and students great flexibility to include interdisciplinary courses, or special courses offered by visiting Fulbright scholars, as well as to incorporate courses that a degree

in a given discipline could not accommodate. Being a college also provides a clearly articulated focus for fundraising efforts.

## **Challenges, Frustrations, and Aspirations**

The Wilkes Honors College offers students the atmosphere of a small, highly selective liberal arts and sciences college with small classes, a challenging curriculum with opportunities for research, and the ability to work with an outstanding faculty. At the same time, our students enjoy the resources of a major research university.

One of the greatest challenges that the Wilkes Honors College faces is related to its being a part of a regional university with seven campuses. Since the college is not located on the main campus, we do not have easy access to many of the amenities available in Boca Raton. For example, we currently have two residence halls on the Jupiter campus that house only Wilkes Honors College students. We have needed a third residence hall for several years, but will probably not be able to build it until 2008 at the earliest. Were we located on the main campus in Boca Raton, housing could have built a multi-tower residence hall that would house all Wilkes Honors College students, and non-honors students could occupy empty suites as the college approaches full-build out in subsequent years.

Another challenge is growing the endowment. Our goal is to provide a merit-based scholarship to each student who matriculates in the Wilkes Honors College and to maintain the same percentage of the overall cost of attendance that the scholarships covered in 1999. To do this, the college must raise an additional \$50 million during the next ten years. Were the college to pursue chaired professorships, eminent scholar positions, or enhanced travel funding, additional monies would need to be raised.

Within the next several years, the college should reach a maximum enrollment of approximately 500 students and have about 50 faculty members. As Florida Atlantic University grows, the Provost may wish to expand honors education to other campuses in order to involve students and faculty from other colleges. The Wilkes Honors College continues to be at the forefront of honors education as a model for the stand-alone honors college.

## APPENDIX:

### **The Wilkes Honors College and the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College**

A quality honors educational experience can occur in a wide variety of institutional settings. When institutions embark on a transition from program to college, they face a transformational moment. Although no one model defines this transformation, the National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes the following characteristics as typical of a successful honors college.

- *A fully developed honors college should incorporate the relevant characteristics of a fully developed honors program.* Yes.
- *A fully developed honors college should exist as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate university structure.* Yes.
- *The head of a fully developed honors college should be a dean, reporting directly to the chief academic officer of the institution and serving as a full member of the Council of Deans, if one exists. The dean should be a full-time, 12-month appointment.* Yes.
- *The operational and staff budgets of a fully developed honors college should provide resources at least comparable to other collegiate units of equivalent size.* Yes.
- *A fully developed honors college should exercise increased coordination and control of departmental honors where the college has emerged out of such a decentralized system.* Not applicable; the College did not emerge from a decentralized program.
- *A fully developed honors college should exercise considerable control over honors recruitment and admissions including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the honors college should be by separate application.* Yes.
- *An honors college should exercise considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty.* Yes.
- *The curriculum of a fully developed honors college should offer significant course opportunities across all four years of study.* Yes. All 120 credits may be taken in the Honors College.
- *The curriculum opportunities of the fully developed honors college should be relevant to all the undergraduate majors and degrees of the institution.* No. At the present time the curriculum is limited to the liberal arts and sciences.

- *The curriculum requirements of a fully developed honors college should constitute at least 20% of a student's degree program. An honors thesis or project should be required.* Yes. Students may do 100% of their degree program in the College. They may take up to 15% of their course work outside the College. The thesis is required.
- *Where the home university has a significant residential component, the fully developed honors college should offer substantial honors residential opportunities.* Yes. We have our own residence halls.
- *The distinction awarded by a fully developed honors college should be announced at commencement, noted on the diploma, and featured on the student's final transcript.* Yes—special commencement presence; noted on diploma and on the final transcript.
- *Like other colleges within the university, a fully developed honors college should be involved in alumni affairs and development and should have an external advisory board.* Yes. We have our own alumni society within the University's, a development officer, and an external advisory board.
- *The establishment of an Honors College should entail a significant enhancement of core physical facilities.* Not applicable. Since the campus opened in 1999, the College had new buildings specially designed for it.
- *A fully developed honors college should offer an opportunity for an interdisciplinary degree program to supplement standard departmental majors.* Yes.





# CHAPTER 6:

## YOU SAY TOMATO, I SAY TOMAHTO: HONORS COLLEGE? WHO NEEDS IT?

ROSALIE C. OTERO  
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO

*You say eether and I say eyether,  
You say neether and I say nyther,  
You like potato and I like potahto*  
—George and Ira Gershwin

Honors education is often at the center of controversy. Lawmakers, administrators, donors, parents, students, instructors, alumni, and the community have all voiced their views at one time or another. There have been debates about the purpose of honors education, about the traditional canon, about shaping a liberal arts curriculum, about an emphasis on scientific investigation, about the business model that has been adopted at many institutions, about uniform curricular objectives for all students or offering a variety so as not to usurp the basic human right to select one's own path of development, and the list goes on. Certainly, in our own NCHC journals, we find that debates have been plentiful. One of the more recent deliberations has been about which is superior or more progressive, an honors program or an honors college.

This monograph addresses the value of establishing an honors college. This chapter, however, concerns the merits of the more conventional model, the honors program. An honors program offers opportunities that are equal to, or better than, those offered by many honors colleges. I believe that many of the purported benefits of an honors college can be available in a program. I will use the Honors Program at the University of New Mexico to inform my discourse.

The Honors Program at the University of New Mexico was founded in 1958 with a \$30,000 grant from the Carnegie Corp. of New York. Dudley Wynn, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and one of the leaders of the NCHC movement at the time, started the Program with thirty students. The Program was integrated permanently into the University in 1961. Currently the Honor Program has more than 1200 students offering approximately sixty seminars each academic year. The University Honors Program (UHP) challenges students by including research, extracurricular, and community-service opportunities. Its

immersive program provides students with experiences that prepare them for graduate programs, professional schools, the job market, and life. The structure of the Honors Program provides academic and social opportunities and reflects the full diversity of the campus and region.

The Honors Program at UNM has served as a model and inspiration for many programs across the country. Four of UNM's five directors, including the current director, have served as president of the National Collegiate Honors Council. That UNM should have played a role in setting the standards for honors education in the United States is a testament to our institution's innovative and historic commitment to undergraduate excellence. Despite New Mexico's relative financial disadvantages, the UNM honors ideal has given some of our best students world-class opportunities that compare favorably with those offered by prestigious and wealthier universities. Since 1998, for example, UNM Honors students have won two Rhodes, two Marshall, seven Truman, ten Goldwater, and ten Phi Kappa Phi Fellowships, competing successfully with peers from the best schools in the nation. In addition, UHP graduates have been accepted to prestigious graduate and professional programs at schools such as Harvard, Brown, Yale, Princeton, Michigan, Stanford, Washington University in St. Louis, and Johns Hopkins.

### **Enhanced Visibility**

One of the reasons given to shift from a program to a college is that it enhances the visibility of honors. The question is what kind of visibility is wanted. If we want students to be aware of honors, then it becomes a matter of skilled recruitment tools. Developing a user-friendly navigational website is becoming more important in this technological age. Certainly producing informative and eye-catching brochures and other advertising material is effective and, of course, can be produced by a program as well as a college. If we want to spotlight honors on campus, then this is best done by initiating and designing outstanding curricular and extracurricular activities and advertising them. Lecture series, special field-based programs, serving as the umbrella for national fellowships, and so forth, all bring the honors program notice and acclaim.

For those who want to become visible to donors, that can happen without the college designation. The Program at UNM has several endowments including a million dollar endowment to support a distinguished visiting scholar. The only drawback might be that a wealthy donor would want his or her name attached to an honors college, but

donors can be persuaded to name programs as well as colleges. The Katherine Simons Honors Program can be as effective as the Katherine Simons Honors College.

The UNM Honors Program has a million and a half dollar endowment and several other smaller endowments totaling over \$700,000. We established an Honors Alumni endowment in 2004 that now has over \$30,000 with alumni contributing to it every year. It may not be the millions that some honors colleges attract, but New Mexico does not have many wealthy donors. At any rate, the point is that honors as a program or a college can attract donors. In addition, many donors want their money to be used for specific purposes that may or may not coincide with the mission of honors. Changing the structure and mission of our programs to fit into the demands of donors hardly seems appropriate. An honors program can certainly make use of donations to establish scholarships, travel awards, and even name the honors center.

## **Program Characteristics**

At the University of New Mexico, the Honors Program is a separate entity from disciplinary-based honors. We believe that the students have the best of all possible worlds. They may get a broad liberal arts education in the Honors Program and in-depth study and research in their chosen field via Disciplinary Honors. The mission of the Honors Program is to provide challenging opportunities for intensive interdisciplinary and cross-cultural education to highly motivated, talented, and creative undergraduates in all majors and to build a community of scholars.

The major goals of the Program are the same as those of many honors colleges. They include the following:

- To create lifelong learners;
- To develop persons able to integrate knowledge from different sources;
- To create students who can adapt to new environments;
- To develop active participants in a democratic society;
- To develop professional skills in formal writing, oral presentations, collaborative exchanges and intellectual dialogue;
- To develop the ability to understand and work with complex topics and situations; and
- To develop intellectual agility and honesty.

## Chapter 6: You Say Tomato; I say Tomahto

The UHP is designed for students who want to satisfy their intellectual curiosity. It draws on a wide range of resources available at a major research university and concentrates these resources within a small, personal, liberal arts setting. The UHP offers an innovative and challenging curriculum for highly motivated students with a strong intellectual curiosity. Students representing a wide variety of majors, backgrounds, and interests form close relationships with faculty and each other to explore new ideas and to share their ideas and interests within a community of scholars in the friendly confines of the Honors Center.

These sound like a high-minded, earnest goal, but they are the aspirations academics have for honors education. The majority of the courses in the Honors Program are interdisciplinary. Some of the courses are team-taught by faculty from different disciplines, others are taught by one faculty member who brings in a variety of fields to bear on a given topic, and still others focus on one field, but from a variety of perspectives. For example, a professor of law at UNM teaches “Intellectual Property: Law in the Age of Technology.” The seminar addresses the Constitutional basis for intellectual property protections and the current statutes and cases that set out the rules for determining ownership. Students learn about such things as copyright, patent, and trademarks as well as read and analyze case studies and statutes. They also have to understand technology and media. Two of our honors faculty, a historian and a biologist taught “From the Rockies to the Andes.” The course provided a comparative study of human impact and natural history of two regions: New Mexico and Argentina. Students participated in several field trips in New Mexico and travelled to Argentina during spring break. Scholars from UNM and Argentinean universities addressed the questions posed by the topic. Another course, “The Promiscuous Object,” explores answers to the question, “Why do we need things?” The students think about how we use objects as tools, signs of social status, markers for personal identity, and symbolic means of transmitting knowledge and meaning.

The Honors Program offers courses at each level, from the first to the fourth year, and students are required to complete 24 credit hours of UHP coursework. The core Legacy seminars offer an introduction to honors and to significant ideas in Western culture. These seminars focus on skills essential to success in college such as critical and creative thinking, critical reading, writing, and oral communication skills, and collaborative learning. The 200-level seminars focus on cross-cultural examinations of other legacies and world views, again with an emphasis on skills begun at the 100-level. The 300-level seminars explore

specific topics designed to broaden understanding and the interconnectedness of academic disciplines. The 400-level seminars are explorations of topics that are more in-depth than that of lower-level seminars, and students have a greater role and responsibility. The end result may be a publishable paper or collaborative mini-conference. Seniors have three options to complete their capstone requirement: Senior Colloquia and Service Learning; Disciplinary or Interdisciplinary research and thesis or project; or student teaching. Capstone options are designed to allow students to examine personal value systems and social ethics, gain experience as student teachers, or pursue independent research. The senior choices allow students to complete the Honors Program while accomplishing an objective that will benefit their personal future and interests.

In addition the UHP offers a variety of field-based courses. The Conexiones Program gives students the opportunity to study language and culture in Mexico and Spain. These two programs are offered during alternate summers. Students live with host families in the country, study Spanish, and develop an understanding of the culture and history of the country. In addition to Conexiones, the UHP has also had a Biodiversity Program in Australia and a service-learning, culture program in India.

Many other courses include more limited field study: one day, weekends, or spring and fall break travel. Students who enroll in “Sacred Sites,” for example, take an intense ten-day experiential excursion to Northern New Mexico, which is home to a diversity of spiritual traditions: Western, Eastern, Native American, new age, and communal. Students who enroll in “Public Space: Monuments and Memory” visit various monuments in New Mexico.

Students in the UHP also work on a high-quality publication of art and literature sponsored by the Western Regional Honors Council (WRHC) and the Honors Program. Produced completely by Honors students, *Scribendi* publishes creative works by undergraduate honors students in the more than 220 member schools of the WRHC. The magazine is organized around a course that provides students with practical hands-on experience in proofreading, copyediting, typography, magazine design and layout, fundraising, marketing, and the process of producing such a publication.

In addition to courses, the Honors Program, primarily with the Honors Students Advisory Council, organizes many academic and social events including lectures, talent shows, movie nights, and debates.

## Operational Characteristics

The Honors Program has a director, eight full-time faculty members (five tenured, one in his first year), three staff members, three peer advisors, and two student assistants. In addition, we hire fifteen to twenty adjunct instructors each semester. The UNM Honors Program is one of the first in the country to have its own tenured faculty. The result is more clout and credibility. The people at UNM perceive the faculty in honors as equals in the institution because they have undergone the same review for tenure and promotion as other faculty on campus. Full-time faculty members play an important role in providing continuity in the various programs in which we are engaged. The *Scribendi* magazine, for example, would not be as impressive as it is if we had to train a new faculty advisor every year.

The Program has a very active Honors Student Advisory Council. This group serves as a liaison between faculty and students. They assist with a variety of activities including recruitment efforts and academic and social events. We also recruit students from this group to serve on UHP committees, including search committees and the Curriculum Committee.

The Program also has an Honors Program Advisory Council made up of faculty from various other units on campus, the director, and an honors student representative. The UNM Faculty Senate appoints the faculty members of this council. This group is advisory. They represent honors in their respective colleges and departments and advise the Director in areas critical to internal University policies. The Council members also interview graduating seniors, review their files, and determine the level of honors to be awarded to each: *cum laude*, *magna cum laude*, *summa cum laude*.

In addition, the Program has an external Board made up of professionals including both UHP alumni and leaders in the community. The Honors Board is primarily a conduit to influence and power. The members provide guidance and support on issues critical to honors. They help the Honors Program build relationships with the community.

## Facilities

The Honors Center is located on the ground floor of the Health Sciences Building, a relatively central location, across from the Student Union Building and near the main library. The 8,300 plus square foot space includes a large forum for special events, presentations, and lectures and serves as a comfortable place for students to

hang out. It is furnished with couches, chairs, and tables. In addition, the Center has a library/computer room, six classrooms, twelve faculty offices, a conference room, considerable storage space, a kitchen, and a large open patio.

Honors students may live in specially designated residence halls. The majority of freshmen live in the Scholars Wing of Hokona Hall. Upper classmen sometimes move to the SRC, a more modern, apartment-like resident hall. One of the full-time faculty members serves as the advisor for these resident units.

## **Benefits of Being a Program**

Some of the major reasons for shifting from a program to a college are that a college has enhanced visibility, more resources, and greater institutional presence. But, as I argue, an honors program can also have enhanced visibility, if not more, certainly adequate resources, and significant institutional presence. Basically the only differences between an honors college and an honors program are that a college can establish requirements for graduation, grant degrees, and are led by deans. In addition, a highly developed honors program offers more opportunities than many of the newly renamed honors colleges.

By its very nature, an honors program is restricted. It is supposed to serve a limited number of academically talented undergraduates. An honors program should be available to all qualified students from any of the colleges and schools at the university.

At UNM students can have a major in the College of Fine Arts, for example, and still easily participate in the Honors Program. Students are discouraged, even prevented, from joining more than one college, so having an honors college could potentially cause conflicts. Students would be made to choose between being in the Honors College or the College of Arts & Sciences, Engineering, or Fine Arts. New Mexico is not a wealthy state, so resources to offer sufficient courses to educate students in an honors college would be taxing. We see ourselves as a small liberal arts college within a large research university. Students can, thereby, major in whatever field interests them, participate in research, and, at the same time, broaden their education through participation in honors, which provides more interdisciplinary courses and seminars that help students strengthen their understanding of the connections among disciplines. Engineering majors can, for example, take courses about Nabakov with a visiting professor or enroll in "Distant Neighbors," which will give them a hands-on opportunity to study

## Chapter 6: You Say Tomato; I say Tomahto

Mexican culture. All of these courses will benefit them as persons regardless of their chosen professions.

Although college vs. program is more than a mere semantics choice, ultimately, depending on one's institutional climate and resources, it may be best to have an extraordinary honors program rather than an honors college. At UNM, honors is not seen in competition with other colleges and deans, but rather as partners in the education of academically talented students. Colleges are seen as autonomous units; other colleges are typically less willing to support activities outside of their own college, but a program can have sufficient autonomy and still be seen as an important, integral part of a university, and, therefore, worthy of support and championing by all units on campus. We can argue, quibble, and debate about the merits of a college vs. a program, but ultimately, we need to make the decision based on the needs and resources of individual institutions.



**Part III:**

**Stories of**

**Creation and Recreation**



# **CHAPTER 7:**

## **HOW TO CREATE AN HONORS COLLEGE**

**BOB PEPPERMAN TAYLOR**  
UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT

### **Disclaimer**

In July of 2003, I was appointed Dean of the Honors College at the University of Vermont. I found this slightly awkward since the Honors College did not yet exist. During the previous year while I was blissfully on sabbatical and away from campus, a university committee had been working to establish an honors college. My initial tasks as Dean were to spend the next year guiding the development of the finishing touches for the institutional structure of the college, ushering the college through the university approval process, and recruiting the first class to enter in the fall of 2004. Prior to accepting this position, I had been, for a few years, the director of a college-wide honors program in UVM's College of Arts and Sciences. Although I had helped that program develop and grow, I had not been involved with its initial design and creation. My participation in the creation of the Honors College was shaped by the work of the university committee during the year prior to my assumption of the deanship. Both out of respect for my colleagues, as well as from a sense of political realism, I felt the need to work within the broad parameters of the Honors College proposal as developed prior to my involvement.

When I was asked to write an essay entitled "How to Create an Honors College," I thought I should be a good sport; after all, I have, in fact, been intimately involved in the creation of an honors college. As I set to work on the essay, however, it became embarrassingly clear that I had no particularly profound insight or special theory to offer about the creation of honors colleges. Indeed, all I have is the experience of one player involved in building one such college and the common sense and pragmatic knowledge that grows from such experience. What follows, then, is a more modest and less authoritative essay than the above title suggests. Perhaps what it lacks in deep theoretical insight or formulaic certainty, however, will be made up for by simply reminding readers about some of the key issues and tensions they will find themselves addressing in the event they take on the task of building an honors college.

### Goals

The first problem to be hashed out by any university interested in building an honors college relates simply to the purpose and goals of the new institution or why it is interested in having an honors college in the first place. There are a number of possible answers to this question. Among the more common goals, at least from the perspective of higher administration, is to make the university more competitive in attracting and retaining high-performing students. This need not reflect only a mercenary, market-driven concern; the desire to attract and retain a higher number of outstanding students is not only a form of institutional vanity. On the contrary, the presence and cultivation of committed students with high ability enhances the educational mission of every university through the role they play in setting the overall tone and atmosphere in individual classes and the university at large.

If a university intends to focus extra resources on this cohort of students, then for both principled and pragmatic political reasons the university as a whole should benefit from this investment. This point may seem obvious, but keeping it in mind during the practical day-to-day business of establishing and administering an honors college is absolutely essential. Consequently, the honors college must be self-conscious in its design and operation to serve the university beyond the immediate student membership of the college. For example, if a fundamental goal of the honors college is to bring outstanding students to campus, we must remember that they are not simply in residence; rather, they must be positioned to benefit the institution as a whole through their presence. This means that we would not necessarily expect most of their coursework to be in the honors college if we hope the membership to influence the overall academic tone of the university. While the NCHC is right to recommend minimal standards of coursework that should be required in an honors college, the flipside of this observation is that the honors college exists not only to benefit itself and its students, but also to bring these students to campus to benefit departments, courses, and programs, university wide. As a second example, as university-wide institutions, honors colleges are poised to serve constituencies of students and faculty throughout the university in many ways. Involving faculty throughout the university in the curricular and extracurricular activities of the college is critical both for the vibrancy of the college and the enrichment of the faculty generally. Providing extracurricular, co-curricular, and advising opportunities for non-member students will bring the resources, commitments, and

programming of the honors college to as broad a student constituency as possible.

Substantively, an honors college should have a clear mission to advocate or promote a particular educational project, reform, or commitment. For many, honors colleges are poised to promote service learning. In my view, honors colleges are best thought of as advocates of liberal learning at a time when such values are in danger of being overwhelmed by professional and technical educational concerns. Honors colleges can bring and reinforce the liberal mission to every college and program at a university. By liberal learning, I do not mean, as should become clear below, just the study of the humanities, or humanities and social sciences. Rather, I have in mind an approach to learning that emphasizes the intrinsic value of all forms of knowledge for broadly educated individuals. My own Honors College at UVM plays an additional role as our first residential college. Our hope is that it will encourage a more general interest in residential colleges and residential learning community opportunities for the student body as a whole.

Other goals are even more self-evident than the ones I have mentioned, but they are not necessarily easy to keep in sight while building an honors college. Here are two: an honors college should be a bastion of academic excellence, and an honors college should be politically accepted in and acceptable to all corners of the university. These goals are not always easy to satisfy simultaneously; what appears to be the greatest academic integrity may be politically difficult to maintain while trying to satisfy numerous constituencies who wish or need to participate in the college. It will, at times, take great delicacy to balance these goals.

All these goals must work together. An honors college should not become little more than a recruiting device or gimmick. In the long run, it must deliver an educational experience that lives up to its name both for its immediate constituents as well as the university as a whole. Obviously if the institution becomes a mere marketing device, its educational integrity will be jeopardized. Likewise, if the institution serves only the student members and the faculty who teach them, the university as a whole has good reason to question the strategic utility of investment in the college. And finally, honors colleges must use their position to promote educational innovation, be it in residential colleges, service learning, the promotion of multi-disciplinary learning and scholarship, or other valuable educational projects.

One last observation about goals: for obvious reasons, the goals of an honors college should be articulated as clearly as possible during the

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design period. Nonetheless, goals will evolve during the design and establishment of the college, as possibilities and opportunities present themselves, and as negotiation with various constituencies shape the situation. For example, when the UVM Honors College was first imagined, the residential component of the program was of minor interest and focus. Through a series of accidents, ranging from the nature of available facilities to my being hired to lead the project, the residential mission of the college grew in importance not only for the Honors College, but also as a pilot project for the university at large. A balance must be struck between clarity of mission and openness to the evolution of goals as the institution is conceived and developed.

### First Steps

A number of elements must be present in the early stages of building an honors college if the project has any chance of getting off the ground, let alone of being established on a solid enough footing to make success a realistic possibility.

- a. *Leadership at the highest levels of the central administration must support the project.* Clark Kerr has observed, perhaps unsurprisingly for a university president, but probably accurately nonetheless, that almost all successful innovations in universities are initiated by the central administration. Although an honors college need not be initiated by a President or Provost, without their enthusiastic support an honors college will not receive the resources, personnel, facilities, and all-around support it needs to blossom into a healthy institution.
- b. *Mobilize the most varied constituencies possible and involve them in the design and establishment process.* The key groups here are, of course, faculty from across the university through a faculty senate or its equivalent; representatives from the various colleges and schools, including schools without undergraduate programs, at least to some degree because their faculty will be drawn on in the future; students through the student government; the deans through their council or equivalent; and administrative and auxiliary units such as the library system and the registrar's office. The design process must bring all these groups together for input and approval to endow the college with the legitimacy it will need.
- c. *Hire a dean or another authoritative individual responsible for leading the process.* This process cannot be led by committee or by a leader without significant resources and authority; simply too many constituencies and interests are involved for a weak leader to be

successful. This individual must have both significant resources at her or his disposal and strong and vocal support at the highest levels of the administration.

- d. *Make sure this dean has sufficient resources at her or his disposal to assure the other deans and faculty that the honors college will pay its way:* This commitment means, most importantly, that sufficient funding exists for new faculty lines at the level required to staff all the honors college courses regardless of how the college is organized. The bulk of teaching in the honors college should be paid for in full, meaning that it will be paid for at the rate of regular tenure-track faculty rather than at part-time and adjunct rates. Full faculty funding prevents the honors college from taking regular faculty away from the rest of the student body and replacing them with temporary or adjunct faculty, while at the same time assuring that the honors college will draw its own faculty from among the faculty as a whole and will not become dependent itself on temporary, adjunct, or graduate student instruction. From the start new funds must be identified for this project, so the honors college does not start out in a zero-sum relationship with other units. Indeed, the honors college must be seen as bringing resources and students to the other schools and colleges.

## Design

An endless number of decisions must be made about the design of an honors college, and these will obviously need to conform to the local institutional setting of the individual university. Rather than presenting one particular model, I will mention a few of the most important of these decisions and some of the options they present.

### Admissions

Here are some of the questions that must be answered:

- Will the college have admission open to any student meeting certain requirements, or will there be an enrollment cap with competitive admission based upon limited positions available? Answers to this question, of course, have huge implications for curricular and staffing plans.
- How selective should the college be? What percentage of the overall student body should it include? Should that percentage hold constant even as overall undergraduate enrollment fluctuates?

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- What percentage of the students will enroll in their first year, and what percentage will be able to join the college in their sophomore year or even later?
- Will there be a separate application process for first-year admission, or will the honors college simply invite the top applicants to the university? If a separate application is required, how will it coordinate with the regular admissions process?
- What will be the diversity goals of the application process? Will the process seek to admit a class balanced in a number of ways: with students from all the various undergraduate colleges, schools, and programs; with representation of historically underrepresented groups; with geographic diversity; or with first-generation students? Will the admission process be formally blind to all considerations outside of some strict standard of academic eligibility?

My own experience suggests that those making the choices should remember that an honors college must serve the entire university community. To my mind, any admissions process must, at a minimum, recruit and admit students from the full array of undergraduate schools, colleges, and programs. To be a porous and open institution, the honors college must admit a significant percentage, perhaps half, of its students after their first year of study on the strength of their university rather than high school performance.<sup>1</sup>

### Curriculum

Many decisions must be made about the curriculum, and here are a few of the key questions governing those discussions:

- Will the curriculum be designed to enrich or supplement a student's primary course of studies, will it act as a separate track within that course of studies, or will it combine the two approaches?
- Will there be a common course or courses for all students in the honors college? If so, should they be offered in the first year for the sake of integrating the new students into the college and university, or should they be offered in the sophomore or junior year so that all students in the college can participate?
- Should there be a senior-thesis requirement? If so, how will this fit the curricular needs of students in professional programs? Should there be other senior-year requirements designed to maintain communication and academic sharing among seniors in the honors college as they pursue their specialized research projects?



- In general, how well will the curriculum serve the needs of students from very different intellectual and disciplinary backgrounds? What will be the goals of the courses at the different stages of a student's progress through the college curriculum?
- If the curriculum is designed as an enrichment curriculum in the first and sophomore years, can it be designed in such a way that it does not only emphasize the humanities?
- What emphases should be placed in the curriculum on certain general educational goals, such as writing and oral communication, numeracy, and cultural literacy?
- Should every honors college course be defined by certain of these goals, or is this more constricting than you wish?

### **Administration, Staff, and Governance**

As suggested above, a dean should lead the honors college during the founding period, and this need continues with the establishment and institutionalization of the college. The dean will need at least an administrative assistant, as well as a secretary/office manager. Depending on the level of extracurricular and co-curricular programming, the college may need a student services professional to organize and direct this programming, advise the honors college student association, and be a first responder to non-academic student problems. As the college grows, the dean will almost certainly need an associate dean. The overall staffing needs, of course, will depend on the size of the college and its programming responsibilities beyond the curriculum, such as advising for prestigious scholarship programs or organizing and supporting special honors college study abroad programs.

While the dean should report, like the other deans, to the chief academic officer, he or she will require a faculty advisory body comparable to the faculty of any other college; this body will advise the dean on policy as well as set the college's curriculum. This body should have representation from all the undergraduate colleges and schools, as well as input from the libraries, admissions, and any other unit working closely with the college. At the University of Vermont, we designed this Honors College Council to have two representatives from each undergraduate school and college: one from each unit's curriculum committee and one faculty member from each to take responsibility for organizing and advising the honors college students in that unit. This advisory body or its subcommittees must meet regularly to discuss policy issues, as well as to make curricular and possibly admissions decisions.

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### Faculty

Defining the honors college faculty can be challenging. In most cases, faculty will not receive their primary appointment in the honors college. Indeed, that might not be a good idea even if it is feasible because it would probably be divisive rather than unifying from the perspective of the university as a whole. If the faculty members have their primary appointments elsewhere, then the issue becomes who should be defined as a member of the honors college faculty. Options include:

- Any faculty member serving on the advisory committee and/or teaching in the honors college. Perhaps this term of membership could extend for a year or two or three beyond this activity.
- Any member of the tenured or tenure-track faculty.
- Any member of the university faculty senate or its equivalent.

Again, at the University of Vermont, we opted for the most inclusive definition, which invites not only tenure-track faculty, but research faculty, adjuncts, and part-time faculty as well, to participate in the honors college.

That said, one of the dangers of honors colleges and honors programs more generally is that they are often viewed as extras for faculty, and as a result many of the best and most-established teachers and scholars do not consider teaching honors college courses. The college must aggressively recruit the very best faculty to teach, and resources must be available to provide incentives to individual faculty and departments or colleges for freeing these faculty members to participate. A related issue concerns the disciplinary backgrounds of faculty. Honors colleges usually find recruiting faculty from the humanities and social sciences relatively easy; in contrast, vigorous efforts should be made to recruit faculty from the natural sciences, engineering, and other professional schools. Any resources that can be brought to these corners of the university at the founding of the college will be well distributed if they bring faculty from these units to the honors college.

### Students

The incentives, privileges, and status of honors college students need to be defined. These can include early course registration, which is high on student lists of desirable privileges; special advising and library resources; special housing opportunities; and special participation in cultural activities. The university's performing arts series and fine art museum may provide opportunities to involve students at discounted prices. The college should facilitate undergraduate research opportunities.

Completion of the honors college curriculum should lead to special recognition at graduation and on transcripts.

Beyond all these perquisites, however, any new honors college should create a true collegiate community from this group of students representing the full array of disciplinary and academic interests. Co-curricular and extracurricular programming should range from the social to the cultural, intellectual, and academic. A strong residential component to the college facilitates such programming, bringing together a significant portion of the student body in their living arrangements. Especially in the early years, the college should stress to the students that the college is a new institution, and they are welcome to become actively involved in helping to shape the co-curricular and extracurricular programming. The administration must actively help the students organize for this purpose, recruiting them to be key players in developing their extra- and co-curricular priorities and practices.

### **Budget**

The major expenses in an honors college are, of course, for personnel: faculty, administration, and staff. The easiest ways to avoid paying the full price for an honors college are by hiring too little staff and by paying less than the full cost for the faculty. Of these two temptations, the second is by far the worst even if it might, in the heat of the moment, seem like the lesser evil. A dedicated administrative staff can make a great deal happen even when they are clearly unable to do all that would be desirable. To pay for faculty primarily through a system of buyouts to the home departments, however, is a dangerous strategy and not likely to result in the quality or diversity of courses the college would like to offer. This may not be a big issue if the curriculum is designed as a set of honors sections of already-offered courses; the honors college students would be taking these courses anyway. The problem is more organizational than anything else, unless, that is, honors sections are designed to be significantly smaller than the regular sections. But if the honors curriculum requires faculty to teach new or different courses and are offered to a different constituency than regular departmental offerings are aimed at, then faculty will need to be released from their regular duties to teach these courses. Paying for this release through buyouts may mean that it will be necessary at times to hire adjuncts to teach the faculty members' regular departmental course while they are teaching in the honors college, but overall this strategy allows the college to pay adjunct rates for often expensive senior faculty. The cost is passed on, in this way, to the departments, and the students in the departmental courses are disadvantaged. This

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cycle can lead to resentment among the non-honors college student body, as well as an unwillingness of departments to cooperate with the honors college.

Consequently, a sufficient number of new faculty lines should be dedicated to meeting the needs of the honors college at the time that the college is established. This does not require hiring honors college faculty *per se*. What it does mean is making strategic decisions about hiring new faculty in colleges and schools most likely to offer faculty to the honors college, with the understanding between the honors college dean and the dean of the relevant college that a certain number of course sections will come from that college to the honors college every year or over a set period of time. With this initial investment in faculty, the honors college will have the advantage of being able to broker real resources honestly for other colleges and paying full price for the faculty it will be using over the years.

Aside from personnel, the budget must have at least moderate resources for social events, always involving food; for guest lecturers; for co-sponsoring activities around campus, which is important because it makes the honors college a good and valued university citizen. If the college has its own scholarships, funds to support these will likely be a large element in the budget.

### **Naming**

Some real thought should be given to the name of the honors college. Simply calling it the honors college achieves descriptive accuracy, but the name can be a daily source of irritation to certain faculty, students, and alumni who are distrustful of what they perceive to be the elitism of an honors college.<sup>2</sup> Some honors colleges will be lucky enough to find a major donor for a naming gift. Perhaps the best option, however, is to name the college for a distinguished university alumnus, someone who represents the values assumed by the college.

### **Development**

Development prospects can be difficult to identify for a new honors college, mainly because of the lack of an alumni base. On the other hand, one purpose of the honors college is improving the academic environment of the university as a whole, and properly conceived, such a college should be of great interest to donors concerned with promoting the academic quality of the university. For this reason, a development officer should be assigned to the college from the start. In addition, the honors college leadership and development officer must offer itself as a partner to other deans in the development process.

### **University Functions**

As a university-wide academic program, an honors college is poised to serve the university in a number of ways beyond its own curriculum and programming. As mentioned above, some universities will want the honors college to take responsibility for service-learning programs, prestigious scholarship advising, or the general promotion of multi-disciplinary educational experiments. No proper blueprint exists for what university functions the college should perform, of course, but an important principle is at stake here: the honors college should do what it can to serve not only its own students, but the university as a whole for two reasons: First, the college is simply well positioned to view the university as a whole and facilitate campus-wide activities since it draws students and faculty from all schools and colleges; it would be a loss of a structural opportunity to fail to take advantage of this position. Second, the college will simply not be able to fulfill its own mission if it does not cooperate and maintain excellent relations with all the academic units. The more it can do to serve not only its immediate students but the broader community as well, the better for everyone.<sup>3</sup>

### **Tensions**

In all that has been recommended above and in all planning for and implementing of an honors college, a series of obvious and unavoidable tensions emerge and cannot be avoided; they must be managed more or less effectively, even though they cannot be fully resolved. An awareness and sensitivity to these tensions should inform both the design and administration of any new honors college. Perhaps the most obvious tension arises between serving the students in the honors college and serving the university as a whole. When building the curriculum, the extracurricular, residential, and co-curricular programming, the dean must focus on addressing the students and their needs and on building a strong collegiate community among them. Building and serving this community create valuable bonds and relationships, but these relationships are also exclusionary and potentially insular. College leadership must not only provide these services and build these bonds, but also turn the students outward toward the greater university community and beyond as well. Likewise, they should find many ways to bring the greater community into the world of the college. All opportunities to make honors colleges permeable, open institutions should be exploited to the degree possible. Extra- and co-curricular programming should be designed for a broad constituency, including but not

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limited to Honors College students; admission should be possible for a significant number of students not invited to join as first-year students; and advising resources, such as those for prestigious scholarships, should be developed for all deserving students, not only those in the honors college. Likewise, developing a curriculum that does not command too much of a student's program is also essential, so the rest of the university reaps the benefits of having these students in the institution's various departments, majors, programs, and colleges. This goal is especially key for making the college a possibility for students in professional programs, given their tendency to have extensive and tightly prescribed curricula.

As an institution representing and promoting academic excellence, the honors college will face tensions that emerge around this mission in any number of ways, such as how selective the admissions process will be. Making the college small will obviously allow for a potentially more consistent and advanced level of achievement among honors students; making the college less selective has the benefit of serving, not insignificantly, more students. Should students be drawn, proportionally, from all the various undergraduate schools and colleges, or should there be no guaranteed representation with admissions being guided instead by a college-blind standard, even if this means that students from one or two colleges are likely to make up a disproportionate percentage of the honors student body? The curriculum may well also produce comparable tensions. As faculty are drawn from across the university to teach in the honors college, differences of expectation, rigor, and educational philosophy will likely emerge not only between individual professors, but also between disciplinary and college units. The college faces a delicate task to draw in faculty from the diversity of programs at a university and retain a consistent level of academic excellence. An honors college can find itself trapped in the midst of old disagreements between liberal arts colleges and professional schools or threatened by other traditional fault lines within a university. In all these cases and more, the college will need to find ways to feel confident about the rigor of its student selection process, coursework, and general academic standards, even while negotiating sometimes serious differences in perspective among faculty and equity demands from students and other academic units.

My purpose here is not to list all the political and academic tensions that will arise when creating and instituting an honors college; more could be said about many such tensions, such as that between using the college as a recruiting device and maintaining its academic integrity, or

between maintaining the honors college's independence while cooperating with all the other academic units, or around providing the resources necessary to attract first-rate administrators and faculty to the college without alienating other colleges. The important task is to recognize these types of tensions and to design the college in full awareness of them, for example, by establishing multiple points of entry for students, so recruiting pressures do not lead to filling the college only with first-year recruits. Of course, the college must attract distinguished leadership, people with highly regarded academic credentials and the credibility and commitment required to maintain the highest integrity of the college even while negotiating these tensions as they surface in the day-to-day administration of the college.

## Getting Started

Designing the honors college and preparing for the inaugural class will probably require at least two years. A great many questions need to be answered and design details worked out by early fall in the year prior to the invitation of the first class if materials are to be available and personnel ready for the recruiting and admission cycle. Although conceivably a committee with strong leadership and support could answer enough of the questions required to begin the recruiting season in less than a year, beginning, say, in January, such a schedule would be ambitious and difficult to keep. On the other hand, if the process extends beyond two years, momentum and enthusiasm for the project could be lost.

Perhaps the best summary I can provide is to reduce the above comments to the following recommendations:

1. Be clear about the values and goals for the honors college, even while being flexible in adjusting these goals in response to developments during the founding process.
2. Create a design and implementation process that mobilizes all the relevant constituencies.
3. Make sure this process is led by a dean with sufficient support, resources, and respect to find common ground with the varied constituencies.
4. Provide sufficient new financial resources so the honors college will be able to pay the full price for its faculty and will not be viewed by other schools and colleges as drains on their already strained resources.

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5. Design multiple points of entry for students into the college.
6. Make sure the college will be designed and administered to serve the entire university, students and faculty both, even while serving its own students.
7. Design the curriculum to be extensive enough to have integrity, but limited enough to assure that students will be able to participate in any of the major programs or courses of studies offered by the university.
8. Design the curriculum with a breadth that includes, but is greater than, the humanities and social sciences.
9. Design a realistic, but not too relaxed, timeline for planning and implementation.

### Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>Students admitted on the strength of their performance at UVM have consistently outperformed students admitted in their first year in both the new Honors College and the previous honors program in the College of Arts and Sciences.

<sup>2</sup>I have never found this charge of elitism to be terribly thoughtful or persuasive. The implication of the charge is always that the recognition of these excellent students is in some way illegitimate, but recognizing and rewarding academic excellence is among the core functions of a university. What truth the charge contains, it seems to me, relates to whether or not the recognition of excellent students in some way disadvantages the remaining students, and this is why an honors college must be designed and administered to provide as many benefits, direct and indirect, to the university as a whole as possible.

<sup>3</sup>Even while trying to be a good university citizen, the honors college must recognize that certain functions are best left in other units at the institution. Any initiative or program that will confuse students about their relationship with the honors college, or prevent the honors college from pursuing its core mission, should be avoided.



# **CHAPTER 8:**

## **HOW NOT TO CREATE AN HONORS COLLEGE**

### **A DYSTOPIAN FANTASY\***

**“DONALD PUBLIUS”**  
**STATE FLAGSHIP UNIVERSITY**

I returned to the Honors Program office after my 11:00 class on “English Poetry since 1800.” Although I hoped to offer an honors seminar this fall, my department insisted I teach a general sophomore lit. class. It might be worse; the subject kept the class under forty students, and most of these had some passing interest in poetry. A few, though, only possessed a strong drive not to take a class before 11:00 AM.

The Honors Program occupied a somewhat shabby bungalow on the periphery of campus; it was purchased by State Flagship University (good old SFU) a few years back. The school was expanding; in fact, the undergraduate population had grown from 15,000 to 18,000 over the previous five years. The house represented a recent upgrade from the office suite in the basement of the Physical Sciences Building. That place always had a vague chemical odor, and my staff complained of headaches. I suspect my letter to the Campus Health and Safety Office had something to do with our relocation.

In any case, our new home was a considerable improvement. The living room served as a reception room, the dining room as a student lounge with kitchen access. The master bedroom served as my office (with a private bath; rank has some privileges), and the other three bedrooms housed my administrative assistant/budget officer and our two advisors/jacks-of-all trades. The backyard was a bit unkempt, but we found three picnic tables to place there, where students congregated, weather permitting.

“Dr Haggard wants you to call him immediately,” Theresa, my AA, shouted to me as I walked by her bedroom office.

“Did he say what he wanted?”

“Nope; just that it was urgent.”

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\*“Donald Publius” is a fictional narrator. The following story is also a complete fiction. Nothing like this has ever happened. Any passing resemblance to any real university, living or dead, is purely coincidental.

## Chapter 8: How not to Create an Honors College

Great, I thought. So this is the day I am going to be fired. No. Haggard and I got along well. He had been appointed Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education the same year I became director of the Honors Program. In fact, he was instrumental in my appointment. Haggard continued in his position after Provost Cathcart came to SFU a year ago. Rumor was that he was on the way out. Cathcart had big plans, and undergraduate education seemed to be an afterthought in them. I knew he was a climber—proud to be a provost at only age fifty, but frustrated that he was not yet a president since he was, after all, already fifty years old. I gave him three years to make a splash at SFU, and then his resume would earn plenty of frequent flyer miles flying around the country.

I called Haggard. “What’s up?”

“We have an appointment with the provost at 3:00 PM.”

“Today?”

“Yes, today. Do you have anything you can’t cancel?”

“No.” Actually, my calendar was open. Students had settled into the semester; it was still too early for the usual crises; and fall advisement did not begin for a month. Of course, I would have cancelled surgery for face time with the provost. I needed to go home to change. I was dressed for class: tie-less Oxford shirt, blue jeans, a tweed jacket, and running shoes.

“I’ll be at your office at 2:55.”

“Theresa, I’m out’a here. I have to go home and get my suit. I have a meeting with the provost. Cancel all my appointments for this afternoon.”

“You don’t have any.”

“Hah.” I didn’t anticipate how rapidly that was going to change.

\* \* \*

Entering the Executive Administration Building was like walking through the gate to another world. The carpets were thick; the staff quiet and efficient; the pace seemingly unhurried; and the odor, well, a little like a new, and expensive, car. But something was missing. Students.

Provost Cathcart was a tall, handsome man, though tending to put on weight. He still looked good in his expensive suit. He eyed mine dubiously as he shook my hand. He spoke with a soft, confident voice that forced you to concentrate on what he was saying. Although a political scientist by training, he had been rising in the university administrative ranks since he was a toddler or, at least, tenured.

## “Donald Publius”

My god, I thought, he does resemble Alec Baldwin in *30 Rock*.

“Professor Publius, you are aware that Upstate University is starting an honors college, yes?”

“Yes.” I sent a memo to Haggard six months earlier, discussing UU’s plan and pointing out how this would place us at a disadvantage in recruiting, especially with respect to in-state students. I suggested creating a task force to develop a proposal for an Honors College ASAP. I leapt to the conclusion that the task force would now be formed. I was wrong.

“The Trustees, the President, and I have concluded that as the flagship university, we must have an Honors College, too.”

Good, I thought.

“So this Friday I am going to announce the establishment of our Honors College”

“A planning task force?” I thought that’s a short time to put a group this important together.

Cathcart looked at me as if I were surprisingly slow for a professor. “No, Publius; the *College*. We intend to start recruiting this year for next year’s incoming class.”

I looked at him incredulously.

“I want you and Haggard to implement the College. You have an advisory committee, right?”

“Ah, yes. Five faculty and three students, plus me.”

“Lose the students; they should not be involved in this.”

“I can’t do that; it’s in our charter.”

Cathcart’s eyes narrowed slightly as he stared for a two-count at me. “Haggard, create a new committee with the five faculty members and Publius. You chair it. All right, we’re settled. You boys better get working. Haggard, I will want a weekly update at the Provost’s Council meetings.”

“Excuse me, Provost Cathcart, but I have a question.”

Cathcart glanced at his watch. “Yes?”

“Resources. Are we going to receive more resources?”

Cathcart relaxed. “Of course. I have already allocated \$250,000 to Enrollment Management for enhanced recruitment.”

“What about programs?”

“What about them? Look, Publius, we’re just getting started here. It’s already the middle of September. The first thing to do is recruit, and we’ve got to do that now. Applications are due January 1. Talk to Flack in Enrollment Management; he already has the publicity rollout planned.”

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He does? I thought. That's the first I heard of this.

"You, Haggard, and the committee work on the structure and programs of the College. If you have recommendations on support, I will consider them at the appropriate time. Now, if you'll excuse me. . . ."

I staggered back to the bungalow.

"What's up, boss?" Theresa asked as I walked by.

"It's going to be a long year," I replied.

\* \* \*

Our honors program at SFU was a pretty good one. We had around 800 above-average students overall, but we tended to lose track of many of them after their second year. Essentially, we were a lower-division operation, offering honors sections of general education requirements. We tried to offer freshman and sophomore honors seminars on various topics that also could be used for general education credit. In recent years we had begun offering upper-division seminars where we thought student demand existed. Almost all our courses were in the College of Arts and Sciences, but students from other undergraduate colleges like business and engineering could participate.

Approximately 80% of our freshman and sophomore courses were straight honors sections, but we also provided courses with an embedded honors section in them, and students could receive honors credit if they undertook an authorized honors project within a regular course. Students who earned 24 honors credits were awarded an honors certificate. They generally accomplished this by the end of their second year. Most departments, especially in Arts and Sciences, offered follow-on departmental honors, but the requirements here varied from unit to unit.

We recruited students from SFU's initial applicant pool, inviting all those with a certain profile into the Program. Essentially, admission was automatic upon receipt of their simple acceptance. In addition, students after their second semester who had a minimum GPA could apply for admission. Generally our efforts yielded an incoming class of 200 students, and an additional 50 or so transferred in for their sophomore year. Academic attrition plus students who moved into the professional schools at the end of their sophomore year kept our total active enrollment near 800.

Now we were going into the big time.

\* \* \*

Fleming Flack was effusive.

“Look at these!” He laid out a series of high-gloss page proofs. They were impressive—tasteful, but striking. I looked at the text. I had never seen it before.

“We are sending these out to every high school senior in the five-state region who scored 120 or above on the PSAT. We are sending bundles to every guidance counselor in the state. We are taking out ads in all three major newspapers. And” (here he paused for effect) “we are running an ad during every televised football game this fall, starting this Saturday!”

At least I could see where the \$250 K was going.

“Ah, Fleming,” I said, skimming the text of the brochure, “you are advertising our old admission standards.”

“Your point being?”

“Well, with this publicity push, we could have many more eligible students who take up the offer of admission to the Program, um, College.”

“So . . .?” he replied, looking at me as if I had just fallen off the turnip truck.

“This might be the time to increase our admissions standards. Maybe make the process more selective on the basis of a separate application.”

“Why would we want to do that?”

“If we have a significant increase in enrollment, where are we going to get the courses?”

“Look, Professor, that’s not my job. The Provost and the Trustees made it clear that my job is to recruit more good students to the University. It’s your job to provide for them. Anyway, nothing wrong with having more good students here, right?”

“Yeah, right,” I glumly replied. Fleming appeared a bit downcast at my lack of enthusiasm. I thumbed through the photos. I noted the new science building, an architectural drawing for a planned upper-division residence hall, the new student union, and, of course, our 17<sup>th</sup>-ranked football team storming the field. Unsurprisingly, I found no photo of the honors bungalow. I looked more closely at the picture of a small seminar of students in front of a window high over the campus. I recognized that room. It was a conference room on top of an 18-floor residence hall. It was never used for classes. I did not recognize the students; then I realized they were Admissions Office staff.

“Ah, Fleming, this isn’t an honors seminar; this isn’t a classroom; and these aren’t students.”

“Oh, that. Well, look. We had to put this together quickly. No time to arrange classroom photo shoots with grumpy faculty—just kidding,

## Chapter 8: How not to Create an Honors College

Professor—so we set up a shot. We can take care of it next year. Anyway, it's a great bird's-eye view of the campus, right?

I thought of mentioning something called truth in advertising, but let it pass. I had the first meeting of our ad hoc planning group to attend.

\* \* \*

Haggard had a pained look on his face. The faculty members from my advisory committee were not pleased.

"Who's gonna head this 'College,' Frank?" asked Tom Vector, a blunt-speaking math professor.

"Don . . . at least for now."

Now that's a vote of confidence, I thought.

"Is he gonna be a dean? Colleges are led by deans."

"Well, no."

"Why the hell not?"

Haggard squirmed a bit. Good for you, Tom, I thought.

"Well, first of all, he is only an associate professor."

"Who's he gonna report to?"

"Why me. Same as now."

"If he is head of a College, then he should report to the damn provost and be on the damn Council of Academic Deans."

"Tom, the other deans would not accept Don's membership on the CAD, even if the provost thought it would be a good idea."

"What kind of damn college is it then?" Tom grumbled.

"Tom, let's focus on the positive. We are going to have an honors college. Let's see what we can do to make it the best one we can. These administrative details are secondary."

"Right. Secondary." Tom grumbled. "It looks to me like another damn 'Ready. Fire! Aim.' initiative on the part of the provost."

"Now, Tom," Haggard started wearily.

"Excuse me," Shelly Keats of my department interjected, "Let's talk about substance, then. Are we going to get more resources for course support? Is the new 'college' going to be able to hire more staff? What about our facilities? If you succeed in attracting more students—which is the point, right—won't this burst our bungalow? In any case, shouldn't we be talking about whether being a college requires a significant enhancement of our programs?"

"Now, Shelly, you know resources are tight, but . . .," Haggard replied somewhat patronizingly.

"They're always tight," she snorted.

“Yes, but you know we’ve received no increase in our budget allocation from the legislature for two years now, and this one isn’t looking any better. I am sure that if Don makes the case, and I will support him, of course, the provost will listen.”

Yeah, and I can call spirits from the deep, but will they come when I call them, I thought.

“But you have to remember, Shelly,” Haggard continued, “that the deans might see the honors college as threatening their resources, and you don’t want to antagonize them.”

“Well, what about improved space, then?” Shelly retorted.

“Now, Shelly, you know space is tight. We are going to have to make do with what we have. After all, we just gave you the bungalow.”

This exchange, while gratifying to me in a primitive way, had probably gone on long enough. Haggard was losing his patience. I decided to drop the argument about resources, since it was going nowhere, and turn the discussion to some qualitative issues.

“Let’s turn to some things we could do that require no additional resources,” I said. “For example, maybe we should take this opportunity to increase our expectations. Maybe raise our minimum GPA to retain academic eligibility and require more honors courses for our distinction.”

“Whoa,” Haggard interjected, “we can talk about that later. The provost made it clear to me that he did not want to get Faculty Senate aroused right now. Everyone concedes the desirability of attracting more good students to SFU, but if you propose changing your criteria for honors, you will have to get faculty approval. He wants this launched and running; then maybe we can talk about requirements. Anyway, you said you were worried about providing the current number of courses with your resources; if that’s the case, wouldn’t enhancing your requirements demand more honors courses, making the situation even worse?”

I had to admit he had a perverse point there. Undaunted, I moved on.

“OK, what about if we generate uniform standards for departmental honors? Right now they are all over the map. Some departments base it solely on GPA; some require a senior thesis; and some, the best model, add junior and senior honors major seminars. Why don’t we do that across the board?”

“No, we can’t do that.” Haggard replied. “The deans would never put up with it. They are not going to let an upstart Honors College dictate how they should run their departments.”

## Chapter 8: How not to Create an Honors College

“Good God, Haggard,” Tom interjected, “what the hell can we do?”

“Tom,” I said.

“As a matter of fact,” Haggard replied, “The provost came up with an idea. Seems that UU is also setting up a special office to groom students for national scholarship competitions. He says we need to have one too, and he thinks the new honors college would be the place to house it. He said it would be a feather in your cap.”

“Would it be an addition to my staff budget?” I asked.

“No, not at first. Tight budgets, remember. Maybe later. Anyway, you said that you did not have room in the bungalow for any additional staff.”

Once again I was trapped by his perverse logic. I wondered if once you made it to the provost’s office, they gave you an orientation seminar in perverse logic.

One last try. “Frank, could we at least be given control over our transfer admissions? Right now it appears that Flake is opening the door there, as well.”

“Sorry, Don. The provost is pleased with the success of Flake’s recruitment campaign so far. He’s doing a heck of a job. It’s not the time to start a turf battle with him.”

So our first meeting ended. The infant college had no new courses, resources, facilities, standards, or staff; we did, however, pick up a function.

\* \* \*

The semester passed. We endured.

\* \* \*

By the middle of spring semester, the disaster I anticipated emerged. The initial response to our publicity campaign was paying off, and incoming freshman enrollment in the college was going to surge. Moreover, the current students were exposed to the new publicity as well, and transfer admissions to the College more than doubled. I saw disaster looming.

I called Haggard. “Frank, Can you get us a meeting with the provost? It’s urgent.”

“I’ll try, but he is very busy now. The launch of this new research campus is taking most of his time.”

Six weeks later, Frank and I were again ushered into Provost Cathcart’s office. By this time I had the final figures on our incoming freshman class. It nearly doubled in size from the previous year.



## “Donald Publius”

Moreover, transfer students were adding over a hundred new students to this increase.

“Well, Publius,” his voice was still silky soft, “Haggard says you have urgent matters to discuss.”

My throat was tight. “We are in a terrible jam. I cannot get faculty to cover our basic courses. The departments are too squeezed with the overall undergraduate population increase to staff any more honors sections. My advisors are panicking with the thought of handling this influx of students. We need some help.”

“Look here, Publius,” his voice, if anything, growing even softer, “if you don’t feel you can handle this job, I am sure Haggard, here, can find someone up to the task. The President and the Trustees think this enrollment increase is a great success. I understand you are stretched a bit, and I will see what I can do in the next budget cycle. Right now, I will allocate your program, um, college, an additional \$50,000 on a one-time, emergency basis. Go hire some adjunct faculty.”

“But our new College does not conform to the national standards for honors colleges.”

“And what standards might those be?”

“The National Collegiate Honors Council’s ‘Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College.’”

“The NCHC,” he purred, “Well, you should know I just returned from a meeting of the Conference Provosts, and we sent a stern letter to that organization, condemning their effort to set themselves up as some kind of accrediting body. I believe lawyers might be consulted.”

I blanched.

“If you have nothing else, Haggard and I have another meeting to attend.”

I rose to leave. As I approached the door, he said,

“Oh, Publius.”

I turned.

“For your information, the meeting I am attending is to put the final touches on our proposed enrollment-based budgeting system. Your honors classes, you know, are rather small. Perhaps you should consider increasing their size.”



# **CHAPTER 9:**

## **SUSTAINING VITALITY IN THE ESTABLISHED HONORS COLLEGE**

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That he not busy being born  
Is busy dying.

—Bob Dylan

A significant majority of the currently existing honors colleges blossomed across the country during the past fifteen years. A fair number, however, have existed for decades, and most of the recent creations grew out of preexisting honors programs. In some cases, the move to honors college represented little more than a name change; in others, the institution invested significant effort planning the transformation and laid out proposals for both growth and program enhancement.

At some point, however, an honors college may reach a plateau when the original mission has been essentially accomplished. Reaching this plateau, though, does not mean the hard slogging lies in the past. Simply maintaining established momentum presents an ever-renewing set of challenges, but they resemble the same old challenges: next semester's schedule must be developed, next year's class must be recruited, and always advisement ever recurs, though the same issues wear new faces. Perhaps at this point, the college is on its second or third generation of leadership. Perhaps, the Provost, for reasons revealed only at provost school, decides now would be a good time for an external review. Perhaps a pending accreditation visitation looms. Perhaps, the current leadership of the honors college simply concludes, "Well, that was fun. Now what shall we do?" Whatever the impetus, such a point offers an opportunity for reflection upon the challenge of sustaining vitality.

If an honors college has met the initial objectives laid out at its founding, university leadership may be tempted to simply expand the vision by enrolling more, preferably better-qualified, students. Even the honors dean may be seduced by this alternative, calculating that 200 more students means one more advisor, 400 more means an additional associate dean, and all these adjustments add leverage for bigger budgets, more space, and greater weight in the Council of Academic Deans.

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A second way of moving beyond the plateau is through the multiplication of honors college functions. Indeed, sometimes the inauguration of an honors college involves not the deepening of the existing mission of the honors program as much as bundling an essentially unaltered program with a variety of ancillary activities, like the management of merit scholarships, undergraduate research, study abroad office, or national scholarship competitions. All of these programs possess value, and they must be done; however, grouping them under the newly established or existing college does not so much renew vitality as sap it.

I argue for another, inherently more interesting, path toward continuously renewable vitality: embracing the role as the institution's center for academic innovation. Honors programs, and the colleges that grow out of them, essentially reflect the desire both to recruit and to serve highly motivated and academically talented students. The better we serve these students, the more successful we will be at recruiting them. This mission of serving the brightest involves creating an arena for academic experimentation, a place where the best faculty and the best students can come together to enrich their mutual education.

The honors college, more than a typical program, is ideally suited to create and maintain this arena for innovation. As a college, it acquires greater visibility on campus among the faculty, the ultimate resource for innovation. Moreover, a highly developed honors college cuts across not only the arts and science core, but also the other undergraduate programs of the university. Visibility and successful innovation create their own momentum because the best faculty at the institution will come to the college with their ideas.

This rosy vision, of course, assumes certain preconditions. The college must already provide a firm foundation for innovation. The core mission must already be essentially realized, even routine. If the college still struggles to cope with a burgeoning student population, inadequate facilities, and hand-to-mouth honors scheduling each semester, then it will likely lack the resources and the energy to pursue significant innovation.

The college must also possess a flexible vehicle for curriculum development. If the college curriculum has been pre-defined in such a way that inhibits flexible and rapid response to emerging opportunities, then every proposal will founder on structural constraints, whatever the interest of its leadership. Moreover, the college must control discretionary resources to cultivate such development. This happy state of being usually requires either strong support for the honors mission from the university leadership or substantial endowment income for curriculum development.<sup>1</sup>

These rather abstract assertions represent a retrospective reconstruction of my happy experience as dean of the South Carolina Honors College. The best way, then, to embody them is by relating some details of my story.

## Origins

Our College, like many others, grew from a preexisting honors program. In 1975, I served on a small committee charged with developing a formal proposal for the honors college. The director of the Honors Program, Bill Mould, chaired this committee. He and I basically shepherded the draft proposal through all levels of university approval, at which point the outgoing president tabled it for his successor's action.

I followed Bill as honors director in 1976.<sup>2</sup> The new president gave me the charge of implementing our proposal in 1977, and the new college admitted its first class in 1978. Bill and I were finalists for the appointment as head of the College, and, fortunately for me, he was chosen in 1979. This outcome was fortunate because the president at the time was more interested in show than substance, and Bill struggled to accumulate the resources needed to support our original vision. Only when John Palms became president in 1992 did the resources begin to match the rhetoric. Fortune smiled, and I became dean in 1994 just as the new resources flowed.

Given what Bill had to work with, he succeeded in laying the foundation for the College. The original plan envisioned creating a living/learning honors community on the antebellum Horseshoe of the University. A flexible curriculum would enable the College to offer topics courses and seminars in every discipline across the entire undergraduate curriculum, as well as interdisciplinary seminars at the second-, third-, and fourth-year levels. We even planned an interdisciplinary degree to be offered through the Honors College, the *Baccalaureus Artium et Scientiae*, finally approved by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education in 1981.

During his 15-year tenure, Bill accomplished a great deal with limited resources. He oversaw the move of the College offices to the Horseshoe. He rationalized our original curriculum plan, which turned out to be too baroque in operation. He controlled the admissions criteria and process and managed the steady growth of the enrollment from incoming classes of 130 to ones numbering about 180. He steadily expanded the honors housing available on the inner and outer Horseshoe. Most significantly, he engineered a significant infusion of

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recurring resources that began my first year and ultimately represented a 50% increase in the annual budget over a three-year period. This cash infusion accompanied a mandate to increase the freshman class to 200 students. Although challenges remained, Bill bequeathed the resources to achieve our goals.

The College admitted its first class of 200-plus students in 1995. During the next two years, I was able to expand and renovate honors facilities, acquire a renovated freshman residence hall on the outer Horseshoe, and lay plans for additional honors classrooms.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, since President Palms wanted to increase the freshman class to 250, I won approval for an additional infusion of resources that increased our base budget by another third.

In August of 1997, the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the College, we welcomed our first freshman class of over 250 students. Moreover, they were the most academically talented class in the College's history. They were also the first to be housed in a newly renovated freshman residence hall, directly behind the Honors College office building. Walking across the Horseshoe, I was struck by the obvious: We had achieved the vision the founding committee developed back in 1975. I called Bill, who in semi-retirement in Washington was running our Washington Internship Program, and told him the news. After two decades of our combined labors, we did it!

The question became what to do next. Certainly maintaining the vision would be challenge enough. All the routines of course schedule development, academic advisement, recruitment, and residential life management remained. Indeed, these challenges would increase arithmetically as the College grew inexorably over the 1000 student mark. When I took the position in 1994, I was not certain I would want to serve more than one five-year term. Now as I was entering my fourth year, I desired something more intellectually exciting than growth management to keep me involved. Actually, I already knew where to find this excitement because it was part of the College mission from the beginning: curriculum innovation. Indeed, Doug Williams, our new associate dean who joined the College staff in 1996, and I were already developing plans not only for the continuous infusion of intellectual vitality into the Honors College, but also for an emergent aspiration to use the College as a lever to transform undergraduate education at the university.

## **Pursuing Permanent Transformation<sup>4</sup>**

The cultivation of academic innovation, of course, could only proceed after maintaining the core mission. Each semester we had to provide our growing numbers sufficient honors courses to fulfill their honors requirements.<sup>5</sup> In the lower division, the students needed honors courses to meet the general education requirements of every undergraduate college in the university. In the upper division, it meant offering honors versions of major requirements in those areas where we had sufficient numbers to justify them. Providing courses and opportunities beyond these requirements was where the fun began.

### **Cultivating Honors Seminars**

In any given semester, honors sections of standard university courses comprise approximately two-thirds of our offerings. Honors proseminars make up the remainder. These proseminars are courses that have been developed especially for the Honors College and are mainly upper division in level. They have no regular university equivalent, at least when initially offered, and so use the Honors College designator (SCCC). All university departments as well as the small colleges have assigned topics numbers. For example, proseminars in political science can be offered as topics under SCCC numbers 233, 333, and 433. New subject matter is designated by a letter suffix. Available letters (L, M, and X are excluded) mean that the College can offer 23 distinct seminars under each number.

When established, this system seemed sufficient, but we underestimated the fertile imaginations of some faculty. After a quarter century, the College is running out of suffix letters in some disciplines. For example, two senior members of the English department each developed an inventory of four to six proseminars that they offer on a two- to three-year cycle. One senior member of the Religious Studies Department, who is a devotee of the Great Books teaching methodology, created twelve different Great Book topics that he rotates through at the rate of one course each semester. The College, then, over its existence developed a reputation among the best faculty as a venue for experimentation. From 1997 through spring 2005, when my tenure as dean concluded, the College offered over 250 new proseminars. Typically, 10 to 15% of each semester's honors courses consist of new proseminars.

The majority of these proseminars flower for only one semester. Some instructors try a topic in the honors curriculum and then adapt it for the general curriculum of the university. In this case, the next

## Chapter 9: Sustaining Vitality in the Established Honors College

time we offered the course, we would use the departmental designation. Others proved so popular that we would repeat them annually or at least every other year; some of these repeats include courses from across the disciplines:

The Natural History of South Carolina

Modern Physics and Society

Mathematical Biology

Earthquakes

Introduction to Neuroscience

Introduction to Anatomy

Motown and Popular Music

The Artist's Experience

The Art of the Book

Fitzgerald and Hemingway

The Modern Novel

Hardboiled Detective Fiction

The Great American Novel?

Gandhi, King, and Non-Violence

Superbowl Commercials

The Art of Law Making

Legal Persuasion

American Student Activism

Typically, fifteen to twenty professors each semester offer the College new ideas for the honors curriculum. Often departments permit new faculty to try courses not in their departmental offerings in the College. Some department chairs, exceptionally wise ones from my perspective, enhanced their recruitment pitch with the promise of teaching in the Honors College. Our venue for course experimentation, then, brought the College and the best faculty in the University together, allowing us to cultivate long-term relationships across the disciplines.

### **Fostering Interdisciplinary Studies**

Honors Colleges are uniquely situated to cultivate interdisciplinary studies. The curricular framework for our College set aside twenty-four course numbers for honors interdisciplinary topics courses at the sophomore (280, 281, 284, 285), junior (380–389), and senior



(480–489) levels. Again over twenty different topics can be offered under each number. We provided a vehicle for interdisciplinary study, and faculty responded with dozens of wonderful courses over the years, sometimes team-taught, though more often offered by a single, though multi-talented, instructor.

In 1997, the College experimented with something more exciting and ambitious, the Integrated Interdisciplinary Semester (IIS). We basically took the idea of a course cluster around a particular theme and attempted to infuse the cluster with a structure for interdisciplinary engagement. The first effort, titled “Environmental Equity in the Global Home,” consisted of seven honors seminars in topics including “Environmental Damage Assessment,” “Environmental Science and Human Impact,” “Literature and the Environment,” “Environment and Human Health,” “Current Issues in the Marine Environment,” “Debating the Environment,” and “Ecology and Politics.” In addition we engaged three nationally distinguished speakers to offer plenary sessions open to the general public.<sup>6</sup> We scheduled the seminars so students could enroll in more than one, and we required attendance of all students at a number of common colloquia, three of which focused on critical introductions to the work of the upcoming speaker. Finally, we planned an undergraduate research conference, where the students from all the seminars would present their course projects.

This experiment was a qualified success. The common colloquia worked reasonably well although some students grumbled about the occasional extra class meeting. The end of semester conference was generally rewarding although not all students participated. All three public events were stimulating and well attended. However, only two or three students took more than one seminar; one professor made no effort to insure his students attended the common events, including those that were his idea, and we offered too many course options in the bundle, and several were quite small, even by honors standards. Finally, the overall design was quite expensive.

Learning from our first experiment, in our next effort, “Darwin Across the Disciplines,” we included only five topics courses. Although we kept the common colloquia, we did not make the effort to have a capstone conference; nevertheless, several of the classes gathered together in a final colloquium to share their experiences. Once again, one professor did not buy into the experience, and her indifference was reflected in her students’ attendance at the common meetings.<sup>7</sup> With the cooperation and contribution of a number of departments, the college successfully organized another fine series of public lectures.<sup>8</sup>

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The College continued to put together interdisciplinary course clusters in subsequent years, including one on education and another on environmental sustainability. Most recently, the College developed a cluster on “Science, Religion, and Spirituality” for spring 2007. These later efforts built on the positive experiences of the first two although they were less ambitious. Having organized the first two, I can attest to the time, effort, and resources it takes to make these clusters successful. Nonetheless, the unique position of the College insures that interdisciplinary course clusters will continue.

Another significant interdisciplinary effort animates the curriculum development since the late 1990s. In the mid-1990s the Honors College, in partnership with the then College of Liberal Arts and the Center for Bioethics, participated in a grant from the Fullerton Foundation to develop a Minor in Medical Humanities, at the time the first such minor in the nation. This minor, intended for all qualified pre-med majors at the University, combined existing courses in the general curriculum, like Medical Ethics, Sociology of Mental Health, and Health Economics, with the dynamic curricular environment of the College to expand a set of eligible courses.<sup>9</sup> Over the past eight years, the College has cultivated a number of medical humanities seminars including:

- Suicide and Literature
- Literature and Aids
- Doctors and Patients Who Write
- Health and the Human Life Cycle
- Health Policy
- Cultures of Symbolic Healing
- Religiosity and Traditional Medicine
- Islamic Science and Medicine
- Artists and Cadavers
- Facing Mortality
- Alternative Medicine
- Neurobiology of Culture
- Practicing Medicine
- Enhancing Humans
- Altruism and Aggression
- Neuroethics

This interdisciplinary minor promotes curricular innovation among faculty from the humanities and social sciences. Currently, over thirty students are enrolled in the minor, and every honors pre-med student takes at least one or two courses in the area.

### **Fostering Innovation in Study Abroad**

All honors programs and colleges encourage their students to study abroad, whether for a summer, semester, or academic year. We are no different, and Honors College students make up a disproportionate segment of the USC students who pursue international education each year. Starting in the mid-1990s, we explored ways in which we could put a unique honors stamp on some foreign study options. Associate Dean Doug Williams planted the seeds for these pursuits even before he joined the Honors College. He received a major NSF grant to study Lake Baikal in Siberia in partnership with scientists at the University of Irkutsk. In the early 1990s, he began taking small groups of Honors and other students to Baikal for several weeks in the summer to conduct research. I first met him in the fall of 1994, when a group of these students presented the results of their summer research experience.

After joining the College as associate dean, Doug planned a much more ambitious summer experience. Working with two professors from the Russian Language Program, he developed a plan where a dozen students from all disciplines would participate in a unique instructional/research experience in the summer of 2000. In order to qualify, students had to take at least one semester of Russian and a new spring semester proseminar, "Siberia in the Russian Imagination." Each student, as part of this course, developed a research problem for the summer program. Doug used his contacts to pair each student with a Russian counterpart also interested in the topic. In the fall, we created a 1-credit course for the students to present their final reports.

The program was a great success. The students earned seven honors credits and shared their work on a variety of issues from the emerging role of religion to the environmental problems in Lake Baikal and the challenges of economic transformation. Moreover, we had a model for developing future honors international educational opportunities. One significant hurdle remained: resources. The cost of the trip amounted to nearly \$3000/student.

Doug overcame this obstacle by using money remaining from an earlier grant to support students doing research on Baikal, thereby lowering the cost for each student to less than \$1000. We first tried to go back to this foundation with a proposal to create a four- to ten-year program, where, in alternating years, Russian students would travel to USC and

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our students would go to Siberia. It seemed to us an ideal way to promote amity between the two nations. The foundation, however, balked at the cost. The basic idea languished for several years until the University came to the rescue. In 2003, it offered our top recruits, approximately 60–80 students each year, a \$2000 grant that could be used only for summer study abroad. With this growing pool of funded students, the resources of the College could be stretched to defray the expenses of students who were not awarded this summer grant. The College modified the program somewhat, retaining the idea of a preparatory spring course that would then lead to a one- to two-week foreign excursion during our Maymester. Students participating in both experiences would earn six honors credits.

The first experiment was a fine arts course, “Landscape and Meaning.” In the spring 2005 semester, students studied the history of landscape art and nature writing and took field trips to the various landscapes in South Carolina. In the Maymester, they traveled to Costa Rica to experience topography significantly different from our state’s. Eight students went on this first trip. In the following year, the College offered a course on the “Christian Heritage in Greece and Turkey.” Over 20 students went on the Maymester trip, visiting the sites they studied in the spring. Building on this success, the College planned three such courses for spring/May 2007: “The Holocaust,” with a Maymester trip to Poland; “The History, Culture, Politics, and Society of Morocco,” with a Maymester trip to Morocco; and “International Service Learning,” with a Maymester trip to Romania.

### **The Grand Strategy:**

#### **Research-Based Learning**

During the last half of my tenure as dean, the College pursued its most ambitious undertaking, Research-Based Learning (RBL). Essentially, RBL began as a general idea, an empty vessel into which we poured content. The process began with a meeting of minds—Doug Williams’ and mine. Doug with his undergraduate research trips to Lake Baikal was exploring ways to involve greater numbers of students in meaningful research experiences. He believed that simply applying the graduate-level apprenticeship model for the favored few undergraduates would not create sufficient opportunities at the undergraduate level. I was coming from another direction. When I became dean, I recognized that many students were not well prepared for their senior thesis or project. For these students, the thesis was less a satisfying finale to their undergraduate education than an intimidating, even crushing, burden in the second semester of their senior year. Some students,

especially in science and engineering, were well prepared through earlier involvement in the labs of professors who eventually became their directors, but others floundered. Clearly, many students needed a better foundation and preparation for their theses.

Doug and I first discussed our mutually supportive ideas at an undergraduate research conference in 1995. When he became associate dean, we developed a series of proposals that eventually unraveled and reove how we conceived undergraduate liberal education. We concluded that in order to better prepare students for their theses, we needed to integrate the research and instructional missions of the university. The integration of these two missions would close the gap between graduate and undergraduate educational experiences and synthesize the mastery of substance of a discipline with the creation of that substance. As Doug remarked at the time, the current gap between these dualities “is largely filled with rhetoric.” By expanding programs that already existed and creating new ones where needed, we set out to achieve three goals through RBL:

- Educate the next generation of scholars;
- Harness the considerable energy and creativity of undergraduates in support of the research mission of the University; and
- Enrich the students’ mastery of the substance of their disciplines by involving them in the challenges of its creation.

A number of honors students, especially in the sciences and engineering, already participated in the research programs of professors, laying a foundation for their senior theses. Some were co-authors on presentations and publications. Consequently, we first turned to broadening and deepening undergraduate research opportunities across all research and scholarship-based liberal disciplines by

- Establishing a required Thesis Planning course for the sixth semester;
- Expanding undergraduate research fellowships offered by the College from five in 1994–1995 to forty-five in 2005–2006.
- Encouraging students outside the sciences and engineering to pursue these fellowships or consider doing third-year independent study projects.

The next challenge was transcending the basic logistical limits of transplanting the standard apprenticeship model of graduate study to the undergraduate population. Doug Williams designed the Marine and Aquatic Research Experience (MARE), a largely self-directed,

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self-regenerating undergraduate research team pursuing its own research program. Starting with a half-dozen students in 1998, MARE grew to approximately 20–25 active participants annually. By the second year, MARE students were presenting their findings at regional and national scientific conferences.

Pleased with the success of MARE, the College awarded small grants to faculty in chemical engineering, neuroscience, oral history, and cardio-biology to replicate MARE-like teams in their disciplines. Additional ones have been developed in linguistics, RNA and disease, exercise and disease prevention, and implications of nanotechnology. Although none of these experiments created self-sustaining research teams like MARE, they explored the substantive basis of research in a particular field and introduced the students to faculty research programs in the area. The one in neuroscience has been particularly successful.

The next logical step after encouraging students to engage in research was to support the presentation and publication of their results. For this reason, in 1999, the College created a fund to pay the expenses of students making presentations at regional or national professional conferences. In another innovative move, Doug Williams and several students associated with MARE received a grant from the National Science Foundation (2001) to create an online undergraduate research journal in marine science, *MarSci* (first issue, October 2002). Other undergraduate research journals exist, but as far as we have been able to determine, *MarSci* was the first one run by an undergraduate editorial board. Building upon the experience of *MarSci*, the neuroscience students started their own on-line journal, *Impulse* <<http://impulse.schc.sc.edu/about.html>> with an international board of student editors. These programs created a unique web of overlapping opportunities that not only prepares students for a culminating thesis experience, but also enriches their understanding of the substance of their particular disciplines and provides exceptional preparation for graduate school.

Unfortunately, we soon realized that this network was not enough.

Despite being satisfied with the bridges we had built, we grew frustrated with other limitations of the transplantation-apprenticeship model. In this model, followed by most research universities, talented undergraduates are transplanted to the other side of the divide between undergraduate instructional and graduate research missions of the university by becoming apprentices in the research program of particular professors. Their experiences can be profoundly deep, but also decidedly narrow. Only if the lead professor has the time, interest,

and knowledge will an apprentice become versed in the many issues originating outside the research program, but nonetheless influencing the conduct and course of inquiry within it. Apprentices must understand the epistemology, logic, conduct, and context of inquiry to be fully competent in a particular discipline. Such issues most appropriately belong in the undergraduate educational experience. The concerns were not just mastering the research design and techniques prevailing in a particular discipline, but also understanding the assumptions that lie behind inquiry, the ethical issues raised by inquiry, and the external forces that impinge upon inquiry. The College tried, therefore, to connect the students' research and learning experience with such concerns, not in an effort to displace the mastery of substance but to inform students' understanding about how that substance is created in the first place.

Consequently, the Honors College developed another component in the RBL program: critical connection courses, the first of which was "Fundamentals of Scientific Inquiry," offered by Doug in 1997. Although students who took the class found it to be a revelation on many levels, as did Doug, they raised a practical question: How does this count toward our degree? We added a second question: How do we expand this opportunity beyond the sciences? The College responded to these challenges by creating the Minor in Inquiry (MIQ). We developed two additional fundamentals courses in the social sciences and in the humanities. Students could choose one of the three to serve as the core requirement for the new minor. We also experimented with "Fundamentals of Business-Based Inquiry."<sup>10</sup> The remainder of the minor requires that students take a number of critical connection courses from a variety of departments. The essential intent of these courses is to pull students outside their particular discipline by asking questions about the foundations of inquiry as practiced within their disciplines. For example, someone in the natural sciences might take courses such as History of Science, Sociology of Science, and Philosophy of Science. Where desired courses did not yet exist in the university curriculum, the Honors College gave grants to faculty to develop them, including a course in the ethics of inquiry and a second on the political economy of inquiry.

In later years, Doug turned his attention to two further RBL innovations. He developed two courses, Arctic Science and Polar Science, that synthesized substantive mastery of an area with outreach to the wider community. Essentially, the students engaged in research into polar environments and then developed projects to communicate this learning to primary school students. The culmination of the first course,



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Arctic Science, was a program the students presented for a series of primary school classes. In the second, they developed a weekend learning program in partnership with South Carolina's children's museum, Edventure. Doug also realized that the University was lagging behind many institutions in failing to offer a forum where undergraduates could present their research. Consequently, he developed a program, Discovery Day, to provide an opportunity for all interested undergraduates, honors and non-honors, to present their research. The first event was held in spring 2003. He persuaded the University Office of Research to establish an award for Undergraduate Research Mentor of the year. The Honors College provided for all other expenses, including cash awards for the students in various categories.

Finally, working with my other associate dean, Leslie Sargent Jones, we developed a summer research program for rising high school seniors. This program involves not simply matching approximately thirty high school students from across the state with university research programs for a six-week, hands-on experience, but also we created instructional elements and mandated that the students present their research at a culminating poster session. For their effort students were awarded three honors credits. This summer program nicely complements the academic camp we already were running for rising high school sophomores and juniors, "Adventures in Creativity," that introduces students to some of the best scholars, researchers, and artists from across the university faculty.

After years of cajoling and persuading, the University Office of Research created an Office of Undergraduate Research in 2004. This office took charge of Discovery Day and in the next year offered undergraduate research fellowship opportunities to all qualified university students. The Honors College continues to offer its fellowships, so this represented a three-fold increase in these opportunities. Our goals, therefore, evolved substantially from improved thesis preparation. Nor were we simply interested in cultivating sophisticated, critically informed applicants for graduate school. We intended to reform undergraduate education, convinced that those who participate extensively in RBL opportunities animate the substantive mastery of their particular discipline through connecting inquiry to related problems that fall within the conventional domain of other disciplines. They will become better educated.

These curricular experiments suggest a redefinition of liberal education for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. No person, however gifted, can master the content of any one discipline, much less all disciplines. However, when



students develop the critical connections between the conduct of inquiry in a particular discipline and the various contexts—logical, ethical, social, political, and economic—of this inquiry, they will be tied into a multidisciplinary dialogue based not on close substantive relations, like that between biology and chemistry, but on the web of influences informing patterns of disciplinary development. The fully developed program of RBL, then, became more than a means for the integration of research and instruction; we saw it as the core of a model to reform general education requirements in the university.

## **Assessment:**

### **Achievements and Limits**

By fall 1997, we essentially achieved the founding goals for the South Carolina Honors College. At this point we could have focused on maintaining the quality of our achievement in the context of continued enrollment growth. Indeed, we must continue to cope with this ongoing challenge. By concentrating on curricular innovation, however, we enriched honors opportunities and even had some impact on the wider university. We most certainly kept ourselves engaged and entertained; however, we fell short of attaining our most ambitious goals, and some of the initiatives proved difficult to sustain. Some of the Honors College initiatives, however, succeeded in either improving existing programs or creating new programs and opportunities:

- The College enhanced its role as an arena for curricular innovation. Every semester, eighteen to twenty-five new proseminars continue to be offered.
- Course clusters remain a recurring component of semester offerings, even though they are not as ambitious as the early Integrated Interdisciplinary Semesters.
- The number of spring/Maymester study abroad experiences has increased.
- Summer programs for high school students have been enhanced.
- Undergraduate research gateway courses have been sustained.
- The Office of Undergraduate Research, advocated by the College, has extended undergraduate research opportunities across the University.
- The Undergraduate Research Mentor Award provides some recognition to faculty who invest their time and effort in mentoring students.

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The efforts to realize this increasingly ambitious and multifaceted vision did not always proceed smoothly. Even with sufficient internal resources to support the initiatives, the Honors College encountered institutional barriers. Like our students, faculty members want to know how participation, especially in our RBL ventures, counts within the institution. Frankly, faculty investment does not count for much in the dominant reward structure. Despite some success in gaining institutional recognition of innovative contributions to the Honors College, we encountered resistance from the entrenched patterns of faculty recognition. Our progress with many of these initiatives largely depended upon the enthusiasm of relatively few individuals whose support was provided primarily *pro bono*. The relative absence of institutional support beyond the Honors College limited success.

- Some elements, like MARE and MarSci, proved difficult to sustain once the animating faculty member, Doug Williams, departed.
- The Fundamentals of Inquiry courses failed to take off although the students who enrolled in the courses over this five-year experiment reported strong satisfaction with their experience.
- The Minor in Inquiry enrolled precisely one student.<sup>11</sup>
- Impact on the wider university was visible, but not transformative.
- The university reward structure has only marginally changed to become more supportive of faculty who invest time and effort in undergraduate education, especially mentoring undergraduate research.

### Conclusions

Overall, the Honors College remains a dynamic academic environment. Although it took twenty years and the efforts of two successive deans to fulfill the original vision, we did not rest on that achievement. Rather, we returned to the core commitment that animated our vision in the first place: the exploration of new ways to enliven and enrich the honors undergraduate educational experience. If successive generations of leadership share this general commitment, they will maintain the vitality of the Honors College, regardless of their particular initiatives.

I conclude with five broad lessons from my experience:

**Lesson 1:** Review, restore, and revise the founding vision periodically.

- Lesson 2:** Focus on the Honors College as a vital venue for curricular experimentation and enrichment, both in the college and for the wider institution.
- Lesson 3:** Consider new missions, but carefully select those that are consistent with the core mission. Do not multiply missions unnecessarily.
- Lesson 4:** Remember that no good deed goes unpunished. This year's exciting innovation becomes yet another routine institutional obligation in subsequent years.
- Lesson 5:** Most of all, have fun. If you are not excited and engaged by an idea, probably few other people will be either.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup>These discretionary resources do not have to be enormous. At our most prosperous level in the period I am discussing (1997–2005), they probably amounted to about 10% of our total budget, after funding salaries, operational expenses, and the core honors curriculum. It is a bit hard to determine because some innovations were simply specific enrichments that faculty wished to infuse into their honors courses.

<sup>2</sup>At this time, the honors director was a three-year, nonrenewable appointment.

<sup>3</sup>Freshmen had previously been distributed on honors floors in three different residence halls some distance from the Horseshoe.

<sup>4</sup>My discussion of academic innovation proceeds conceptually from less to more comprehensive in ambition, as opposed to chronologically. In fact, all these elements developed simultaneously from 1997 onward, and individual course innovation was part of the mission of the College from its founding.

<sup>5</sup>To earn the honors distinction, students must take an honors liberal arts core consisting of English, history of civilization, social science, math, and natural science amounting to 29–30 credits, plus at least 15 more honors electives including a senior thesis/project.

<sup>6</sup>Our three guest speakers were Edith Brown Weiss, Georgetown Law; Peter Matthiessen, author and naturalist; and Paul Ehrlich, Stanford.

<sup>7</sup>She was denied tenure after the semester was planned and was basically going through the motions in her final year.

<sup>8</sup>Michael Behe, Lehigh University; Richard Lewontin, Harvard; Daniel Dennett, Tufts; and Elizabeth Bates, UC, San Diego.

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<sup>9</sup>Admission to the minor is by application, and qualified non-honors students can be admitted. All students in the minor, honors or non-honors, have priority access to medical humanities eligible honors courses.

<sup>10</sup>We developed our courses in conjunction with the Freshman Year Experience office that created a parallel course, UNIV 201: Fundamentals of Inquiry. Support for this initiative was provided by a grant from the Hewlett Foundation.

<sup>11</sup>At a conference in March 2007, she reported that her minor gave her a broader comprehension of inquiry in her graduate discipline than that of her peers.

# CHAPTER 10:

## FOLLOWING IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE FOUNDERS

DAVIS BAIRD  
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

### **If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It**

An engineering aphorism proclaims: “if it ain’t broke, don’t fix it.” When I arrived in July 2005, the South Carolina Honors College [SCHC] most certainly was not broke. Furthermore, I quickly realized that I lacked experience with and knowledge of the fundamental parts of the College. If I tried to fix it, most likely I would break it. I was, of course, excited to take over such a successful unit, but I quickly understood that the downside risk was enormous while the upside potential would require considerable creativity.

I assumed the role of Dean of the Honors College on July 1, 2005. The Honors College, founded in 1978, is one of the older and, in many respects, one of the most fully developed honors colleges. My two predecessors, Bill Mould (Dean, 1979–1994) and Peter Sederberg (Dean, 1994–2005) were both involved in the initial vision and founding of SCHC in the 1970s, a time when I was making the transition from high school to graduate school by way of college.

As a long-time faculty member at USC, I was aware of the many good qualities of the Honors College. The students were noticeably better than those in the general university population. The College allowed professors to do interesting things that often strayed from their usual disciplinary reservations. The College had initiated and developed a program of undergraduate research that I found exciting.

I was not aware of just how good the College really was. In terms of objective measurements, such as the SAT or GPA, Honors College students are on a par with Ivy League students. My impression that they were good was based in measurable reality. The College has an extensive curriculum, more than 300 courses per year across all disciplines. The College remains involved with travel courses, high school summer programs, internships, among other activities. In short, I took over a well-established College.

When I arrived, I knew nothing of admissions and enrollment management, nothing of student housing, and little about prestigious

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national fellowships. I soon learned about all of these things and many others as well, and I have come to a deep and profound appreciation of all the work that my predecessors have done. The South Carolina Honors College is indeed an impressive college that legitimately competes with the best private and public undergraduate schools.

A critical role of the dean of a college is, and indeed must be, selling the unit to prospective students and their parents, to the faculty that contribute, to the university administration, and to potential donors. Selling requires ownership. The metaphor here is exact. In order to properly sell SCHC, I have to own it: the practices, places, products, and documents that together constitute the College have to reflect values and ideals that are mine or that I can make mine. Happily, I have had little problem taking for my own many of the values, practices, and institutions that my predecessors put in place. Still I am not identical to Bill Mould or Peter Sederberg, and coming to own the College has meant change. Whether I have broken the well-oiled machine I inherited, only time will tell. But the first point I want to make is this: Change has been unavoidable; indeed, it is essential to my ability to do my job leading the institution.

### **Mail-Order Bride Put to Immediate Test**

Perhaps my first impression on arriving at the Honors College in July 2005 was of being an outsider. I was the mail-order bride to an arranged marriage. I did not know my mate or mates, and they had not chosen me. The Provost, a person whom, I came to understand, they viewed with suspicion, thrust me upon them. To make matters worse, I came to the Honors College from chairing the Department of Philosophy. In Philosophy, most of the people I worked with were faculty members. Yes, there was a small staff, but faculty members did most of what got done. The staff members I inherited in the Honors College were not, with several exceptions, faculty members. As we all recognize, faculty and staff differ. These differences are institutional; faculty and staff are assessed and financially rewarded through fundamentally different systems. But the differences are also cultural and psychological. Faculty loyalties frequently are principally to their discipline, not their institution. This is not so with staff. Faculty, for all their learning and ability in their disciplines, can be remarkably inefficient and ineffective when it comes to other more bureaucratic tasks. Staff tend to be brilliant at making the institution work, but can lack an understanding of the educational reasons behind requirements and procedures. As my first task,

I had to learn how to relate to and motivate my staff. I inherited an excellent staff with considerable good will, and I believe I have made fairly rapid progress with them.

I write as if I arrived and have spent a year on whatever would be necessary and useful, especially getting to know my staff and my institution, before doing anything that might harm or significantly alter the College. But the river was flowing as I arrived, and very quickly I was navigating rapids. During my first week on the job, the Associate Provost and Dean of Undergraduate Studies approached me with a plan to create departmental honors tracks. He felt strongly that the Honors College only catered to early-bloomers who excelled in high school, but that late-bloomers, like himself, who did not find their way until their sophomore year, received neither the recognition nor the opportunities provided students in the Honors College. The logic was compelling, and being a late-bloomer myself, I shared some of his moral urgency. At the same time I was struck with the thought that in my first week I would give up the primary role and defining characteristic of my College. I was suspicious about the timing. Hobble the horse while the new dean does not know better how to protect her, and I did not know better in that first week.

Soon thereafter fundamental decisions had to be made about space. Well before I even considered applying to be Dean of the College, a decision had been made to build a new residence primarily for freshmen and sophomores in the Honors College. At the same time the administrative offices of the College were clearly inadequate. The question arose whether new, more adequate administrative offices should be designed into the new residence. This decision was vexing. The College currently occupies space on USC's historic antebellum Horseshoe. The Horseshoe, partly because of its significance and partly because of its beautiful integration of green space and buildings, is the heart of the campus. The new residence hall is not on the Horseshoe. Choosing to move the College to the new residence would remove it from the symbolic center of the University and from the residences of the College's juniors and seniors, who have the opportunity to live on the Horseshoe. On the other hand, staying on the Horseshoe would leave me with the problem of finding sufficient space in the most highly desired area on the campus. With no experience in university space politics, this option seemed risky.

A reasonable conclusion at this point would be that my opening contrast between the need for change and the advice to refrain from tinkering with that which is not broken is academic. If change does not

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come from the internal logic behind the need to own the institution, it will come from external forces. Change happens.

### **Change is Difficult**

And change is difficult. Already I have touched on two fundamental changes: the College's monopoly on the honors distinction and the College's location. I have not, however, been merely reactive. I have initiated and developed multiple changes: in College procedures, in College personnel, in College programs and policies, and in College marketing. These changes have pushed my staff and generated some growing pains, but in working together to accomplish something, we have come to know and appreciate each other. The mail-order bride became a wife.

A new dean possesses some advantages. For years, the Honors College operated a kind of shadow course reservation system we called the "book of names." This system was necessary because the College has always needed to control access to its courses and because the College has always started advising its students before the rest of the University. The University Registrar had not been willing to accommodate our early advising needs and so we created our own system. This was inconvenient for students and, I believe, gave us inadequate data about enrollments. Carrying no injuries from previous battles with the Registrar, I naïvely went in and expected some help, and I got it. The "book of names" is now a thing of the past, and honors students are registered for Honors College courses through the same system that the Registrar provides all University students. Procedures can change occasionally for the better.

I took over a College with insufficient office support staff. The same two staff members had worked in the College office for decades (one since 1974 and the other since 1985). When the Honors College had about 500 students, one Dean, and one Associate Dean (1985), this structure worked. When I arrived the numbers had expanded to 1,150 students, 3 Associate Deans, 3 Advisors, and an Information Technology Manager. (This expansion is also the source of the administrative space problem.) I can understand how this happened. Growth in the College occurred over time. The number of students grew, the number of courses offered kept pace, and other initiatives were added. Each change in itself did not overburden the system, and everyone grew accustomed and made do. Arriving from the outside, I recognized that the College was operating in survival mode, finishing one task just



as the next arrived with little room for assessing the situation. I added needed office support staff, and now we have four people running the office and a new director of development. This expansion, along with some normal turnover in personnel in established positions, has created the surprising situation, for me anyway, that I have now hired more than half of the staff. I have become an old-timer!

I could not have expanded the office staff if I had not arrived with a better base budget than my predecessor had labored under. I was responsible for part of the increase and my predecessor for the remainder. As most readers will understand, the point of hire is when a new dean has significant leverage to acquire additional resources. True to form, I negotiated an increase to the Honors College base budget as part of my hire package. The irony is that this is usually the point when a new dean will know the least about needs. I certainly knew relatively little about the College's financial situation. Nonetheless, I did obtain a significant increase, and I have used these funds to expand the College's staff.

At the same time, my predecessor, who had a much more thorough understanding of the College's needs, negotiated an increase in the participation fee required of all students in the College. He was aware of the demands that the increase in the size of the student body were placing on College resources, and he well knew that there was yet more demand for growth. He also knew that the University as a whole was trying to do more with less: a significant increase in the total number of undergraduates, from roughly 15,000 to about 18,000, with fewer faculty resources. This put pressure on College resources to field a sufficient number of courses for the College's students.

One of the most important new hires I made was a Director of Development. I was pushed in this direction by several factors. The University is starting a new capital campaign, and I felt that the Honors College could be an important participant. Simply by remaining on autopilot, the Honors College was a strikingly more effective development vehicle than was the Philosophy Department from whence I came. This fact is likely is not very surprising. But I was immediately struck by the interest, enthusiasm, and loyalty of Honors College alumni, and a moment's reflection will suggest the reason. A main point of the Honors College is to make a student's experience at the large comprehensive university that is the University of South Carolina personal and involved. Here is a powerful source of loyalty. Furthermore, while Honors College alumni as a group are young, they also are much more likely to be financially successful. Finally, one

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of the oft-repeated reasons for creating and maintaining an Honors College is to reverse the brain-drain from South Carolina and to thereby promote economic development. This fact in itself is a persuasive development vehicle. The results have been gratifying. During her first year as Director of Development, Chappell Wilson, a College alumna, which helps with the authenticity of her work, has increased giving to the College by a factor of ten.

### **The College as Engine for Innovation**

The South Carolina Honors College provides a powerful set of tools for improving the University and the broader community in which it sits. South Carolina Honors College students prove themselves to be leaders and innovators year after year, and the College provides a space for faculty to develop new courses and other innovations such as undergraduate research. The Honors College pioneered undergraduate research at the University of South Carolina, and we are now pushing ahead with efforts in service learning and taking classes out of the classroom. The Honors College serves all majors at the University of South Carolina. SCHC students—to generalize, although I think this is a defensible generalization—are very smart and able, they are energetic, and they are idealistic. These students can and have helped professors create better learning opportunities. Since the College includes all majors, it presents itself as an ideal unit for educational experiments, and the students are able enough to contribute to improving these experiments. My predecessors did this with undergraduate research, an effort that has now gone University-wide with the University Office of Undergraduate Research.

Undergraduate research is not for every student, but, I believe, connecting students with faculty and with concerns outside the classroom and textbook is valuable for each student. We diminish knowledge, and we diminish learning when we restrict it to the classroom. So we are developing an educational initiative, “Honors Beyond the Classroom,” that will require that students engage material in some way beyond the classroom. Although they can pursue research with a faculty member, we are also developing internship opportunities, opportunities for service learning, and opportunities to study abroad. I hope that this kind of educational innovation can be developed and adapted to the University as a whole. The Honors College can contribute to this enterprise by providing an experimental test bed, and the SCHC students will benefit by working with faculty to refine the system.

Such an effort has two parts. The College must provide opportunities, and the College has to craft a sensible and workable policy to require students to avail themselves of these opportunities. Toward the first end, some work was well underway. The College had developed an enviable set of opportunities for undergraduates to pursue research. As I arrived, my predecessor had just started developing opportunities that would build travel experiences into Honors College courses. I have significantly expanded these opportunities, and now the Honors College, approximately 7% of USC's undergraduate population, is responsible for between a quarter and a half of all educational travel by USC students. We are now starting to develop a variety of opportunities in service learning. Given both our size and the quality of our student body, we can move much faster than the University at large, and I have no doubt that these initiatives taken by the Honors College will be part of general University education in the coming decade.

Crafting a policy is in many ways a more difficult problem. The variation in ways that a student might satisfy a requirement for honors beyond the classroom is endless, and constructing a policy that is open to these variations while still calibrating them so that the requirement applies equitably to students from all majors, is difficult. I have no doubt that this process will be an iterative one and that our experience will be helpful to the University at large as it follows us down a similar path. As this article goes to press, we have just added a requirement for Honors Beyond the Classroom (3 credits) for the entering freshman class of 2008.

As my staff and I have been working through these issues, I was struck by the more general point that the Honors College was an ideal site for educational innovation and that the innovation did not have to come from the inspiration of my staff or me. To this end, I am also developing an Honors College Faculty Fellows program to institutionalize educational innovation by faculty members in the Honors College. The concept can be most simply understood as an educational sabbatical in the Honors College. A faculty member would take a year from his or her home unit and come to the Honors College to develop and test something new and interesting for undergraduate education. In addition to providing resources and a site for pursuing innovative approaches to undergraduate education, the Faculty Fellows program also provides a venue for discussion and exchange among the group of fellows with shared interests in undergraduate education but different ideas for how to improve it.

## Chapter 10: Following in the Footsteps of the Founders

So change is necessary, and change is going to happen whether one likes it or not, and change is a good thing because we learn through change, which is surely a central value of the university. With some anxiety and a hell of a quick study, I have embraced change and used it to take ownership of the College and endear myself to the unit I was thrust upon.

### **Did I Wreck the College during my First Week on the Job?**

In my first week I dealt with the two critical decisions. Faced with a proposal to establish departmental honors, I decided that this was not part of a conspiracy to ruin the Honors College, and furthermore, that departmental honors opportunities would benefit the Honors College. Honors students could pursue, most likely in disproportionate numbers, these new departmental opportunities. Furthermore, the departmental honors concept was focused on research; a senior thesis was part of the concept. A senior thesis also is required for graduating with honors from the South Carolina Honors College. So the departmental honors concept would provide more opportunities and encouragement to my students to write their senior theses and successfully graduate with honors from the South Carolina Honors College.

I did, however, insist on retaining rights to the word, “honors.” There would be no departmental honors, but instead students could earn a degree with distinction or even high distinction in, for example, philosophy, while also graduating with honors from the South Carolina Honors College. I feel pretty good about this solution.

I decided against moving the College’s administrative offices to the new residence and in favor of duking it out with my colleagues for more space on the Horseshoe. Somehow I could not abandon the romance of an office that had once been a ward for wounded confederate and union troops. Whether this was the right decision, time will tell.

# **CHAPTER 11:**

## **THE PILLARS OF COLLEGE CREATION**

**GARY M. BELL**  
**TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY**

As a young faculty member, I used to fantasize about how rewarding it would be to create and then to run my own university. I suspect that I was not alone in such dreams. I would get things right; I would make sure that all the pieces worked properly; I would be magnificently creative. As with many dreams for most people, the realization is elusive. There are not many universities being created, except for the burgeoning “for-profit” entities whose unvarnished materialism truly gets in the way of the dream.

As an additional preface, I need also to remark on the profession of honors administration—for profession it indeed has become. As I have consulted nationwide with programs, and as I have interacted with colleagues through the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), I have developed the highest respect for the women and men who serve as directors, deans, and program heads. They are idealistic to a fault. In their pursuit of academic excellence for their institutions and educational opportunities for their special cadre of students, they work inordinate numbers of hours, have some of the most student-centered perspectives in all of higher education, and genuinely want what is best for their programs. Typically, they labor hard for modest recognition or reward, and all too frequently the result is burnout; or even a loss of their position when a new and generally clueless university administration changes the circumstances of their carefully crafted programs. This is often a process that is not without pain.

By putting these two preceding factoids together and then combining them with a third academic phenomenon, the creation of honors colleges nationally, perhaps one can find therein the seeds of redemption and renewal for some of us in the honors community. Increasingly, hard-working and often inspired people are being permitted to participate in this crafting and design, one of the most widespread innovations in higher education. The development of a new college may grow out of an existing program, or it may constitute an altogether fresh start. But in the process, honors administrators are being allowed to live the dream. They are creating, if not a university, at least a significant

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component of the university. They can adopt some of the reforms that they always believed would make their institutions more effective. They can manipulate the curriculum in ways that they know will provide the best educational outcomes. They can launch some of the experiments that they have always hoped to try. They can inspire young minds, in a personalized setting, to achieve in a way they always suspected that it was possible to do. They model innovations that, with luck, they will see adopted throughout the university as the superiority of their educational perceptions become manifest to the more general enterprise. In short, they have become the educational da Vinci's of their fantasies. It is rewarding work, it is meaningful work, and, gratifyingly, it often carries the recognition that most of us cherish. Thus, the creation of honors colleges is giving some reward to an unusually enterprising, dedicated, and motivated body of people who deserve nothing less.

Such an enterprise carries with it truly daunting demands and burdens as well. With privilege comes responsibility. We preach this maxim to our students, and it pertains to our calling (and that in which we are engaged is no less than a "calling") as well. We are taking the resources that Agriculture, Engineering, and Arts and Sciences would dearly love to have, and we are using them in ways that are unprecedented and challengeable. Therefore, as the college is created, there needs to be results—and often fairly prompt results. Honors colleges indeed have the ability to attract qualitatively better students than the institution has heretofore enjoyed and to do so reasonably quickly. Another virtual given will be a notable increase in outside funds attracted to the university as a result of the college. People enjoy contributing to excellence, and there is no better symbol of excellence at a university than an honors college devoted to the highest ideals in higher education. In like vein, producing competitive students makes an enormous difference. Honors colleges typically have identifiable success with graduates going to highly regarded professional schools, to notable graduate schools, and to significant post-baccalaureate experiences. Administrators quickly notice this and recognize as well the recruitment potential and the positive retention statistics that honors colleges can also generally supply. Furthermore, honors colleges can serve as a very prestigious launching platform for winning the national and international scholarships that universities crave—the Rhodes, the Marshall, the Gates-Cambridge, the Truman, the Udall, the Goldwater. Identifying, grooming and preparing candidates for these awards should be a promptly offered and uniquely emphasized activity if it is not already

being done on campus. The college potentially can demonstrate fairly significant early results in these competitions. Nor should honors college administrators be reticent about celebrating all of the university achievements to which they have contributed—or have created by themselves, such as innovative classes, a rise in faculty morale, a new emphasis on a previously under-offered or absent activity such as undergraduate research or early admission to law or medical school. We are fond of saying in honors that every university circumstance is unique and every honors effort has to be individualized to fit the culture of the specific institution. So strong has this mantra become in NCHC that we find it virtually impossible even to consider the subject of honors accreditation, an idea that has substantial merit behind it. Yet the assumption of uniqueness truly does apply to the creation of an honors college. Thus to plot a course of creation with the certitude of universal applicability is impossible. One can argue that the “top down approach” or “college by fiat” approach, such as occurred at Texas Tech University and other institutions, insures the quickest success. But at the same time, in other institutions anything less than full faculty participation and implementation would be a recipe for failure. Rather, therefore, than developing a specific outline for the course of creation, we offer instead some philosophical and practical considerations that should accompany any move to the new structure. Perhaps we can call them the “five pillars of college creation.”

## **Pillar I**

The first pillar goes almost, but only almost, without saying. There must be a thorough plan of what one hopes to accomplish with an honors college and an awareness of how that plan fits into the unique circumstances of one’s university. Here my admonition is to think large. The first steps may need to be modest, but the overall scheme needs to be grand. For instance, one should start with the premise that a new college should ultimately do what the name implies: *Be a college*. Rather than presumptuous, this goal is basic. For example, the honors college should envision and then anticipate being led by a dean. Titles, and the participation in the appropriate university councils as a result of the new title, are important at our hierarchical institutions. Moreover, it should ultimately employ, in some fashion, an honors faculty. It should plan to become, at some point, a degree-granting entity. It should offer careful, professional, and holistic advisement. Perhaps most critically, it must offer the student services and opportunities that the more capable students uniquely need. Honors should serve the needs of the



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high-end student in the same way that so many offices at the university are already serving the under-prepared and under-performing student.

Perhaps the most critical function in this admonition to be a college is to find the niches at the university where services are not being provided, where programs are not being generated. The options can be limitless. In the category of student services, for instance, most major campuses recognize the desirability of undergraduate research opportunities. Of course, full undergraduate research does not consist just of term papers or even the ubiquitous honors senior project, although some institutions advertise it this way. Indeed, most universities do little to foster working directly with the faculty on the cutting-edge research that occurs at most campuses. An honors college can model this approach and fill the gap.

Another niche might be to provide systematic and high-quality study abroad opportunities. An honors college can provide the infrastructure to make this happen. Service learning, assistance with national and international scholarship applications, special first-year undergraduate classes and experiences, providing support for internship participation, counseling for post-baccalaureate opportunities, coordinating and advising on honoraries (some are worth joining, others are not, and generally students cannot distinguish between them) are just some of the many niches into which an honors college can insert itself. Every campus has its lapses, and the honors college can make itself the home for initiatives that the institution ultimately comes to value, about which it even brags, but which had previously not been part of the university environment.

At the same time, the plan must guard against the college becoming a dumping ground for someone's under-resourced pet project or the last bastion for a peripheral activity that has only modest relevance to the needs of high-end students. For example, a chess club or participation in Model U.N. can certainly be attractive, but one must recognize that the college does not have the resources to do everything. One must plot one's strategy to become a unique but increasingly irreplaceable part of the university's undergraduate landscape, but only in areas where the honors college can make effective and meaningful contributions to the students and to the institution.

The same argument can be made for the academic programs of the honors college. Typically great lip service is given to the importance of interdisciplinary work, but the bureaucratic obstacles to this type of study can be immense. Honors should be the vehicle for making it happen. From new courses, to tracks of study, to actual degree programs,



this is potentially the signature activity of the fledgling honors college. Honors reweaves the tapestry of the human experience. One could argue that enabling interdisciplinary studies is a major justification for the existence of an honors college in the first place.

Interdisciplinary experiences also carry with them special problems. Getting disparate departments to cooperate, solving the puzzle of professorial compensation and workload credit in team-taught, inter-departmental classes, and determining the nature of student credit hour production are just some of the challenges. The new honors college needs to specialize in resolving such issues, and thus providing the opportunities for this type of education to flourish.

Nor does the college stop with simply providing interdisciplinary opportunities. It needs to assume a leadership position in pioneering new classes. The college, with an appropriate support structure, can be a home for the class that a professor always wanted to teach, either discipline-based or focused on an acquired expertise. It may provide a class that may demand a substantial extracurricular component that a home department has been unable to subsidize. It may involve a program with an unusual combination of service, study, and travel. The permutations are endless, but with support, honors can offer flexibility and a venue for experimentation, combined with the ability to facilitate, that should become another hallmark of the new college. At an extreme, the new college could even become the home for cross-disciplinary orphan institutes or centers. These alliances should be pursued, however, only if the programs can be incorporated smoothly and managed well. In sum, finding niches, thinking creatively, and planning obsessively comprise the most important first admonition to anyone contemplating the college creation process.

## Pillar II

This first pillar or mandate in creating a college implies the second. Too often, merely the label changes: the substance of the pre-existing honors *program* remains the same except that it is now the essence of a newly created honors *college*. The evolution from a program to a college must produce real differences. If this move is being driven by marketing or recruitment offices, the re-labeling must be resisted. To call oneself an honors college without accompanying substantive change continues to have a most deleterious impact on the national honors movement. We have been coping, fairly successfully in my judgment, with the unreasonable charges of “elitism,” but we have been a little

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less effective in making sure that the term “honors college” means something different than “honors program.” As a result, the creation of an honors college as a marketing ploy can leave honors vulnerable to the allegation that honors is intellectually flabby, an academic Potemkin village.

Similarly, a mere label change creates one of the gravest dangers in academe—the “bait and switch” syndrome practiced on students who hear: “Come to university X because we have an honors college.” When students arrive, however, there is little that can be identified as unique awaiting them. In fact, in some instances, they may find little that can be called “honors” at all. This is fraud of the worst kind for it plays on the naiveté and lack of academic sophistication of the non-academic world. This is a world that only vaguely understands our labels and our functions. Ethics alone should cause one to eschew a “bait and switch” operation. Again, circumstances vary enormously from institution to institution. For instance, thorough substantive changes at one institution may be unattainable, undesirable, or premature at another. The creation process is evolutionary. Just as an example, the contentious objective of developing a stand-alone honors faculty as a prerequisite to college status comes most immediately to mind. This is possibly unachievable, at least initially, but not to have an honors faculty is not to invalidate other substantive changes that may have taken place. In like manner, some “programs” are so highly developed that the change of name to “college” is logical and natural. So judgment must be exercised, but the warning not to let enrollment management, marketing, or higher-echelon administrators swept up in their enthusiasms drive the process is sacred and immutable.

### **Pillar III**

Our third pillar involves a shibboleth. A popular cliché observes that management would be a great job if it were not for the personnel issues. While this represents the universal lament of administrators, it is critical for the fledgling honors college to make the very best personnel decisions possible. For one thing, the operation will, at least initially, be very small indeed, and thus every employee takes on disproportionate importance. Those employees will of necessity be multi-taskers, they will be key advisors both to the dean and to the students, and they will, with their behaviors, substantially set a tone for the nature of the operation. Everything one says here, about a good work ethic, about principled and trustworthy behavior, about loyalty to the vision of the

local honors endeavor and to its management team, strays again into the realm of platitude, but two admonitions are paramount.

One has to do with credentialing. Long a believer that anyone, with the proper attitude and training, can, within clearly defined parameters, do virtually anything, I have veered rather abruptly into an advocacy of credentialing. As a colleague recently put it, there really is something to the “baptism by fire,” to the “scholarly seasoning” of having earned a doctorate. The new college needs to use academically trained people from the outset for its key administrative positions. If they have an honors background, so much the better. These people lend credibility to the organization among campus peers who are inclined to be skeptical and perhaps a little resentful anyway about the academic reality of an honors college.

A second admonition has to do with academic experience. Ph.D.-holding college administrators need further refinement through the leaven of experience. If at all possible, and as the personnel roster evolves, the credentialed candidates for the honors college positions should be people who have worked with the demands and the vagaries of the academic world. Assistant or associate deanships are substantial prizes, and in an increasingly professionalized honors environment, honors college leadership can now chart a career path that could mean an ultimate deanship, and perhaps other academic positions of equal or greater rank. No longer just a career *cul-de-sac*, honors can expect to attract people of idealism, who can also provide substantial backgrounds in student affairs, curriculum development, or departmental oversight. Youthful energy is valuable, but provides only a modest substitute for measured knowledgeableness and mature reflection. Maturity, of course, is not simply a chronological designation, but a value to treasure when found.

## **Pillar IV**

Budgets are never adequate, we should note at the outset of this fourth pillar or admonition in the college creation process. No matter what resources one receives, so much more could be done. Realism, however, tempers our aspirations: we typically make do with what we can secure. In honors, however, another phenomenon is pervasive and debilitating. Realism is subordinated to what can be termed “hopeful anticipation.” This takes a variety of forms, fed by the epic idealism of honors administrators. On one level, directors assume that if they can just hold on for another budget cycle, recognition for their program

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will be forthcoming, and resources will be more liberal. Another level of “hopeful anticipation” sees us rationalizing that times are straitened, so we resist putting pressure on higher administration because they face so many other demands. (As an aside, I have never known, since 1968, a time that was not “straitened.”) Perhaps most perniciously, university leadership offers the not always subtle suggestion that honors, the less established “new kid,” needs to pay its own way. An underfunded program, in other words, must rely on the kindness of strangers. The response here, to paraphrase one of the stalwarts of the honors movement, is to wonder whether or not English or Political Science is expected to provide their own resources. If they are not, why then should honors be expected to do so?

The excuses for underfunding multiply, beginning, of course, with the old standby that a problem cannot be solved by throwing money at it. Perhaps one ought to check with the NFL or, better yet, the local athletic establishment for a reality check on this one. Following from and bolstering this assumption, I have observed that upper administrations throughout the nation have come to rely too heavily on the extraordinary time commitments that honors personnel have been willing to undertake. These administrators therefore can expect to skate by on the excessive contributions that are made as a substitute for sufficient resources and support. I have a suggestion in this regard: honors administrators should simply keep a realistic and very detailed log, over a three to six month period, of how many hours they spend on honors-related activities, including those pesky, time-consuming letters of recommendation. The log will reveal surprising results, and it also serves as effective ammunition when talking to supervisors about adequate funding and staffing levels.

Regarding the issue of honors college funding, we simply have no national statistics about budgets or costs per student to fund an honors college. In their absence, generalizations about what constitutes adequacy are elusive, but some guidelines are discoverable. In general, a minimum personnel commitment, with the commensurate salary and benefits budget, for a new honors college of at least 300 students (any fewer leads to questions about whether or not one needs college status), would be a dean, an assistant dean, an assistant to the dean for clerical and financial matters, and an advisor/program coordinator. How much this total would be depends entirely on local circumstances. Honors deans, being a relatively new designation, are paid in the most wide-ranging amounts. Further, it seems inconceivable that a new college would not have an obligation to pay something for instruction in

honors classes, and thus would need a recommended minimum allocation of around \$100,000.00 for this purpose. Finally, special programming (depending on what university niches one fills) and providing for both student and everyday college needs, including operation and maintenance, would necessitate a minimum of about \$150,000.00 to \$200,000.00. These estimates represent broadly suggestive figures, with percentages reconfigured depending on the size and scope of one's local effort, but they constitute a starting point, and more importantly, they may serve as a reality check as to whether or not an administration, despite its appealing rhetoric, is serious about the inauguration of an honors college. The promises of future funding should not be mistaken for a firm commitment. Budget considerations serve, in my judgment, as the absolutely final indicator of what the school truly intends to do. If the financial support is not available, then one should beware of investing substantial effort.

Several final elements need to be worked into the financial picture of the new college. Either local policy in the case of private institutions or state restrictions in the case of the publics can prohibit some funds from being used for food, drink, or student travel. New honors leaders must have access to discretionary money that allows them to provide for this peripheral but critical function of an honors college. Similarly, the college needs to be able to make some scholarship awards to some college participants. Both of these elements will provide for a much more effective new organization.

## **Pillar V**

The fifth and final pillar relates to personal considerations. I have already amply alluded to idealism and to honors people having an admirable propensity to do whatever it takes to serve the students and to maintain a viable enterprise. An honors college, because it involves so much more in scope and responsibility, tends to be even more taxing on personnel. This is especially true of the new dean or director of the honors college. Although a little disconcerting, the hourly log is a good idea, if only to indicate to oneself how much effort one is truly investing. Therefore, in order to succeed, deans must be measured and reasonable about time commitments. Yes, deans will face busy times, especially those clustered around recruitment or development drives. Yes, the endless letters of recommendation must be done. Yes, the personnel issues and the interaction with the students are things to which they must attend, the former to maintain morale, the latter because personal attention is the *sine qua non* of honors education.

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Further, many deans continue to teach, in part because upper administrators, in dealing with the largely unfamiliar territory of honors, and having no clear idea of what is involved, demand a teaching load of one or two classes per semester. Others teach, not because they are expected to do so, but because teaching helps keep them in touch with student concerns; because the college always needs the innovative class that only they are prepared to handle; and because, in the last analysis, this is the reason that most honors administrators went into academe. Teaching has such huge intrinsic rewards that, in my judgment, we need professionally to indulge ourselves.

Some of us even try to maintain a modest research commitment, another one of the joys of the profession. But the chances are very good that if a dean has made an honors commitment, research will not remain a priority. When one puts all of the foregoing together, the potential for the “three-year burn-out” of NCHC legend is virtually assured. If deans leave because of excessive work, then they are not doing the program the good that could be done, and they are basically letting the job master them. Deans need to jealously guard their time in order, in the last analysis, to protect the college.

Observing these tips may keep the honors commitment in perspective. Above all, deans must make sure that at least one day per week is free from administrative or even teaching responsibilities. That break is psychologically crucial. E-mail, the bane of our modern existence, needs to be handled in a strict priority fashion. Deans, furthermore, must learn to say “no.” People will approach constantly with suggestions about assuming additional responsibilities. Knowing precisely what can be done and what will overburden is critical. Honors administrators will always put pressure on themselves to do more for students, but again this must be avoided. And the same holds true from an institutional perspective. Maybe, for example, there just is not time to plan adequately for the highly desirable but non-essential study abroad program. One must constantly ask oneself if some newly considered task is the proverbial straw.

We have an almost unparalleled opportunity in honors-oriented higher education to make a difference—and to live the dream. The work that we undertake in building a new honors college, if that chance is available, can have enormous consequences in terms of the joy of being a creator, of assisting students to a maximum degree, and of leaving a legacy of accomplishment and progress for the university. Although there are pitfalls, they can be avoided by developing a sound, rational approach to the task of creating an honors college. To

Gary M. Bell

paraphrase but also to confute an old saw, in developing and then maintaining an honors college, one can both “teach” and “do.”





## **APPENDIX A:**

### **Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program**

No one model of an Honors program can be superimposed on all types of institutions. However, there are characteristics that are common to successful, fully developed Honors programs. Listed below are those characteristics, although not all characteristics are necessary for an Honors program to be considered a successful and/or fully developed Honors program.

- A fully developed Honors program should be carefully set up to accommodate the special needs and abilities of the undergraduate students it is designed to serve. This entails identifying the targeted student population by some clearly articulated set of criteria (e.g., GPA, SAT score, a written essay). A program with open admission needs to spell out expectations for retention in the program and for satisfactory completion of program requirements.
- The program should have a clear mandate from the institutional administration ideally in the form of a mission statement clearly stating the objectives and responsibilities of the program and defining its place in both the administrative and academic structure of the institution. This mandate or mission statement should be such as to assure the permanence and stability of the program by guaranteeing an adequate budget and by avoiding any tendency to force the program to depend on temporary or spasmodic dedication of particular faculty members or administrators. In other words, the program should be fully institutionalized so as to build thereby a genuine tradition of excellence.
- The Honors director should report to the chief academic officer of the institution.
- There should be an Honors curriculum featuring special courses, seminars, colloquia, and independent study established in harmony with the mission statement and in response to the needs of the program.
- The program requirements themselves should include a substantial portion of the participants' undergraduate work, usually in the vicinity of 20% to 25% of their total course work and certainly no less than 15%.

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- The program should be so formulated that it relates effectively both to all the college work for the degree (e.g., by satisfying general education requirements) and to the area of concentration, departmental specialization, pre-professional or professional training.
- The program should be both visible and highly reputed throughout the institution so that it is perceived as providing standards and models of excellence for students and faculty across the campus.
- Faculty participating in the program should be fully identified with the aims of the program. They should be carefully selected on the basis of exceptional teaching skills and the ability to provide intellectual leadership to able students.
- The program should occupy suitable quarters constituting an Honors center with such facilities as an Honors library, lounge, reading rooms, personal computers and other appropriate decor.
- The director or other administrative officer charged with administering the program should work in close collaboration with a committee or council of faculty members representing the colleges and/or departments served by the program.
- The program should have in place a committee of Honors students to serve as liaison with the Honors faculty committee or council who must keep them fully informed on the program and elicit their cooperation in evaluation and development. This student group should enjoy as much autonomy as possible conducting the business of the committee in representing the needs and concerns of all Honors students to the administration, and it should also be included in governance, serving on the advisory/policy committee as well as constituting the group that governs the student association.
- There should be provisions for special academic counseling of Honors students by uniquely qualified faculty and/or staff personnel.
- The Honors program, in distinguishing itself from the rest of the institution, serves as a kind of laboratory within which faculty can try things they have always wanted to try but for which they could find no suitable outlet. When such efforts are demonstrated to be successful, they may well become institutionalized thereby raising the general level of education within the college or university for all students. In this connection, the Honors curriculum should serve as a prototype for things that can work campus-wide in the future.

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- The fully developed Honors program must be open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change in order to maintain its distinctive position of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution.
- A fully developed program will emphasize the participatory nature of the Honors educational process by adopting such measures as offering opportunities for students to participate in regional and national conferences, Honors semesters, international programs, community service, and other types of experiential education.
- Fully developed two-year and four-year Honors programs will have articulation agreements by which Honors graduates from two-year colleges are accepted into four-year Honors programs when they meet previously agreed-upon requirements.
- A fully developed program will provide priority enrollment for honors students who are active in the program in recognition of their unique class scheduling needs.

(Approved by the NCHC Executive Committee on March 4, 1994, and amended by the NCHC Board of Directors on November 23, 2007)



## **APPENDIX B:**

### **Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College**

An Honors educational experience can occur in a wide variety of institutional settings. When institutions establish an Honors college or embark upon a transition from an Honors program to an Honors college, they face a transformational moment. No one model defines this transformation. Although not all of the following characteristics are necessary to be considered a successful or fully developed Honors college, the National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes these as representative:

- A fully developed Honors college should incorporate the relevant characteristics of a fully developed Honors program.
- A fully developed Honors college should exist as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate university structure.
- The head of a fully developed Honors college should be a dean reporting directly to the chief academic officer of the institution and serving as a full member of the Council of Deans, if one exists. The dean should be a full-time, 12-month appointment.
- The operational and staff budgets of fully developed Honors colleges should provide resources at least comparable to other collegiate units of equivalent size.
- A fully developed Honors college should exercise increased coordination and control of departmental Honors where the college has emerged out of such a decentralized system.
- A fully developed Honors college should exercise considerable control over Honors recruitment and admissions, including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the Honors college should be by separate application.
- An Honors college should exercise considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty.
- The curriculum of a fully developed Honors college should offer significant course opportunities across all four years of study.
- The curriculum of the fully developed Honors college should constitute at least 20% of a student's degree program. An Honors thesis or project should be required.

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- Where the home university has a significant residential component, the fully developed Honors college should offer substantial Honors residential opportunities.
- The distinction awarded by a fully developed Honors college should be announced at commencement, noted on the diploma, and featured on the student's final transcript.
- Like other colleges within the university, a fully developed Honors college should be involved in alumni affairs and development and should have an external advisory board.

Approved by the NCHC Executive Committee June 2005

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Larry Andrews** is recently retired Dean of the Honors College at Kent State University <<http://www.kent.edu/honors>> in Kent, Ohio, having served 1993–2007. He is a member of the NCHC Publications Board and the *Honors in Practice* Editorial Board, served as president of the Mid-East Honors Association, and recently completed a term on the NCHC Board of Directors.

**Davis Baird** is Professor of Philosophy and Dean of the South Carolina Honors College at the University of South Carolina <<http://schc.sc.edu>>. He also is a founding member of the *nano*Science and Technology Studies Group in the USC NanoCenter. Currently Baird is developing “Honors Beyond the Classroom,” which embraces service learning, undergraduate research, internships, and study-on-the-road initiatives for the College.

**Gary Bell** is Founding Dean of the Texas Tech University Honors College (begun in 1998; <<http://www.depts.ttu.edu/honors>>). The conversion to a college took place after he was charged with revitalizing the honors program, in 1993. Previously, he was the founding director of the Sam Houston State University Honors Program. He is by training a professor of Tudor-Stuart British history.

**Alexandria Holloway** is Dean of The Honors College at Miami Dade College <<http://www.mdc.edu/honorscollege>>. Having previously served as Academic Dean, she established The Honors College in 2002. The Honors College is available to students on four campuses and includes a separate dual language curriculum at the InterAmerican campus for students who are proficient in both English and Spanish.

**Ted Humphrey** is President’s Professor, Barrett Professor, Lincoln Professor of Ethics and Professor of Philosophy in Barrett, the honors college at Arizona State University <<http://honors.asu.edu>>. He is founding dean of that honors college, a position he held for fifteen years, during which time he oversaw the college’s growth to 2,700 students and received a naming endowment of \$10,000,000 from Barbara and Craig Barrett. He served as NCHC President in 1989–90 and was recently named President of Arizona State University’s Distinguished Teaching Academy.

## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Rosalie Otero** is an associate professor and director of the Honors Program at the University of New Mexico <<http://www.unm.edu/~honors>>. She has been the director since 1992. She served as NCHC President in 2001–02 and has been serving as Co-Chair of the Assessment and Evaluation Committee for several years. She was also elected to the NCHC Board of Directors in 2007.

**Nancy Kason Poulson** is Professor of Spanish and Latin American Studies at Florida Atlantic University. She was the Associate Dean of the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College at FAU from 1999–2004 and Interim Dean from 2004–2006. See <<http://www.honorscollege.edu>> for more information.

**Donald Publius** is an associate professor in the Department of English at Flagship State University. He was director of the honors program from 2000 to 2005 and interim head of the honors college, 2005–2006. The college recently received a \$3,000,000 naming gift from AdvanceAmerica. The program's website has been removed while that for "AdvanceAmerica Honors College" is under construction.

**Peter Sederberg** is distinguished Professor Emeritus in the Department of Political Science at the University of South Carolina and Dean Emeritus of the South Carolina Honors College <<http://schc.sc.edu>>. He helped develop and implement the proposal for the USC honors college in 1975–1976 and served as dean of the college from 1994–2005. He chaired the NCHC committee that drafted "The Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College." He currently serves as Special Assistant to the Provost for Undergraduate Initiatives at Emory University.

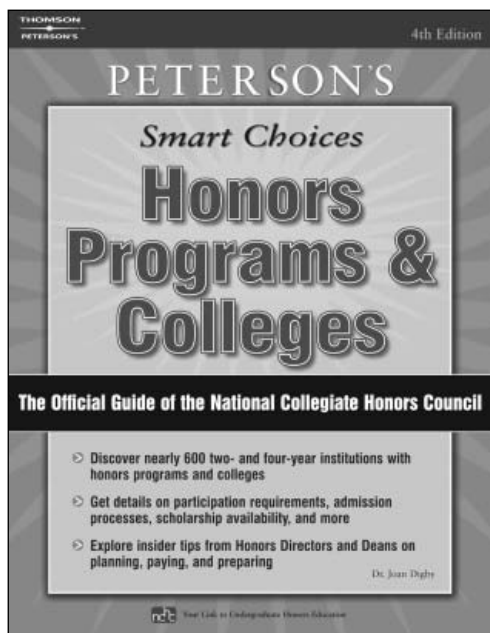
**Bob Pepperman Taylor** served as the founding dean of the University of Vermont Honors College <<http://www.uvm.edu/honorscollege>> from 2003–2007. He is Professor of Political Science.



## NOTES

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# NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL MONOGRAPHS & JOURNALS

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

*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.

*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 (Second Edition, 1999, 53pp). How to implement an honors program, with particular emphasis on colleges with fewer than 3000 students.

*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.

*Place as Text: Approaches to Active Learning* edited by Bernice Braid and Ada Long (2000, 104pp). Information and practical advice on the experiential pedagogies developed within NCHC during the past 25 years, using Honors Semesters and City as Text™ as models, along with suggestions for how to adapt these models to a variety of educational contexts.

*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.

*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.