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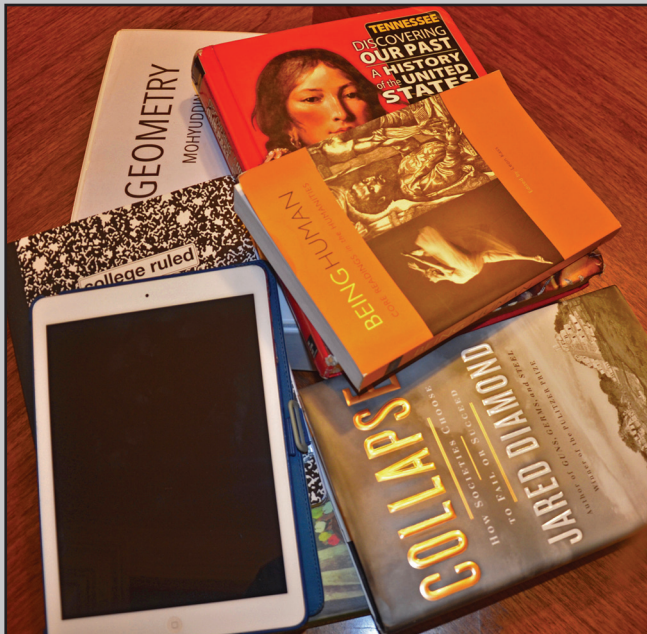
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JNCHC

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council

Forum on AP and Dual Enrollment Credit in Honors

Vol. 17, No. 2 | Fall/Winter 2016



Journal

OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

AP AND DUAL ENROLLMENT CREDIT IN HONORS

JOURNAL EDITORS

Ada Long and Dail Mullins

University of Alabama at Birmingham

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

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Cover photo by Linda Frost

CALL FOR PAPERS

The next issue of *JNCHC* (**deadline: March 1, 2017**) invites research essays on any topic of interest to the honors community.

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

The lead essay for the Forum, posted on the NCHC website <<http://nchchonors.org/jnchc-lead-essay-first-do-no-harm>>, is by Lia Rushton, formerly National Scholarship Advisor at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Based on her experience, Rushton provides thoughtful and nuanced perspectives on the role of scholarship advisors in her essay “First, Do No Harm.” She considers the opportunities and pitfalls of the application process for successful and unsuccessful students as well as the faculty and staff who support these students in what can be a life-changing experience, for better or worse. From her experience in helping students win Rhodes, Marshall, Goldwater, and Truman scholarships among many others, Rushton distills both general and particular suggestions for making the process beneficial for all involved.

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

Questions that Forum contributors might consider include: Has the expanded focus on competition for national scholarships enhanced or diminished the quality of honors education? Should potential candidates for national scholarships be identified as incoming freshmen or as students who have already proven successful in college? Should national scholarship advisors, whose numbers have proliferated rapidly in the past two decades, be housed in and associated with honors or operate independently of honors? What ethical complexities arise from the amount of help available to national scholarship applicants? Do national scholarship candidates take on a role similar to athletes in boosting an institution’s reputation and rankings, and what are the consequences for the students? Does the competition for national scholarships help focus students’ interests in scholarship, extracurricular commitments, study abroad, and/or service activities? Does the competition broaden or narrow students’ interests? Does the competition enhance or disrupt the sense of community often associated with honors?

Forum essays should focus on ideas, concepts, and/or opinions related to “National Scholarships and Honors” and not just on practices at individual institutions.

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

EDITORIAL POLICY

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

DEADLINES

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

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

We accept material by email attachment in Word (not pdf). We do not accept material by fax or hard copy.

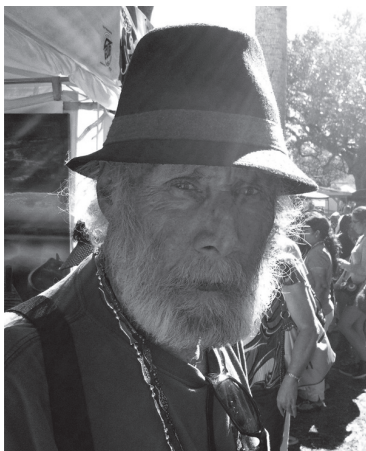
The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.), but please avoid footnotes. Internal citation to a list of references (bibliography) is strongly preferred, and the editor will revise all internal citations in accordance with MLA guidelines.

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

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

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

DEDICATION



Dail W. Mullins, Jr.
1944-2016

by Ada Long

Dail Mullins and I started team-teaching together in the UAB Honors Program in 1984 and continued our teaching partnership for twenty years, during which I taught literature and he taught science in semester-long courses with titles like “Science and Religion on a Pale Blue Dot,” “The Earth in Our Shadow,” and “What We know and Why We Know It.”

Dail was a biochemist, and after he became first a teacher and then associate director of the honors program, he was always just a little nostalgic for benchtop science, but he consoled himself by devising lectures like “The Fate of the Earth,” “Dead Bees and Homosexual Flies,” and “Human Rights and the Crunch to Come,” earning him the title “Dr. Doom.” The students adored him.

Already partners in honors teaching and administration, in 1990 we became partners in life as well, hosting raucous annual parties for honors students and faculty in our downtown loft, feeding them dinner in smaller groups, putting them up when they didn’t have a place to stay, bailing them out of financial difficulties and occasionally jail, and in 2002 introducing his son,

Chris, to our all-time favorite honors student, now Ashley Mullins. Fifteen months ago, Chris and Ashley gave us an adorable granddaughter, Cleo.

In 2000, we became partners in founding the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, which we have co-edited ever since. After we retired to an island in 2004, we founded the other NCHC journal, *Honors in Practice*, which we also co-edited together until his death on September 28, a day after he finished proofreading one of the essays for this issue of *JNCHC*.

As editors, we didn't agree on everything. I didn't like his commas, and he thought my sentences were too long. But our tastes were so alike that they were nearly interchangeable, and when Dail would say "Sweetie! Is this 52-page analysis of data on a 15-student honors seminar *for real?!;*" I knew I had an "I regret to inform you" letter on my hands.

As in all our partnerships, we played different roles. In the NCHC, Dail headed the Science and Math Committee, for instance, while I worked on Honors Semesters, but we always found a way to merge the roles, as in the NCHC Faculty Institute we co-facilitated on "Island as Text: Coastal Ecology and Culture" on Skidaway and Tybee Islands in 2003.

On our own island, we ran the annual county-wide coastal cleanup and the St. George Island Trash Patrol, where I would get everybody organized with my trusty clipboard and Dail would haul tons of trash in his old Ford pickup. Also on our island, we hosted several meetings of the Honors Semesters Committee and the Publications Board; he made the gumbo, and I made the ceviche.

As always in honors, students should have the last word, and this collage of his students' words about Dail characterize his legacy:

"A legend is gone; the world is a darker place. . . . Dail Mullins, aka Dr. Doom, was irreverent, fun, open-minded, and blindingly intelligent. . . . Dail had a child-like curiosity paired with a fierce intellect. . . . He was hilarious, gentle but tough as old boots, loving, sharp as a tack, fun, intelligent, irreplaceable. . . . For all his Dr. Doom bluster, Dail Mullins was a sweet soul who liked to take care of others. He noticed the details not just of the universe, but of the individual. . . . He was a great guy who would make you have to think even if you didn't want to. . . . I am grateful for my time with him. My condolences to Ada Long and the universe. . . . I'll see you in the cosmos, dear teacher, dear friend."



EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Ada Long

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

Honors students have long entered college with Advanced Placement credits already on their transcript, but in recent years the number of these credits has increased dramatically. At the same time, the more recent phenomenon of dual enrollment credits has ballooned. In a recent article called “As Dual Enrollments Swell, So Do Worries about Rigor,” Katherine Mangan writes, “Fueled by desires to cut college costs and improve access to underserved students, enrollment in dual-credit classes has been growing at a clip of about 7 percent a year nationally” (*The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 5 Aug. 2016, A8). While the possibility of decreased rigor is an institution-wide concern, honors programs and colleges confront the additional concern that, because the credits that students bring with them when they matriculate are concentrated in the liberal arts, incoming students have already fulfilled some, many, or most requirements of a traditional honors curriculum. Consequently, students who would otherwise be excellent candidates for honors are choosing to take the more cost-efficient route toward a diploma and to bypass honors. While some honors administrators might choose to see this trend in a positive light as a way to weed out students who want the status but not the challenge of an honors education, most are struggling to adapt to the trend’s challenges to curricular integrity, academic rigor, diversity, and even survival within the numbers-driven context of higher education today.

Now is thus an opportune time for a *JNCHC* Forum focused on the theme “AP and Dual Enrollment Credit in Honors.” We invited NCHC members to read a lead essay by Annmarie Guzy and respond to issues she raises or address other questions arising from increased AP and dual enrollment credits among potential honors students:

Is the increase in AP and dual enrollment credit a crisis for honors? What are the best ways for the NCHC and for individual honors programs and colleges to react to the increases in AP and dual enrollment credits? Should honors programs/colleges hold the line and insist on the value of their traditional offerings? Should community-building opportunities replace a traditional curriculum as the core of honors? Should honors opportunities like study abroad, experiential learning, and service projects replace liberal arts courses as

a way to lure students into honors? Should honors education shift its focus away from lower-division requirements toward upper-level seminars, projects, and theses? Should honors reduce requirements or eliminate them altogether? Should the NCHC launch a lobbying effort to stop states from mandating accepting AP/dual enrollment credits? Should the honors community accept the tide of AP/dual enrollment and welcome the opportunity to downsize, focusing on those students for whom time and money are less important than the best education?

In her lead essay, “AP, Dual Enrollment, and the Survival of Honors Education,” Annmarie Guzy of the University of South Alabama launches the discussion of what she sees as an emerging crisis in honors education. She observes that most honors programs and colleges substitute rigorous and innovative honors courses for general education requirements. As students now enroll in college with general education credits through AP and dual enrollment, she argues, the incentive to save time and money by foregoing honors is substantial, threatening the traditional core of honors education. With legislatures mandating that public colleges and universities accept AP and dual enrollment credits, the cultural focus has shifted away from getting a well-rounded education to getting a degree as quickly and cheaply as possible. Guzy discusses this trend and suggests provocative solutions for the honors community that include the possibility of reducing or eliminating required honors courses.

Three of the five other contributors to the Forum agree with Guzy that honors must adapt in order to survive, and they present an optimistic picture of successful adaptations. In “Rethinking Honors Curriculum in Light of the AP/IB/Dual Enrollment Challenge: Innovation and Curricular Flexibility,” David Coleman and Katie Patton describe a new “Honors Flex” curriculum at Eastern Kentucky University, which mostly dismantles the previous required curriculum, replacing it with “a broad buffet of cross-listed, team-taught, interdisciplinary, topical honors seminars that [honors students] may use to fit into the General Education categories that they have not already fulfilled via AP, IB, or Dual Enrollment credit.” The authors claim that, in the innovative spirit of honors, they have created a curriculum that is beneficial and satisfying to students, faculty, and administrators.

Karen D. Youmans suggests an alternative adaptation in her essay “Using Hybrid Courses to Enhance Honors Offerings in the Disciplines.” She describes a shift at Oklahoma City University from a strict general education

model of honors offerings to a more discipline-centered curriculum, in which students take regular course requirements in the disciplines with an added "Honors Supplement Syllabus," essentially a contract model in which honors students work collectively and not just individually to enrich a regular course offering. Youmans describes the benefits of this approach, which include greater access and flexibility for students, increased quality of regular disciplinary requirements, and rethinking of "the honors classroom, enabling us to look beyond the stark dichotomy between honors and non-honors courses."

In "A Dual Perspective on AP, Dual Enrollment, and Honors," Heather C. Camp and Giovanna E. Walters present a dialogue on the challenges and benefits of the increased AP and dual enrollment credits that honors students bring to Minnesota State University, Mankato. Camp is a faculty member in honors and director of composition, and Walters is an honors advisor and instructor. The authors describe the institutional mandate to encourage dual enrollment as a way to increase income to the university; they acknowledge the problems that arise from college courses taught by rural high school teachers who "lack the materials, time, and rewards to sustain and innovate their college-level teaching"; and they nevertheless welcome the opportunity to think in new ways about honors education, not just in curriculum adjustments but in collaborative partnerships with high school teachers, "envisioning high school teachers as colleagues in light of the significant role they are playing in providing today's college education."

The other two contributors to the Forum are not quite so comfortable and optimistic about college credit offered in high school. In "Got AP?" Joan Digby of LIU Post takes a balanced view, noting the benefits of AP credit and having no trouble accepting them as replacements for honors courses. She appreciates the cost savings and also values the emphasis on the classics in AP English courses, adding that AP classes "can help boost self-esteem and academic confidence. I do not want to be the person to diminish what they have achieved." At the same times, she remarks that "college is in every way different from high school, even from high school classes that pretend to be college" and that AP or dual enrollment courses are not college equivalents despite claims to the contrary. At the same time, she is hardly optimistic about college courses either, even in honors, where the "idea of teaching students how to think and how to expand their intellectual and cultural world has been overwhelmed by utilitarian ends."

The title "AP: Not a Replacement for Challenging College Coursework" is a clear giveaway of the position taken by Margaret Walsh of Keene State

College. Conceding the cost incentives of taking AP and dual enrollment courses, she argues that the focus on acceleration that justifies these pre-college credits is incompatible with the goals of honors, in which students should “shift their focus from getting *out of* course requirements to getting *into* new and different courses to advance their capacity to learn.” While AP and dual enrollment courses have a positive effect in high school, they are in no way equivalent to and should not substitute for honors courses in college: “[N]ow they no longer need to accelerate their education. They need to deepen it.”

* * *

The first of eight research essays in this issue is by Traci L. M. Dula of the University of Maryland. In “The ICSS and the Development of Black Collegiate Honors Education in the U.S.,” Dula provides an in-depth history of interactions between the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student, the precursor of the NCHC, and the multiple programs that had been targeting high-ability students since the 1920s at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Providing important information previously unavailable in the honors literature, Dula shows that Frank Aydelotte and his faculty, who are commonly credited with initiating honors education in the United States during the 1920s, seem to have ignored or dismissed honors-type developments at HBCUs. Joseph Cohen, however, who led the development and activities of the ICSS from 1957 until 1965, visited and actively supported the development of honors education at HBCUs. Dula provides the historical background—especially in the context of race and civil rights—for the evolution of honors at HBCUs and Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) and for the evolving interactions between them.

Another essay that presents an interesting new context for understanding honors is “Reading Place, Reading Landscape: A Consideration of City as TextTM and Geography” by Ellen Hostetter of the University of Central Arkansas. Hostetter compares the rich traditions of NCHC’s signature program City as TextTM (CAT) and the discipline of landscape geography. Categories of exploration that landscape geography can offer to buttress CAT strategies include, she writes, “landscape as unwitting autobiography, landscape as an act of will, landscape in a continuous process of becoming, landscape as power, and object orientation vs. people orientation.” Both the overlaps and the distinctions between the professional practices, goals, and theoretical perspectives of the two approaches enrich the possibilities for deeper readings of place.

The remaining six research essays are data-based, beginning with “Demography of Honors: Comparing NCHC Members and Non-Members” by Patricia J. Smith and Richard I. Scott of the University of Central Arkansas. Adding to their previous analysis in “Demography of Honors: The National Landscape of Honors Education” (*JNCHC* 17.1: 73–91), the authors “examine structural features, engagement with regional honors councils, and reasons that non-member institutions’ administrators give for not joining NCHC.” While NCHC members make up more than half of all the 1,503 institutions offering honors education, 640 institutions are eligible to join but have not become members. Among other kinds of findings about institutional and structural differences between member and non-member programs, the survey revealed that the two primary reasons non-members gave for not joining NCHC were expense and lack of awareness, with a small subset indicating that NCHC did not meet their needs. Based on these results, the authors recommend potential strategies to improve NCHC’s outreach.

Addressing an almost universal question that potential recruits ask about honors—whether it will hurt their GPA—Art L. Spisak and Suzanne Carter Squires have produced a study at the University of Iowa to provide an answer. In “The Effect of Honors Courses on Grade Point Averages,” the authors first describe a study that examined two groups of students, all of whom had been automatically admitted to the honors program; in the two-year span of the study, one group took at least two honors courses, and the other group took none. At the end of the study, the GPAs of the two groups were statistically the same. Five years later the authors conducted a second study comparing honors GPAs to overall GPAs among students who had completed at least twelve hours in honors during their first two years, and this study showed that honors and overall GPAs were also statistically the same. Both studies thus demonstrated that “honors courses do not adversely affect the GPAs of honors students,” providing support to honors recruiters who assert that participation in honors does not endanger academic performance.

A question of concern to honors administrators is how best to support students writing honors theses, which are required at three quarters of honors programs at four-year institutions. In “Honors Thesis Preparation: Evidence of the Benefits of Structured Curricula,” Steven Engel of Georgia Southern University reports on a six-year study of four hundred honors students that compared the success of three models: a seminar-based curriculum designed to teach students about thesis writing; an apprenticeship model, most common in the sciences; and no formal structure. The data led to the following

conclusions: “The apprenticeship model led students to stronger gains over the other two models on three dimensions: interaction and communication skills, professional development, and professional advancement. Seminars led to stronger results over the other two models on only one dimension: knowledge synthesis.” Whether the support took the form of seminars or apprenticeships, the study provided “quantitative evidence for the benefits of curriculum structures designed to help students complete honors theses.”

Another issue of interest to honors administrators is the role of digital competency in the curricular focus of honors education. In “A Digital Literacy Initiative in Honors: Perceptions of Students and Instructors about its Impact on Learning and Pedagogy,” Jacob Alan English describes a study of the Digital Literacy Initiative (DLI) that incorporated digital skills into fourteen honors classes within the Georgia State University Honors College. The study includes both quantitative and qualitative analyses indicating the benefits to both students and faculty as well as demonstrating that “intentional technology integration is appropriate for honors education.” As English writes, the essay “introduces a digital literacy model for honors education, provides concrete examples for implementation, assesses the impact of the model on learning and pedagogy, and continues the digital conversation in the honors community.”

In “Helping the Me Generation Decenter: Service Learning with Refugees,” LouAnne B. Hawkins and Leslie G. Kaplan describe a study at the University of North Florida that compared two groups of students in an honors colloquium; all the students attended the same lectures and other traditional course activities, but one group interacted directly with refugees in the local community, and the other group did refugee-related projects but did not interact directly with the refugees. Based on both qualitative and quantitative examination of the two groups as well as external review of the students’ end-of-semester posters, the authors conclude that the interactive group more successfully “decentered,” as revealed in their greater increase in empathy and decrease in narcissism.

The final essay—“The Honors College Experience Reconsidered: Exploring the Student Perspective”—is by James H. Young, III, of Belhaven University; Lachel Story, Samantha Tarver, and Ellen Weinauer of the University of Southern Mississippi; Julia Keeler of Forrest County Hospital in Hattiesburg, Mississippi; and Allison McQuirter of Yazoo Family Healthcare in Yazoo County, Mississippi. The essay describes a study designed to “assess student perspectives on programming and experiences among current

honors college students” at the University of Southern Mississippi (USM). The researchers created three focus groups of honors students, who during two-hour sessions described their honors experience in terms of “connectedness, community, and opportunity.” Based on these results, the USM Honors College has, for instance, revised its vision and mission statements, promotional materials, website, and recruitment plan. The authors believe that their study validates the importance of student input in program development and assessment.

Journal

OF THE National Collegiate Honors Council

**FORUM ON
AP AND DUAL ENROLLMENT
CREDIT IN HONORS**

AP, Dual Enrollment, and the Survival of Honors Education

ANNMARIE GUZY

University of South Alabama

At the NCHC annual conferences, in publications, and on the discussion list, honors educators frequently compare admissions criteria for individual programs and colleges, including minimum ACT and SAT scores, high school coursework and GPAs, and AP and IB credits and scores. In light of the seismic issues NCHC has faced over the past two decades—significant restructuring of governance, establishment of a central office, the accreditation debate—matters of admissions criteria and freshmen with incoming credits seem mundane, but a new admissions crisis has begun to emerge in the honors community. In an increasing number of states, legislatures are mandating uniform minimum AP and dual enrollment credits that public colleges and universities must accept, and consequently the honors students we have admitted based in part on their willingness to take on challenging coursework such as AP classes are now struggling to find enough liberal-arts-based honors electives to complete an honors program.

Neither parents nor state legislatures want to continue paying the ever-escalating costs of higher education, so fast-tracking students through a

bachelor's degree program in three years has become particularly attractive. Reports of freshmen coming into public institutions with 30–60 credit hours are becoming more frequent. The intensely competitive twenty-first-century high school recruitment process readily exploits parents' tuition fears by hard-selling AP and IB programs and dual enrollment, touting their "Best High School" rankings in *U.S. News & World Report*. For example, I learned from students in my fall 2014 and fall 2015 Honors Composition courses that one local high school is now paying students \$100 per test for simply taking each of the four core AP tests, regardless of score, and thus improving the school's "tests taken" rating. The students confessed that they were not as concerned about their scores as they were about getting paid \$400. In turn, the schools claim that they will not only rigorously prepare students for their schools of choice but also save parents a great deal of money along the way.

The legislative movement toward reducing tuition costs through fast-tracking accelerated markedly in 2015, when states such as Virginia, Texas, and Illinois enacted key pieces of legislation in rapid-fire succession. According to the Education Commission of the States (ECS) website, which serves as a database for education initiatives in the U.S., the dates, titles, and summaries of these laws are as follows:

Virginia, March 23, 2015—Uniform Policy for Granting Undergraduate Credit for AP, A/AS, IB, and CLEP Examinations (H.B. 1336)

Requires the State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV), in consultation with the governing board of each public institution of higher education, to establish a uniform policy for granting undergraduate course credit to entering freshman students who have taken one or more Advanced Placement, Cambridge Advanced (A/AS), College-Level Examination Program (CLEP), or International Baccalaureate examinations. ("State Legislation: High School—Advanced Placement")

Texas, May 23, 2015—Prohibiting Limits on Number of Dual Credit Courses/Hours a Public High School Student May Enroll In (H.B. 505)

Prohibits regulation from limiting the number of dual credit courses or hours a student may enroll in each semester or academic year (or while in high school), or limiting the grade

levels at which a high school student may be eligible to enroll in a dual credit course. Repeals statutory provision that limited a student from enrolling in more than three courses at a junior college if the student's high school is outside the junior college's service district. ("State Legislation: High School—Dual/Concurrent Enrollment")

Texas, June 3, 2015—Minimum AP Score for Postsecondary Course Credit (H.B. 1992)

Prohibits an institution of higher education from requiring an Advanced Placement (AP) exam score above 3 for granting lower-division course credit unless the institution's chief academic officer determines, based on evidence, that a higher score on the exam is necessary to indicate a student is sufficiently prepared to be successful in a more advanced course for which the lower-division course is a prerequisite. ("State Legislation: High School—Advanced Placement")

Illinois, August 13, 2015—Recognition of Advanced Placement Exam Scores at Postsecondary Institutions (H.B. 3428)

Beginning with the 2016–2017 academic year, requires that a score of 3 or higher on an AP exam be accepted for postsecondary credit by all public two- and four-year institutions. Directs each institution to determine for each test whether credit will be granted for electives, general education requirements, or major requirements, and the AP exam scores required to grant credit for those purposes. Before the 2016–17 academic year, directs each institution to post on its website its updated policy on granting credit for AP exam scores. ("State Legislation: Postsecondary—Postsecondary/K–12 Alignment")

The noble, pragmatic goal of this barrage of legislation is to eliminate confusion about credit acceptance and create uniform policies that apply to all state colleges and universities, but the bottom line is, of course, money. As summarized succinctly by Matthew Watkins of the *Texas Tribune*, "The aim of the new law [H.B. 1992] is to save money for students and universities. [Texas] State Rep. John Zerwas, R—Richmond, the bill's author, predicted during the session that accepting all scores of three could save Texas students up to \$160 million in tuition."

While parents and state governments are happily saving those tuition dollars, the traditional liberal arts foundation of honors education is being gutted. According to NCHC's "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College," the curriculum of an honors college should constitute at least 20% of a student's degree program; similarly, the "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" states that an honors program should be "typically 20% to 25% of the total course work and certainly no less than 15%." The average baccalaureate degree requires 120 credit hours, so the average honors component would be 24 hours, of which 9 to 12 hours might consist of lower-division honors general education electives. Due to state-mandated credit acceptance, however, incoming freshmen with high numbers of general education credit hours are having an increasingly difficult time fitting additional honors classes into their schedules in order to complete honors graduation requirements.

Incoming students have also been bombarded in high school with not only myriad standardized tests but also the cookie-cutter curricula that support the endless testing cycle. As college and university professionals, we question the equivalence of high school curricula and teacher preparation to college-level coursework, but then we find ourselves cast as elitist ogres picking on poor, put-upon high school teachers and defending an outrageously overpriced and outdated educational system. The students themselves, however, are also looking beyond the quantitative factors of their scores and credit hours toward the qualitative value of the instruction they received in the process. In preparing for the 2015 NCHC national conference, I asked my Honors Composition students to practice refutation and counterargument using the College Board's AP promotional materials. The students argued that while AP curricula and tests may be standardized, AP teaching is not. The students' concerns focused on qualification and preparation.

The College Board's website states that they have "no rigidly defined selection criteria for who can serve as an AP teacher. The College Board recommends that AP teachers have undertaken some form of professional development prior to teaching AP for the first time" ("Training AP Teachers"). The College Board provides training through fee-based workshops, summer institutes, and an annual conference, and the federal AP Incentive Program offers "teachers from low-income districts funding for professional development" ("Training AP Teachers"). According to recent findings from the Education Commission of the States, twenty-seven states provide funding for AP teachers to attend AP training, but only five states mandate that AP

teachers complete such training (“State Legislation: High School—Advanced Placement”).

While some of my Honors Composition students generally felt that their AP teachers were well-qualified, others had long lists of specific complaints: the class was taught by a student teacher, the teacher was far out of field for the subject matter, an AP Statistics class was taught by a long-term substitute PE teacher, the AP Calculus class was taught by the freshman remedial math teacher, and so on. They were also concerned about teacher preparation: good teachers were overloaded with too many AP classes, teachers were notified over the summer that they would be teaching AP in the fall and had no time to prepare, the class had none of the AP books or materials, the teacher only covered eight of twenty-two chapters in the book, teachers taught the opposite way from what was advocated by the AP study materials, and so forth.

By the end of the discussion period, the students had concluded that honors needs thinkers and problem solvers, not test takers, and that honors is based on leadership and research, neither of which is reflected in AP scores. The students reached this conclusion independently of the *JNCHC* fiftieth-anniversary issue’s “Forum on the Value of Honors,” in which editor Ada Long used her “Editor’s Introduction” to summarize the common values that university presidents find in honors programs and colleges around the country. First and foremost was critical thinking, which lead essay author James Herbert renamed “thinking and rethinking.” As Long argued, the familial nature of an honors community reinforces the opportunity for rethinking: “A big part of what makes thinking and rethinking possible is a *diverse community* in which *relationships can deepen over time*, and honors provides just such a community on most campuses” (xv, emphasis added). Through the innovative curricula and active learning programs that are essential to honors communities, students’ lives are transformed, and “[a]t the heart of this transformation are the thinking and rethinking that take place in honors programs, the habit of reflection, the widening of horizons that comes from listening to other people, listening again, and learning to listen to yourself” (Long xxi). The eighteen-year-old student who enters college with forty credit hours and immediately proceeds to focus on her major has little time for philosophical reflection or transformation, nor does she spend four years building ties in the honors community. Honors administrators have anecdotally reported attrition at honors functions as students move from lower-division honors general education courses into upper-division major coursework and thesis/capstone projects; the student who starts college as a sophomore or junior by

leapfrogging over lower-division coursework has little engagement with the honors community to begin with.

As honors educators, we no longer have the luxury of continuing the “more vs. different” debate regarding whether honors courses should be differentiated from regular courses through more assignments (frequently the default setting in honors contracts) or through qualitatively different work. If students have already covered the material in high school, and the state mandates that they must be awarded college credit for it, then calling coursework “honors” by simply offering more of the same—more papers, more tests, more books, more labs—is indeed a waste of time and tuition. We must challenge ourselves to teach something substantively different, and as Long argues, innovation is the hallmark of honors education:

Often serving as incubators of new ideas on campus, honors typically is a place on campus that experiments with new courses, projects, and pedagogies. Interdisciplinary courses, team teaching, community service projects, peer counselling, cooperative student/faculty research: often these experiences take place first in an honors program and then radiate out into the university at large. (xviii)

For the honors programs and colleges at public institutions in over a dozen states that currently have legislation for uniform minimum score and credit acceptance, we must act now to ensure those programs’ survival. For those of us in states that don’t yet have such legislation, we must prepare for that eventuality. The urgency of this situation hit home for me when my family attended a fall 2015 open house at the public high school for which my daughter is geographically zoned. Offering one of only two IB programs in a county-wide district of 60,000 students, the school structured its open house around a 75-minute Prezi that focused almost exclusively on its AP and IB signature programs; when a parent asked what programs were available for “regular kids,” one of the teachers briefly responded that they do have programs for regular kids but then immediately returned to the IB/AP script. The crown jewel of the presentation was the story of a spring 2015 graduate who had been admitted to LSU with 59 credit hours. Normally, this young man would be in the target recruitment demographic for honors, but consider the potential resistance from the student and his parents when the honors administrator explains that he would need to take and pay for an extra year or two of credit hours just to graduate from the honors program.

To meet the emerging AP/dual enrollment crisis head on, we must remind ourselves of this pioneering spirit in honors and prepare to take action in some of the following ways:

- We must promote the hallmark active learning that honors did first—and still does best—through experiential learning, study abroad, and service learning projects that expand students’ horizons beyond a standardized, test-driven, high-school-as-college curriculum.
- We must focus on CUR-based research opportunities and honors thesis/capstone projects that promote individualized mentoring, student/faculty engagement, and professional development.
- We must hold the line on smaller class sizes under competing pressures to cut costs and to grow the program, or we risk offering the same large lecture classes that students took AP to avoid in the first place.
- We must re-examine our own pedagogical practices; if we criticize teacher preparedness at the secondary level, we must tend to our own houses as well. To support the goals above, we must recruit dynamic classroom teachers and cutting-edge researchers, and in turn we must weed out those who have stopped producing, begrudgingly deign to teach undergraduates only in an honors setting, or are more interested in the perks, such as smaller class size, than the responsibilities of teaching in honors.
- We must continue to foster the community nature of honors among students and faculty, advocating for the time and space to allow the personal, professional, and intellectual exchange that leads to Herbert’s “thinking and rethinking.”

When I reflect on my own experience as an honors student in the 1980s, I remember that our Presidential Scholars Program at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville had a competitive application and interview process that strictly limited admission to twenty students per year. Presidential Scholars were automatically admitted to the Dean’s College Honors Program, to which any academically qualified student could apply, but Scholars were also awarded full scholarships for four years, were assigned honors mentors in our majors, and were given priority advising and registration. While these benefits remain common in honors today, one significant difference was that we had no required honors coursework: no honors general education electives,

no upper-division seminars, and no senior thesis project. In fact, our general education credit-hour requirement was reduced, and we were allowed to take courses outside the designated general education list to “expand our horizons.” Still, even though we did not take many core courses together, our small honors cohorts had a highly developed sense of honors community through an active student organization, retreats with faculty, fundraisers, conference travel, and various receptions, of which my favorite was always the beginning-of-year gathering at the president’s house. In the end, we were able to maintain a vibrant honors family of students and faculty mentors without a mandated honors core. While this type of program might seem antithetical to our twenty-first-century beliefs about what an honors education should be, parents and state legislators across the country are arguing that their children cannot afford to incur the debt to pay for a full four years of college, and we in the honors community cannot afford to dismiss their concerns.

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Rethinking Honors Curriculum in Light of the AP/IB/Dual Enrollment Challenge: Innovation and Curricular Flexibility

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Annmarie Guzy’s lead article for this volume speaks of a familiar challenge in the Eastern Kentucky University Honors Program. The nearly universal and dramatic increase in the number of AP, IB, and/or Dual Enrollment credit hours among our incoming first-year honors students over the past two decades served as the primary impetus for a major curricular overhaul within our program in 2013. The result—what we call our new (post-2013) “Honors Flex” curriculum—was initially a source of considerable anxiety among many of our faculty as well as some of our students and alumni. In retrospect, however, we are able to see that our willingness to enact fundamental change at the heart of our honors program has opened up new creative possibilities for our students, faculty, and university community. While AP/IB/Dual Enrollment credit did, in fact, contribute to what Guzy terms a perceived “admissions crisis,” we have found that our response to the challenge provided an important opportunity to rethink and reimagine the nature of honors education on our campus.

Ours is a mid-sized honors program of approximately 500 students in the context of a public comprehensive university with a total enrollment of just over 17,000. Our fall 2015 class of incoming first-year honors program students was typical of recent trends in AP/IB/Dual Enrollment credit. This group of 112 students had an average ACT of 28.7 and average unweighted high school GPA of 3.91; 103 (92%) came to us with college credit earned during their high school years; 82% had at least some AP credit; 61% had at least some Dual Enrollment credit; and many had both AP and Dual Enrollment credit. Among these 103 students, the median of college credit hours earned before arriving on our campus was 20.8, and the mode was 21 credit hours, the equivalent of completing seven courses toward general education requirements before the first year, and one of those students came to us with 51 hours of college-level credit earned in high school. The most common subjects for credits brought in via AP exam among this group were English composition (61), American history (42), European history (30), biology (22), calculus (22), and psychology (22). The most common subjects for credits brought in via Dual Enrollment were English composition (25), college algebra (16) and introductory psychology (15).

By 2010, the growing wave of AP and Dual Enrollment credit among our newly admitted honors students presented a daunting challenge. From the foundation of the ECU Honors Program in 1988 until 2012, our honors curriculum centered on a lockstep sequence of innovative and challenging, team-taught, liberal arts honors seminars. Taking advantage of a series of NEH grants in the late 1980s and early 1990s, our founding generation of honors program core faculty, drawn from departments across our campus, thoughtfully developed a “General Education Replacement” honors curriculum that began with a classic small-enrollment Honors Rhetoric first-semester experience, team-taught by philosophy and literature faculty. This course was followed in semesters two and three by our required, team-taught Honors Humanities I and II and Honors Civilizations I and II sequences, built on common thematic linkages between the “Humanities” and “Civ.” courses that the students were taking simultaneously. All students then, in semester four, took an honors science seminar to fulfill a science general education requirement, followed in semester five or six by the interdisciplinary Honors Junior Elective. The curriculum culminated in a two-semester capstone honors thesis experience in the senior year.

As the number of prior college credit hours brought in by our first-year honors students grew, we faced considerable pressure from students to exempt them from elements of our general education honors course sequence

for which they already had AP/IB/Dual Enrollment credit. Feeling that our lockstep curricular requirements may have been leaving us at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting, in 2011–2012 our honors director convened a group of ten regularly contributing honors faculty from across the EKU College of Arts and Sciences, along with three advanced honors program students, to serve as a Curriculum Reform Committee.

The result of that committee's work was what we today call our "Honors Flex" curriculum, implemented for the first time in 2013 and now the standard curriculum for honors students in their first semester of college. From our old lockstep curriculum, the only elements that we have maintained are the required community- and skills-building Honors Rhetoric experience in semester one and the capstone two-semester Honors Thesis experience at the end. In between, students choose from a broad buffet of cross-listed, team-taught, interdisciplinary, topical honors seminars that they may use to fit into the General Education categories that they have not already fulfilled via AP, IB, or Dual Enrollment credit.

Three examples of our most popular cross-listed Honors Interdisciplinary Seminars should demonstrate how the system functions in practice. We typically offer twelve sections of cross-listed seminars such as these each semester, with each section capped at an enrollment of 20:

- HON 308W (Humanities)/HON 310W (History): "Mummies, Museums and Buried Treasure: The Modern Discovery of the Ancient World." Team-taught by one faculty member from the Philosophy Department and one from the History Department and satisfies a General Education requirement in either Humanities or History.
- HON 304W (Math)/HON 307W (Art): "Beauty and the Beast: Art, Math, and a Shared Aesthetic." Team-taught by one faculty member from the Art Department and one from the Math Department and satisfies a General Education requirement either in Art or Math.
- HON 310W (History)/HON 312W (Social Sciences)/HON 320W (Diversity of Perspectives): "Poverty and Revolution in Latin America." Team-taught by one faculty member from the Economics Department and one from the History Department and satisfies a General Education requirement in Social Science, History, or Diversity of Perspectives

The interdisciplinary seminars at the heart of our "Honors Flex" curriculum earned high praise in a September 2015 external review of our program.

Our site visitors, both past presidents of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), noted the following in their report: “Most Honors programs and colleges have one or two interdisciplinary courses required in the curriculum; at ECU Honors, interdisciplinarity and team-teaching are true hallmarks. . . . This mode of honors education may not be unique to ECU, but if it is not, other examples are unknown to us.”

From the student’s point of view, the greatest advantage of this system is its adaptability to individual curricular needs. Students in the “Honors Flex” curriculum customarily take three interdisciplinary seminars during their time with us, using them as needed to cover General Education elements not already fulfilled by their AP/IB/Dual Enrollment coursework. This setup is attractive to our average incoming honors student, who enters with 21 hours of our required 30 hours of general education credit already completed. S/he can simply choose honors interdisciplinary seminars in the remaining general education areas, thus alleviating some of the recruiting challenges of our old lockstep curriculum. One trend that we did not foresee when we designed the curriculum is that the General Education requirements students are least likely to bring with them are Arts and Diversity of Perspectives; these, then, are the courses (HON 307W and HON 320W) that are by far our highest enrollers.

From a faculty point of view, the creative possibilities for pedagogical innovation within this system are both numerous and exciting. As stipulated in the NCHC’s “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program,” one of the most important reasons for having an honors program or college is the role that it plays as an incubator and laboratory for creative pedagogy, which in turn positively affects faculty approaches to instruction campus-wide. Our team-taught “Honors Flex” curriculum is playing an especially powerful role on our campus in releasing and focusing faculty energies in this way. The Flex curriculum also attracts honors course proposals from faculty in a far wider range of departments across campus than did our previous curriculum, which relied disproportionately on three specific departments (English, Philosophy, and History). The new curriculum is helping create a broader sense of faculty ownership of honors across our university.

From the administrative point of view, an unforeseen advantage of the new system is that it ameliorates, to some degree, common worries about the quality of the content students are receiving via AP/IB/Dual Enrollment credit. A student may arrive in our program having received an AP score sufficient to grant six hours of general education history credit, for example, without having done genuine college-level work in the AP history class (Guzy;

Mangan). The Arts or Diversity of Perspectives requirement within our honors program, however, may be cross-listed with an honors history seminar and team-taught by a history professor, thus exposing the student to historical inquiry at the college level. The student's honors experience thereby exceeds the spirit as well as the letter of the General Education requirements and does so within structures that explicitly foster interdisciplinary vision and meta-cognitive approaches to active learning.

For all of the benefits that have emerged from it, however, the move to our Flex curriculum has not proven a universal panacea. We are still uncertain what to do with a student who comes to us with fifty or more credit hours and all General Education requirements completed or a student who has completed an associate's degree in a high school "early college" program. Fortunately, we have had some students who have told us that although they did not necessarily need any honors courses to fulfill General Education requirements, they still chose to enroll in honors because of the exciting classes and the strength of our academic community. Nonetheless, we still may be losing some students who might otherwise have been inclined to choose ECU and our honors program.

We continue to seek effective means of becoming even more flexible in our curriculum and program requirements without sacrificing our sense of academic community. The evolving needs of students coming into our honors programs and colleges require creative and innovative solutions. Fortunately for all of us, innovation and creativity are areas in which honors programs and colleges have traditionally excelled.

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Using Hybrid Courses to Enhance Honors Offerings in the Disciplines

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How honors faculty and administrators might best respond to the challenge of AP/IP/dual enrollment credit mandates across the country will depend largely on the nature of their institutions and the size, structure, and mission of their individual programs. While the debate will continue about long-term consequences for the quality of higher education, the realities of the mandates have begun to force new and creative thinking about curriculum design in honors programs that could lead to positive developments for both students and faculty. In response to the demand to develop honors course offerings beyond the general education curriculum, the honors program at Oklahoma City University has experimented with creating hybrid courses that have expanded the honors curriculum in some beneficial new ways, enabling more students to complete honors requirements while increasing the scope of our program's positive impact on our institution as a whole.

Like many other programs across the nation that came into being in the 80s and 90s, the OCU Honors Program developed a liberal arts honors

curriculum consisting primarily of honors sections of core courses that fulfilled general education requirements. Primarily, this philosophical choice followed the tradition of James Herbert's "thinking and rethinking," which Annmarie Guzy references in her lead article: the conviction that an honors education aims to develop astute critical thinkers in a traditional liberal arts curriculum that provides a strong foundation and springboard for advanced study in a variety of majors and fields. The realities of our program in a small university also made this approach a practical necessity as we did not have the student numbers to fill honors sections of upper-level courses in most majors. Honors work in the major would have to be pursued via contract, an agreement with a professor to complete more advanced work through individual assignments while otherwise participating like any other student in the non-honors course.

For the program's first decade or two, this curricular approach worked well in both providing a feasible way for students to complete the required twenty-four honors credits and creating a cohesive honors experience in the arts and sciences. Recently, however, with greater and greater numbers of honors students entering our program with more and more core credits completed, our established curriculum was beginning to align less and less with these students' remaining degree requirements. While most entering honors freshmen could still carve out an honors degree plan that combined the few honors core courses they still needed with a series of honors contracts in the major, we had a growing sense that our general education honors model might not remain sufficient for new generations of honors students and that we needed to give attention to developing more honors opportunities in upper-level courses.

Also, we needed to be willing to see a shift toward a concentration of honors work in the major as something more than a diminution of our honors core. Students have for some time expressed a desire for more honors course opportunities in the major, but the concern among honors faculty and honors committee members has always been that an honors track consisting of half or more of the total honors credits as independent contract work would undermine the integrative and communal nature of the honors experience. What we needed were more opportunities for students to earn honors credit within discipline-specific courses without sacrificing the interactive and collaborative environment of the honors classroom.

The response, initiated by my predecessors as honors director, has been to develop hybrid courses in a few majors that have a critical mass of honors

students—not enough to form a separate honors section but enough to form a small group who can work together completing contract-level work in collaborative engagement with each other. We define a hybrid course as an honors section of four to ten students that is cross-listed with a regular section of the same course for which the maximum enrollment is adjusted to account for the honors subset. Students in the honors section complete all requirements of the regular section plus the requirements of the Honors Supplement Syllabus. One faculty member teaches the general course and also facilitates supplemental assignments and projects for the honors subset of the class.

Currently, we offer four courses in this hybrid format: Dance History I and II (2000-level), General Microbiology (3000-level), and Musical Form and Analysis (4000-level). We plan to add Theatre History II (3000-level) in the spring of 2017. As this list suggests, the types of major courses that a program decides to develop depends largely on the character of the institution and the majors most common among the honors student body. OCU draws a large number of its honors students from the schools of music, dance, and theatre while maintaining a very slight majority of honors students in the College of Arts and Sciences.

In addition to offering a practical solution for honors students who come to college with much of the general education curriculum completed, hybrid courses enhance the overall honors experience by encouraging advanced work in the discipline that goes beyond the individual research project. In Honors General Microbiology, for instance, students work together in groups of three to four to establish semester-long projects that require them to work together an extra hour every week fine-tuning their research questions and testing principles learned in the regular section of the course. They then complete a lab experiment and subsequent poster presentation to be presented at our program-sponsored undergraduate research day. In recent years, students completing the course have also presented at regional scientific conferences, the NCHC annual conference, or our regional honors conference. Similarly, in Musical Form and Analysis, the honors subset meets weekly from mid-term on to discuss musical texts that present problems for the conventional sonata form, a form that the class as a whole surveys during the previous unit. Each honors student then completes a final project that explores, through specific texts, the complicated evolution of the sonata form through the twentieth century.

The advantages of introducing hybrid courses extend beyond the program and its members to the larger student body. In a recent *JNCHC* Forum

on “The Institutional Impact of Honors,” James Clauss pointed to important ways that honors programs, and honors students specifically, benefit the institution at large by “raising the stakes for all students” (96). He argued that, as honors students participate in their non-honors classes, they often “ask questions that transform lectures and discussions into moments of uncertainty, ambiguity or wonder; and they have the potential to inspire or provoke other students to search for answers on their own” (96). We have seen this dynamic at work with perhaps even greater intensity in the hybrid course context, in which the honors students, inspired by the material and the discussions introduced in the supplementary honors assignments, inject that information and that enthusiasm into general class discussion. Moreover, in most cases the honors students are also required to make a formal presentation of their honors projects and research to the class as a whole.

Hybrid courses also have distinct pedagogical benefits for the faculty who teach them. Each of our hybrid courses is a required course within the major that is part of the faculty member’s regular load, often taught in multiple sections semester after semester. Faculty members who have agreed to develop hybrid courses have reported an influx of new ideas, both methodological and content-based, that naturally carry over to the other sections of the course.

Finally, in some cases hybrid courses have served as a midway point in the creation of a new honors course. They allow for the monitoring of honors student enrollment in the course over time as they provide for the gradual development of an honors curriculum for the course. Repeated semesters with eight to ten students enrolled in the hybrid section may provide a rationale to administrators for adding a full-fledged honors section. Our freshman honors sections of Music Theory and Aural Skills, for instance, began as hybrids and are now distinct honors sections with twelve to fifteen students enrolled each semester.

Hybrid courses have allowed us to rethink the honors classroom, enabling us to look beyond the stark dichotomy between honors and non-honors courses. As our honors curriculum adapts to new demands and needs, this flexible format brings honors and non-honors classroom experiences together, increases the visibility of honors on campus, allows the kinds of experimentation that provide faculty with new perspectives and ideas, offers a vehicle for new honors course development, enhances the overall honors experience for our honors students, and meets a practical and immediate need for our honors students looking for more options for earning honors credit.

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A Dual Perspective on AP, Dual Enrollment, and Honors

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As co-authors of this response to Annmarie Guzy's essay, we provide different vantage points on prior-credit programs that arise from our distinct roles on campus, and together we suggest the appropriate way forward for honors. To represent our unique perspectives and to mimic the ongoing back-and-forth on this topic on our campus and elsewhere, we have chosen to format our response as a dialogue, thus suggesting some of the multiple voices and angles on AP, dual enrollment, and honors.

Both of us have felt the impact of AP and dual enrollment programs and have worried about its implications for both the traditional and honors experiences. Notwithstanding our concerns, we move forward reassured. We feel that the characteristics of honors that have helped us build strong programs will help us maintain vitality and integrity in the changing academic culture ahead. By continuing to be flexible, experimental, and collaborative, we can construct models of honors that uphold quality and rigor while adapting to the institutional and national frameworks that shape higher education today.

HEATHER

As the composition director at my university and a faculty member in honors, I have paid the most attention to the impact of dual enrollment on our general education writing requirement. English 101 is perhaps the most frequently offered course on our campus and is an important source of credit generation for the department and university. English faculty members like the course because it serves as a funding source for teaching-inclined graduate students. Administrators are drawn to it as a site for increasing retention, promoting student success, and encouraging timely graduation.

At my institution, dual enrollment sections of English 101 are taught by high school teachers in often rural areas. English faculty members, in turn, play a supervisory role. While lending institutional support to dual enrollment offerings in our region potentially constricts the number of students who might be served onsite by our English 101 course, university administrators encourage us to be involved in dual enrollment to generate revenue and to foster positive relationships with public school systems and communities in the region.

GINNY

As an honors advisor and instructor, I have noticed increasing numbers of students entering the university who have completed a significant number of general education requirements, including English 101. More than half of this fall's entering first-year students are coming to campus with some type of general education requirement completed. Anecdotal evidence, primarily conversations with students, has led me to believe that this trend is driven in large part by the increasing cost of higher education and the student loan situation in our country. The opportunity to complete a semester or even a year of school at very little cost to the student is extremely tempting. First-year students are often asking how soon they can take upper-level courses, either in honors or in their major. They seem eager to move quickly through their college requirements and are generally confident that they possess the basic skills to succeed in upper-level courses.

HEATHER

My involvement in dual enrollment has led me to share some of the frustrations articulated in Guzy's lead essay. The trend toward sprinting through

college requirements, even though it is fueled by legitimate financial worries and abysmal college completion rates, seems in Guzy's words antithetical to "philosophical reflection or transformation" and to "building ties in the honors community." I also have reservations about the quality of college course equivalencies offered in high schools, seeing this problem less as a failing of individual teachers and more as a systemic problem: most high school teachers are removed from a disciplinary community and from other professionals engaged in similar work, and they lack the materials, time, and rewards to sustain and innovate their college-level teaching. From a developmental standpoint, I question whether the AP/dual enrollment movement has sufficiently explored the level of work that high school students are capable of achieving. I would like to see more research being done on the interplay between high school students' social, emotional, and intellectual maturity and their capacity for college-level work.

GINNY

Another problem I see is the lack of clarity about what kind of prior knowledge and experience a college instructor can expect from a student who has earned credit through a dual enrollment or AP course. English 101 illustrates this problem well. I work with students on their first-year-experience reflective essays and on writing for their honors electronic portfolios. With the uptick in dual enrollment, I find that students enter with a wide variety of skills learned through their previous writing course equivalencies. One expects to see a range in competency, but with dual enrollment I feel less assured that students will know specific skills like proper citation, using library databases, or effective source synthesis. I feel more confident about these skills among students who have completed an ENG 101 course at my institution. The erosion of this benchmark makes it hard to know what students need when they begin writing in honors.

HEATHER

The pressures toward AP and dual enrollment call upon us as rhetoricians to make convincing cases for the distinctive work done in our general education honors courses. We need to make our case to administrators, parents, and students, and above all we need to ensure and demonstrate that honors work really is distinctive. Gone are the days when we could rely on honors requirements to guarantee our courses would fill, if such days ever existed. To

sell our programs and courses, we have to set them apart in the opportunities they offer. In one recent honors section of ENG 101 at our university, for example, students worked with the local newspaper (circulation 22,000) to develop a feature article for their glossy magazine. In spring 2017, honors students enrolled in an intermediate writing course for general education credit will tutor adult refugees in a community education program. Opportunities like these can help us make the case that honors general education courses are unique and valuable sites for learning.

GINNY

At the same time, we may need to think more carefully about what is essential in an honors curriculum. Honors programs need to recognize and adapt to the needs of their students, understanding that the honors education of the past may not best suit the future. For example, in 2015–2016 we instituted a new honors curriculum in which students could choose between two separate tracks: *Honors Program Graduate* or *Honors Program Graduate with Distinction*. Perhaps paradoxically, only the “Distinction” track includes honors sections of general education courses. The Honors Program Graduate pathway allows students to complete the honors program even if they come into the university with many or in some cases all of their general education credits.

This approach might not adhere to the NCHC Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program, especially the condition that “program requirements constitute a substantial portion of the participants’ undergraduate work, typically 20% to 25% of the total course work and certainly no less than 15%,” but as part of a competency-based honors program we embrace the mindset that the future of honors education lies in experiential and project-based learning that may or may not occur in a classroom. Such learning can occur with or without the general education curriculum. We view the association between honors and credit hours as an evolving concept.

HEATHER

In honors program models that deemphasize general education, administrators and faculty may have to work together to determine where in the curriculum to embed skills that were previously taken for granted. If fewer students are taking English 101 on campus, for instance, then honors administrators may need to identify a new home for library research skills. More

generally, a move away from a shared general education experience puts more responsibility on honors faculty to incorporate the habits of mind and liberal arts values of a general education curriculum into their upper-division courses and for the honors program to articulate standards and means of support for doing so.

GINNY

We also need to identify ways to engage with our fellow educators who are teaching dual enrollment courses in the high schools. Honors administrators might not have considered this kind of collaborative partnership before, but we benefit from envisioning high school teachers as colleagues in light of the significant role they are playing in providing today's college education. As more honors students bring in credit for prior learning, honors directors should have a seat at the table in university conversations about dual enrollment, including conversations about teacher preparation and ongoing training.

HEATHER

In matters of teacher development, Guzy encourages us to “tend to our own houses as well.” This advice may be especially relevant to general education courses, which are increasingly staffed by poorly compensated and often tenuously employed adjunct faculty. In their relationship to the departments for which they teach and in their access to a professional community, ongoing development, and time for planning, these faculty members may resemble dual enrollment instructors. Both types of faculty inhabit a kind of peripheral space that does not provide necessary support for and recognition of teaching excellence. Those of us involved in honors staffing should do what we can to provide the resources that teachers need to excel in the honors classroom.

GINNY AND HEATHER

The honors community's reputation for developing new and creative methods for teaching and learning has to be earned. The challenges associated with AP and dual enrollment extend fertile proving ground. We accept this challenge as we have done with other large-scale paradigm shifts in higher education.

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Got AP?

JOAN DIGBY

LIU Post

One of the first questions I ask prospective students is whether they have taken any AP or college courses in high school. The question itself frequently generates lines of tension in a student's face while parents erupt into proud smiles. The difference can generally tell me whose idea it was to take AP or college courses and to what degree they considered them a benefit in gaining college admission and scholarship funding.

Families, especially those considering sending their children to a private four-year university, need all the help they can get in funding college. At my institution, four years without any scholarship support costs around \$142,000, not including room and board. Families with two or more siblings can double or triple this number and anticipate a mountain of debt. Annmarie Guzy's essay powerfully spells out the financial benefits that accrue from using AP courses to satisfy college credits and how states have begun to legislate quite terrifying directives mandating the acceptance of "uniform minimum AP . . . credits." The essential issue—"seismic" as Guzy has aptly put it—boils down to money, probably even more for students headed toward private colleges and universities than those enrolling in state schools.

Naturally, families search for strategies to bring down the cost of college as well as the time it takes to complete a degree. Taking college courses or AP courses in high school facilitates this plan. Both are offered at rates cheaper than college tuition, and they often permit a student to cut out as much as one whole semester. Although bringing in even more credit may be on the rise as Guzy suggests, I have not yet experienced a student bringing in a whole year. Perhaps that will come soon.

My university does accept AP credit, and I do permit students to apply this credit against core requirements, even honors college core requirements so long as scores on the AP exams meet department standards. Many liberal arts and social science departments accept a 3 or better on the AP exam; the science departments—good for them, bad for Texas—require a 4 or 5. Since we want to attract students rather than point them in the direction of our other regional competitors, the most practical course of action is to compliment and reward students for their choice to do AP or other college-level work in high school. Many of them are excited about these classes even when generally bored with high school and ready to move on; they are the ones who mirror their parents' smiles and talk about inspiring AP teachers, who, as Guzy suggests, are not always the norm.

Despite some cheerleaders—"Give us an A, give us a P / How much money will the scholarship be?"—AP courses generally come with a reputation for being oppressive. Both parents and students, even those enjoying the challenge, frequently present the classes as endurance trials that have made them lift heavy academic loads. For those of us concerned with time management, this background of heavy lifting can be a positive factor. AP courses are reputed to assign endless homework and extensive reading whereas any reading seems too much for the majority of a media-driven student body. According to the marketing strategy of the College Board, the rigor of AP courses is designed to prove that they really are Advanced and will earn those who complete them a desirable college Placement.

AP courses live up to this ideal only if the courses are taught well and if students do well. As Guzy has pointed out, AP is often an assigned workload for which teachers might have little training. Since I believe in anecdotal information, I am not going to search for statistics in this area, but from my own experience in recruiting students who have taken AP English, I can say that they have often read more classical works of British and European literature than many taking so-called college English classes with reading lists of modern American novels and media pieces. My two-semester honors freshman

English seminar combines writing with comparative world literature from *Gilgamesh* to contemporary poets whom I invite to read, so I favor the classic syllabi of many AP classes. On the other hand, when it comes to writing, AP and college English courses taught in high schools appear to work from the same old model of the five-paragraph essay that takes the next three years to break. Further, these students quickly forget the basics of grammar, punctuation, and citation, putting all freshmen back on the same level playing field.

When I ask students for the grades they earned on AP exams, usually those taken in their sophomore or junior years, some reveal in shame that they only made a 2 or that they never paid to have them count toward college. Typically such students were pressured into taking AP courses by friends, teachers, or family; in the frightening example cited by Guzy, they were even paid to take them. On the other hand, some students flourish in the AP environment and beg for the honors college to “bring it on” even more intensely—which is not at all what I have in mind! I like to respond by saying that the decision to join the honors college should be based on engagement in a community of students and faculty who share similar interests, ideals, and passions. One of the first lessons of college should be to take courses not simply with “a short professor who wears glasses” but with an actual person who might one day become a thesis advisor and possibly a lifelong mentor. I try to move students who are focused on their credentials away from running the gauntlet to relaxing into a new academic society.

Honors programs and colleges have good reasons for accepting AP credit. The financial benefit for families is the most basic, along with the natural inclination of students engaged in AP courses to seek honors opportunities. Rather than worrying about what they might miss by having completed requirements before immersion in college, I focus on possible gains. For students majoring in disciplines that have a rigid sequence of courses such as at my university Music/Music Education, Theater/Musical Theater, Nutrition, and Social Work, completing part of the core in high school makes room for some advanced honors electives that students need before they embark on research and an undergraduate honors thesis in the major. For students entering departments with more flexible courses of study, having a cushion of core courses taken in high school opens up greater possibilities for study abroad or internships as part of their undergraduate education. Thus, for many reasons I am in favor of accepting AP credit rather than taking the position that they have wasted both time and money. These classes can help boost self-esteem and academic confidence. I do not want to be the person to diminish what they have achieved.

That said, AP classes and so-called “college classes” in high school are nothing like college equivalents. I was a “cooperating teacher,” a periodic visitor supervising our freshman English courses in many schools on Long Island for more than twenty years. While I learned what it is like to start class at 7:00am, eat lunch at 9:00, and pore over *Hamlet* on film with increasing boredom for more than two months, I never found much similarity with sections of college English taught on campus. For one thing, college courses do not meet five days a week for forty-minute periods, making it impossible to get discussion going or in-class essay-writing done after attendance roll calls, school announcements on the PA system, homework assignments, and general chatter. Furthermore, teachers spoon-fed students with notes on the blackboard focused on preparation for the final validating tests required in high school. On all my visits, I insisted on giving college-style lectures or holding seminar discussions that digressed from the daily routine. I tried to teach students how to take a running set of notes while listening and participating. A few of the teachers taught with me, but most retreated to the back of the room to do their own preparations and get some relief from a long, grueling day. I could never have survived a career in this environment, so I applaud those who have inspired their students.

Professors who meet with and work with students in the high schools have the benefit of talking about their institutions, a nice marketing ploy for recruitment, and informing students about their discipline, explaining what a particular major might offer with respect to content and career possibilities. I often interview students who have already taken a college course in accounting, forensic science, or chemistry and are thinking about a choice of major at LIU Post based on a positive high school experience. The fact that they arrive with some projected focus helps them get off to a dynamic start even though they may change direction and major.

When I talk with prospective honors students about their high school AP or college classes, I let them know that the college experience of core courses will be very different from high school. Classes will meet twice a week; professors will typically assume that everything is important, so students will have to take copious notes on their own; whole texts may be assigned to be covered in a week or two; and most of all, students are on their own. The idea of owning books and being able to take notes in the margin seems almost crazy to students who have always borrowed school texts and been told not to write in them so that they come back unscarred at the end of the year. Some of these issues are disappearing as students migrate to material online, but my

essential point is that college is in every way different from high school, even from high school classes that pretend to be college.

My greatest fear is that college itself is pretending to be higher education. AP and other fast-track schemes seem based on Lady Macbeth's premise about murder that "twere well it were done quickly." Such schemes are just the edge of a more harrowing discussion current in the media about whether a college degree is a credential worth having. Society appears to be flooded with people who earn more money without a college degree, giving families some reason to doubt the efficacy of spending all that money on a college education. Think about the marketing language now widely used to attract students. Within the last year, colleges have become "incubators" for "entrepreneurship," teaching students to be "successful." The idea of teaching students how to think and how to expand their intellectual and cultural world has been overwhelmed by utilitarian ends. Even honors programs are having more difficulty in "selling" advanced electives in philosophy and history that don't appear "useful." Over the next decade we can expect undergraduate education—if it survives—to devolve into an alien form. I try to stay in the present and not to let my imagination leap into that dystopia.

Thus, when I review the information sheet that students who qualify for admission to the honors college are asked to fill out, I factor in AP classes along with so-called college classes they took in high school. A background in such classes is usually not as compelling as students' talents and experiences—working with special-needs children, making films, being an Eagle Scout, speaking three languages, breaking green horses, or training for opera—but is surely part of the mix. We must hope, at least, that students with wide ranges of interest will keep college real.

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AP: Not a Replacement for Challenging College Coursework

MARGARET WALSH

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College affordability is weighing heavily this year on the minds of students, parents, faculty, and the U.S. electorate. Intent on saving money on college tuition as well as impressing college admissions committees, high-achieving students frequently start college-level work early through Advanced Placement courses. However, these courses do not replace the learning that takes place in college-level honors courses. For honors students, making the transition between high school and college means finding opportunities to learn in new ways, taking risks, and diving deeper into ideas.

For more than fifteen years I have been a professor of sociology at a public liberal arts college with an honors program. Advising students and seeing them graduate to pursue meaningful careers in education, science, and the arts is the most rewarding part of my teaching career. My daughter, who is a high school senior at a rural public high school, has completed several Advanced Placement courses and a dual enrollment course at a local college. In recent

conversations, we have shared perceptions of the role of honors education in high school and college. Our different vantage points have led us to consider the purpose of Advanced Placement courses, the motivation of students who complete them, and what is in the best interest of students, honors programs, and colleges in awarding credit for AP and similar programs.

Some readers may remember their own experiences in high school AP courses. In the 1980s, the small school I attended offered only two AP options in the senior year, English and calculus. Most of my friends and I were among the first in our families to apply to college, and teachers said that these courses were important for our futures. We did not question them. Research from that era of the College Board found that students who sat for an AP exam in high school earned honors and higher grades in college compared to their peers with similar academic abilities not enrolled in AP ("AP Students Excel" 3). Now, more than half of all high school students are taking these courses, many as early as their sophomore year of high school. Research supports what my teachers used to tell me: that earning high scores on AP exams correlates with improved college performance, and, on a 2004 Gallop survey, students reported that AP courses reinforced their self-perception as being "above average" and "self-motivated" (Mason).

The College Board now lists thirty-eight different Advanced Placement exam areas including languages, math, natural sciences, humanities, and social sciences. An increasing number of schools are feeling pressure to offer more AP courses to a wider range of students. A downside, though, is that these courses are shaped by a standardized recommended curriculum, and teachers may not have the freedom to supplement their courses with quality experiences that allow for creativity and insight. The test looms.

Since cost reduction is a major incentive for students to take AP courses, an important issue is the rise in college tuition. In a recent National Public Radio interview, journalist Claudio Sanchez asks author Sandy Baum whether the rising cost of higher education has reached the crisis level. Baum responded that student debt is a real problem but mainly for students who are not well prepared and not well advised. For example, she found that older students, non-matriculated students, and students who leave before finishing their degrees are all at risk. Also, when students choose majors without the guidance that helps them link coursework to professional opportunities, they are likely to have difficulty getting established in careers with competitive salaries to pay off their loans. Baum says, "They tend to come from disadvantaged, middle-income families and they're struggling. [But] not because they owe a lot of money" (Sanchez).

In *USA Today*, Derek Thompson reported that the cost of college in New Hampshire, where I live and teach, is among the highest in the country. In 2014, 76 percent of graduating seniors carried an average debt of \$33,410. These figures vary substantially from state to state and by type of institution. For-profit institutions have students with the largest loan burden and the lowest degree completion rates, creating a problematic “debt without degree” scenario (Thompson). Thompson also points to the decrease in state support and the increase in tuition at public colleges as well as the marketing of for-profit institutions as contributing to the student debt crisis. Based on current research, the focus should be on ensuring that students make informed choices and that they graduate so that their investment can pay off not only in earnings but also in intellectual growth and personal accomplishment.

To understand the perspective of a high school student, my daughter suggested I look at the website *College Confidential* <<http://www.collegeconfidential.com>>, a free Internet message board that is popular with U.S. college-bound students and their parents. Many of the participants are seeking admission to the most selective public and private colleges and universities in the country, and they share opinions and information on a range of topics from admission criteria to tuition costs and scholarships.

On visiting the website, I first noticed that these students are savvy. In the thousands of posts and replies, students provide advice about using the summer to begin preparing for the course or exam on their own or give tips on the most useful books, guides, YouTube videos, and websites. In other threads, students compare AP summer assignments, which are typically projects, chapter summaries, or problems to solve that vary widely from school to school. The threads often include general discussion about teacher quality, mostly centering on concerns that their AP teacher will be “really bad,” a judgment that may mean “too easy” or “too hard.” Some students are fixated on getting “5s,” the highest possible test score. Some students devise schemes to get into the better teachers’ classes when more than one section of an AP course is offered at their school. While users share general anxieties about Advanced Placement courses at the high school level, they write from different states and contexts—private and public institutions, rural and urban environments, large and small districts.

What students posting on *College Confidential* rarely share is learner engagement in the course material, which is and should be the central concern of honors. Despite all of the hand wringing about college preparation, controlling costs, and maximizing student success, honors programs and colleges should preserve, for instance, the educational enrichment offered in a

first-year experience once students have arrived at college and should then include diverse offerings that meet the needs of students who have taken AP courses as well as those who have not. In 2011, Annmarie Guzy made a powerful case that regardless of AP scores, honors students need time to develop their analytical and writing abilities. Students spend far too little time on research and writing in most high schools, so, as she put it, “You don’t want to have the writing style of an eighteen-year-old high school senior forever, do you?” (68) Students who have done advanced work in high school and who enter college with academic and possibly financial advantages should be poised to enter a new phase of learning: to shift their focus from getting *out of* course requirements to getting *into* new and different courses to advance their capacity to learn.

In the college honors program where I teach, students begin their first college semester together in a “thinking and writing” course that focuses, for instance, on the theme of encountering adulthood; they later travel as a group in a course on global engagement that may take them on a journey with faculty to such places as Nepal, Ecuador, South Africa, Romania, Belize, or Bosnia; and they complete a senior capstone seminar that gives them a chance to communicate across disciplines, seeing links among majors such as education, environmental science, or math. These courses all meet general education requirements, and they do not involve high-stakes multiple choice and essay tests at the end.

High school graduates expect college to be challenging and interesting, and we have an obligation to offer experiences—e.g., mentoring, research, leadership, and professional development—that will serve them well in an unknown future. Students who have taken AP classes have gained self-confidence, shown initiative, and made a good impression; now they no longer need to accelerate their education. They need to deepen it. They are starting a new phase of learning that requires new strategies so that, as honors students, they can experiment, expand, and refocus. Honors faculty must do the same, growing from a strong foundation and preserving the value of learning while moving forward resiliently in a changing environment.

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RESEARCH ESSAYS

The ICSS and the Development of Black Collegiate Honors Education in the U.S.

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Precursor to the NCHC, the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS) was active from 1957 to 1965 under the leadership of Joseph Cohen at the University of Colorado. As NCHC culminates fifty years of supporting collegiate honors education, its historical context needs to include the contributions to honors from a unique group of institutions, the nation's Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). While scholars of collegiate honors education understand Frank Aydelotte, Swarthmore's seventh president, to have started "a trend in honors among American colleges and universities" (Rinn 70), the honors literature does not provide evidence of Aydelotte's engagement with Black higher education in the U.S. In fact, Aydelotte's 1925 report "Honors Courses in American Colleges and Universities," identifying institutions operating honors programs, does not list any HBCUs. Further, in their book describing the "adventure" of developing honors education at Swarthmore and across the country, the Swarthmore faculty also made no mention of collaborating with colleagues at HBCUs (Swarthmore College Faculty). During this time, Aydelotte and the Swarthmore faculty

were attracting national attention and starting to get major grants from, for instance, the General Education Board (Aydelotte, “Breaking” 34–35), just as later Joseph Cohen and the ICSS attracted funding from the Carnegie Corporation and Ford Foundation, indicating that honors was increasing in national importance (Andrews 18). We are left to question, though, whether HBCUs were providing the same kind of special opportunities for their students in the mid-twentieth century and what particular challenges these unique institutions faced providing honors education within the racialized climate of the United States in the 1960s.

My present study, an historical analysis exploring the development of honors education at Morgan State University (see Dula), reveals that some of the private, liberal arts HBCUs in the 1920s were likely offering opportunities to their high-ability students that could have been operating in the spirit of honors even if they had not launched a program with that name. Moreover, the findings in my study, based on archival documents, reveal that Cohen, with the ICSS, did, in fact, actively support the development of collegiate honors education at Black colleges. While the focus on high-achieving students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) was a campaign that began between the two world wars and continued in the 1950s Cold War era with the ICSS, the question is whether earlier, in the 1920s, Aydelotte and his faculty ever reached out to HBCUs as they promoted honors education or whether they simply dismissed these institutions as not possessing the raw material: talented students.

Perhaps the notion of Blacks with superior academic talent seemed preposterous to Aydelotte and his faculty in the 1930s, but—at a time of scientific racism and the Eugenics movement—Black scholars were responding powerfully to that assumption. Consider, for example, the writings of Charles H. Thompson, who was a professor and dean at Howard University and founder of *The Journal of Negro Education*. Louis Ray wrote that one of Thompson’s goals for Howard was “to focus on educating gifted students of color” (190). In 1935, as editor of the *Journal*, Thompson provided the editorial comment “Investing in Negro Brains,” in which he insisted “that the range of intelligence among Negroes runs just as high as it does among other racial groups”; then, going on to note poor educational opportunities and facilities, Thompson wrote that it was no wonder that a student might not achieve full potential “in view of the depressing effect of poor environment and poor school facilities upon the I.Q.” (153–55). Thompson did not call for the development of honors programs or special honors facilities, but he did go on to inquire about the identification and harnessing of Black academic talent, writing:

[W]hat efforts are being made to discover them and to develop their talents for the benefit of the race and the nation? These questions assume considerable importance when it is considered that the Negro as a race and the nation as a whole are handicapped because our natural resources of superior human ability remain buried, undeveloped, and unused. . . . [I]t is evident that something much more systematic must be done about it. . . . [A]re we making the best of our higher educational facilities[?] . . . [S]ome rather comprehensive machinery has to be devised by which we may discover the members of this “very superior” Negro group. . . . [M]any of these bright young people are lost, either because of lack of encouragement or lack of funds to go on with their training—and their superior brains are of little avail without training. (153–55)

Some HBCUs were pushing Thompson’s agenda despite the segregated environment that made the training of “superior Negroes” into the kind of work requiring a most adamant combination of educator and civil rights advocate.

By the 1950s and 1960s, however, during the timespan of the ICSS, several HBCUs were deeply engaged in the discourse of honors education for their collegians. According to his papers, Cohen made several ICSS visits to HBCUs to assist with the development and strengthening of honors programs (ICSS, Fd. 9, Box 22). Cohen worked closely with HBCUs such as Fisk University, Howard University, Southern University, Morehouse College, and others. Among ICSS’s regional conferences, one was dedicated to the needs of high-achieving Black collegians.

HONORS EDUCATION AND THE COLD WAR ERA

The ICSS and the national spread of collegiate honors education was successful in part because the efforts were unfolding during a time when the country was attuned to the Cold War and the 1957 launch of the Russian satellite Sputnik (Andrews 21–22). Sputnik served the honors movement well in the 1950s and 1960s as the nation grew increasingly interested in talent development. The United States was immersed in a domestic battle at all levels in the 1950’s. For one, it was witnessing the ardent upsurge of a community’s refusal to be quieted or to settle for the second-class citizenship allocated to them, a refusal that was expressed in their anger and mobilization against the flagrant violence pervading their existence and an unequivocal demand for equal rights in every form from bus boycotts in Montgomery, Alabama, to

their demands for the right to vote and their appeals for educational access in Topeka, Kansas (Sitkoff). The stratagem of the Civil Rights movement eventually gave way to the executive signing of the first Civil Rights Act in September of 1957 (Pub. L. 85-315, 71) by President Eisenhower.

In 1957, when academically able and talented Black children in Little Rock, Arkansas, were fighting for equal access in America's classrooms, the Soviet Union was launching an international sneak attack in technology and the sciences. The domestic unrest that Eisenhower was facing in the homeland was a national challenge, but President Eisenhower was equally unprepared for Sputnik. Russia's successful October 4, 1957 satellite launch caused the United States embarrassment, moving the country to invest resources in every level of U.S. education, including colleges and universities. Almost a year to the date of Russian's 1957 coup, the 1958 National Defense Education Act (NDEA) allowed for funding provisions to education in science and technology. The United States was panicked that American scientists, technology, and schooling had fallen second to that of the Soviet Union (Hartman). However, even before 1957, there was sentiment that higher education and education in general were eroding: "The Cold War setting created higher expectations among Americans concerning the quality of education in their schools, well before the first Russian sputnik was launched" (Chaszar 46). Joining Aydelotte's chorus were others such as Thomas Bonner, an historian and university president, who also publicly asserted concerns that American education was not at a level to maintain and secure the country's safety and quality of life. He wrote in 1958 that the nation's lawmakers and educators had been sufficiently warned:

[F]or several years independent observers have been warning us about what the Soviets were doing in education, especially in science education, but they were crying in the wilderness until October 4, 1957. . . . [I]t is upon education that the fate of our way of life depends. It means that the outcome of the third world war may be decided in the classroom. (Bonner 178)

Bonner went on to argue that the problem was not that the United States did not have the intellectual talent to compete with Russia but that it was indifferent to intellectual achievement and scholarship. He found that scholars and professors in Germany were given rock star status while in America all prestige went to those who excelled in athletics and entertainment. Bonner wrote that, when he was a guest professor in Germany, "nothing impressed

me more than the contrast in status and acceptance of the scholar and the intellectual” (180). In addition to the “skewed” American perspective, he explained, everyone was educated at the same level: “we have decided that democracy means the same amount of basic education for all regardless of ability” (179). Instead, Bonner advocated providing trade education for the less capable so as not to “adjust to meet the needs of those not capable” (179). Bonner foresaw a time in education when

our colleges [and] universities [and the nation] . . . will be unashamedly and proudly concerned with the gifted. We will cease grouping them with the handicapped and defective as abnormal or problem children and recognize them as the greatest and most important challenge we have in the classroom. If we continue to make [the gifted] . . . ashamed of their abilities, as we never have with athletes and showmen . . . we are doomed as a free people. (178)

Bonner’s plan for a true intellectual and societal democracy reflected the U.S. government’s and educational leaders’ new goals for U.S. society. U.S. Naval Admiral Hyman Rickover, for example, used his status to influence federal-level engagement in education, testifying before Congress in 1958 that Russia’s lead with the Sputnik launch rested squarely on the inferiority of American schooling compared to that of Russia’s educational system (O’Gorman 771).

While the quality of education at all levels became a popular concern to the American public, higher education became the main target for criticism as colleges, and research universities in particular, were where scientists were trained (Douglass). Research universities were also partners with the government, receiving hefty amounts of federal funds and facility resources in efforts to advance technology and produce a new generation of scientists. In 1945, according to John Douglass, “the federal government was already funding 83 percent of all research in the natural sciences,” most of which was funneled to universities in dollars and in the form of federal laboratories on university campuses; these included large sums of money appropriated to the National Science Foundation (NSF), which was created in 1950; the National Defense Education Act (NDEA), which was passed in 1958; and funding to other federal agencies such as the Department of Defense (DOD) and the Atomic Energy Commission (Douglass 2). Douglass went on to explain that while October 1957 was not at all the beginning of federal involvement in higher education research, Sputnik jolted “American lawmakers and the public in their joint resolve to invest in and reposition higher education” (4).

This repositioning and emphasis on technology rather than the liberal arts dismayed honors educators who were hoping after the war to refocus higher education on liberal studies. Chaszar notes, however, that the climate of scrutiny on science research and the research university actually focused attention on academic rigor and academically talented students, and it “encouraged the resurgence of honors programs” (44). Chaszar references the response at the collegiate level, but the effects of the satellite launch also trickled down to the K–12 classroom. According to educator Abraham Tannenbaum,

There was no serious action in America’s schools [for the gifted] until Sputnik was launched in 1957. . . . When the educational community finally took action on behalf of the gifted, it did so with alacrity. . . . [In] the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was an upsurge in research activity dealing with the characteristics and education of gifted children. (9–11)

The White community’s wake-up response to the quality of U.S. education was differently motivated yet peculiarly similar to Black America’s long critique of U.S. education that had begun a tenacious fight for equality as well as quality in schooling. Black higher education was also seeking to develop talent, but HBCUs were not initial recipients of funding from the 1958 National Defense Education Act. Black institutions were systematically denied consideration in training scientists and maintaining federal laboratories on their campuses.

In addition to institutional partnerships with the government, colleges and universities were responding to the campaign of talent development with the resurgence of interest in collegiate honors education. The Cold War era made conditions ripe to pick up after where Frank Aydelotte’s initial honors campaign and World Wars I and II had left off.

COHEN, ICSS, AND BLACK HONORS DEVELOPMENT

The University of Colorado’s honors program was among a few to survive through and after the Second World War. Cohen wrote that “[i]t was a striking fact how many of the programs listed by Aydelotte in 1925 were practically nonexistent when I made my own first survey in 1952” (Cohen, Foreword x–xi). Cohen’s ability to secure Rockefeller Foundation monies to support both Colorado’s honors program and the expansion of the honors movement broadly made all the difference in his ability to mobilize the effort

across the nation. The grant also stipulated that the Colorado honors director would visit colleges and host a June conference in 1957, a meeting that represented “twenty-seven large institutions, both public and private” (Cohen, “The First” 25).

With the June 1957 conference behind them and with backing from the Carnegie Corporation, the ICSS held a second meeting later that year, in October, to define action steps from the June proceedings. Among those items, the ICSS was developed at the October 1957 meeting to “act as a clearinghouse for information on honors activities across the nation” (Cohen, “The First” 27). Other initiatives were a newsletter, *The Superior Student*, campus visits, and a plan for more conferences with regional scope (South in 1958 and Northeast in 1959).

By Cohen’s own accounting, the establishment of the ICSS in 1957 made for a “systematic, coordinated effort . . . to extend honors programs to the large private and state universities” (Cohen, “Development” 9). The University of Colorado provided the infrastructure and leadership for its headquarters. According to Chaszar, the ICSS’s main mission was to reach administrators and faculty, especially, in order to facilitate a broad discussion of honors education, to share resources and support for building and sustaining honors programs, and to serve as a clearinghouse for information. The group intended to implement this mission through campus visits; the established newsletter, *The Superior Student*; outreach to educational associations and agencies; and national and regional conferences. Chaszar cited the April 1958 newsletter as declaring “to stimulate nationwide discussion of the fundamental honors questions” (78).

The ICSS made great strides in advancing collegiate honors. Cohen highlighted eight important conferences of note, some thematic in nature, between the years 1958–64. They targeted particular populations such as the conference on Honors and the Preparation of Teachers at the University of Wisconsin in April 1962 and the conference on Talented Women and the American College—titled “Needed Research on Able Women in Honors Programs, Colleges and Society”—at Columbia University in May 1964 (Cohen, “The First” 48–49). Cohen also made campus visits in order to investigate how institutions and faculty could best develop and manage honors programs suitable for their campuses, and he made other visits to prepare for upcoming regional conferences.

Despite the segregated structure of higher education in the late 1950s, Cohen’s honors campaign crossed racial lines. According to Chaszar, Cohen

visited fourteen Southern universities in the spring of 1958. A few of the Southern institutions visited were HBCUs: Howard and Southern and later that summer Fisk and Morehouse (87). After his Southern visits, Cohen reported in the October 1958 newsletter,

Fisk University is exploring new academic approaches with 25 of its best freshmen. It is also testing out an early admissions experiment in cooperation with six other colleges and universities including Oberlin and Wooster. . . . Morehouse is gathering important data by means of a controlled experiment involving an accelerated program. 24–30 Ford scholars are participating. (“Some Notes,” 11–12)

Appearing in the May/June 1959 *Superior Student* newsletter was an article entitled, “Educating the Gifted Negro Student: A problem of Encouragement and Development,” written by President Felton G. Clark and Dean E. C. Harrison of Southern University about the obstacles in both identifying and encouraging Black student talent (2–4). The authors referenced the Cold War “international power struggle . . . and the numerous publications criticizing the nation’s schools for their neglect of the gifted” as reasons and urgency to identify and encourage Black student talent, and they pointed out that although the nation was preoccupied with talent development, there was “a noticeable lack of interest in this regard among Negro students” (2–4). The authors’ criticism was critical in ensuring that Black institutions and students were included in the talent development campaign, especially with regard to financial support. It would have been detrimental to allow the segregationist climate to disregard Black talent as able to contribute to the Cold War efforts, especially after proving its patriotic valor in the Second World War as with the Tuskegee Airmen, a group of Black WWII military pilots, for example.

One concern that Clark and Harrison highlighted was the measures in place to identify able students and provide an environment that would nurture their talents. Finding standardized testing to be an inadequate indicator, they wrote, “the devices which are being used to identify the talented among the dominant group are less effective in measuring the intellectual potential of Negro youth” (3). Instead, they supported efforts that called upon more integrated strategies for identifying talent such as those of the Southern Project of the National Scholarship Service and Fund for Negro Students that “experimented with methods and techniques of searching for talent among Negro high school seniors. During the existence of the project from 1953–1955, 1,732 students in 45 cities were identified as superior

through such procedures as counseling, instructor ratings and scholastic aptitude testing” (3).

Clark and Harrison acknowledged the lower socio-economic background of some of the identified students and encouraged directing their talent potential by affording them “a challenging and stimulating educational climate [so] they are motivated to strive for high achievement” (4). In this regard, they expressed their criticism of Black institutions:

Unfortunately, too few of the colleges existing primarily for Negro youth provide the climate that is conducive to the development of able or gifted students . . . the fact that existing among Negro youth is a significant number of potentially gifted students. . . . Hence, those who are involved in the process of planning educational programs of Negro youth must become more aware of the need for seeking out those with potential and for extending to them stimulating educational opportunities . . . [and] continue to pursue rather vigorously research and experimentation that will lead to promising “how-to-do-it programs.” (4)

One of the “how-to-do-it programs” was collegiate honors.

On the first page of the May/June 1959 newsletter that preceded the article by Clark and Harrison was an announcement, “The Gifted Negro Student: A Challenge to American Education,” detailing an upcoming conference on the gifted Negro student sponsored by Southern University, the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS), and Southern regional educational associations. *The Superior Student* editors noted that the conference would address a national concern: “the loss to the nation of a considerable source of undiscovered and hence unrealized Negro intellectual potential serves as one of the foremost challenges to American educational leaders today.” That “educational leaders” was not qualified by the term “Negro” emphasizes the national imperative for the education of this group of students from K–12 to the college level.

Among the other conferences of note between 1958 and 1964, Cohen highlighted the February 1960 conference, hosted by Southern University and A. & M. College in Baton Rouge, for predominantly Negro institutions and focused on the gifted Negro student. Cohen wrote, “I am particularly proud of our first, the Southern conference, which led at once to a conference of predominantly Negro colleges and therefore opened up the whole issue of the culturally deprived and disadvantaged anywhere” (Cohen, Foreword xiii).

Chaszar explains that the Southern University president, Felton G. Clark, reached out for conference support to the Carnegie Corporation, which directed him back to the ICSS. ICSS assisted in cosponsoring the conference. At this conference, societal issues were addressed that plagued Black educational experiences, such as inferior facilities and resources, not to mention the racial climate that might impede the recognition and/or growth of Black talent (Chaszar 88–89).

Earlier, in a 1958 article titled “The Development and Present Status of Publicly-Supported Higher Education for Negroes,” Clark had rejected the vocational and agricultural training encouraged by Southern state-funded institutions and espoused by Booker T. Washington’s “advocacy of industrial education which was hailed by white Northerners and Southerners” (Clark 225). Noting a total of “34 state-supported institutions for Negroes” in 1956–57, he charged Black institutions “to become American institutions . . . providing an educational climate that stresses competition with standards of excellence” (232). Clark did not mention Sputnik directly but did write that

it was soon realized that America was not utilizing effectively its human resources; the results being a shortage of specialized talent such as engineers, scientists, physicians. . . . Related to the problem was the Negro to whom had been applied the “separate but equal doctrine,” with the consequence being the denial of appropriate opportunities for maximum development of the Negro’s potential. (231)

In other words, Black colleges should have been no different than majority White institutions with regard to academic standards and educating Black students in the tradition of the liberal arts rather than industrial training, and doing otherwise would be a waste of “Negro” talent. As if speaking to an audience broader than HBCU leadership, Clark appeared to see an opportunity in the Cold War space race to argue for higher levels of Black education. With the recent passage of *Brown v. Board of Education* and the NDEA (National Defense Education Act), Clark was perhaps appealing to both the interests of the nation and its urgent need to develop all talent as well as to the interests of HBCU presidents.

Legal scholar Derrick Bell’s concept of Interest-Convergence—the accommodation of two opposing sides with mutual interests but with competing motivations—was likely Clark’s goal. In the context of desegregation litigation, Bell viewed the Interest-Convergence Dilemma principle operating

in favor of the Black community only when this dismantling met the interests of the White community: “the interest of blacks in achieving racial equality will be accommodated only when it converges with the interests of whites” (“*Brown v The Board of Education* and the Interest-Convergence Dilemma” 523). Further building upon Bell’s theory of interest-convergence, critical legal scholar Mary L. Dudziak historically traced desegregation cases, contextualizing the timing of decisions such as *Brown v. Board of Education* with federal interests regarding foreign policy and global relationships, concluding that hypocrisy more than good will led to a nation’s espousing democracy and dismantling *Plessy v. Ferguson* while maintaining segregation. Dudziak argued that these legal events need to be understood in the racialized Cold War context in which they occurred in order to truly benefit from their historical and contemporary meanings.

Clark’s focus on the need for Black talent was an opportune example of interest-convergence within the historical context of the late 1950s, when the nation needed all hands on deck and when an international audience was observing the nation’s practice of democracy in relation to its Black citizens. In 1960, Clark coordinated leaders from a total of thirty-three Black institutions to “explore the most urgent educational problems of superior students from culturally deprived backgrounds . . . good minds unevenly developed [due to lack of educational resources]” and to explore “*remedial* (emphasis theirs) work for Honors students” (Clark and Harrison 2). True to the traditions of HBCUs, the conference “Report” in the same issue of *The Superior Student* newsletter indicated the contribution that these leaders gave to the larger collegiate honors educators’ community,

It was a contribution of this conference that the broader socio-cultural aspects of Honors programs necessarily received closer scrutiny and came into the foreground. . . . [T]he conference made evident the large role which favorable cultural environment and high levels of expectancy in the . . . school and the community play in academic achievement. (2)

The ethic of care that distinguishes HBCU institutions and the supportive experiences they afford their students (see Brown et al.; Fleming) was powerfully present even in their meeting deliberations.

The impending intellectual loss HBCUs would suffer from failing to nurture gifted Negro students was heartfelt. In “Final Session: Next Steps,” Albert N. Whiting, Dean of the College at Morgan State College—now Morgan

State University—pleaded “for the establishment of Honors programs in Negro colleges” along the lines recommended by the ICSS (15–16).

HBCUs had significant engagement with the ICSS and the honors movement. Howard University English professor and honors program director John Lovell, Jr., and Fisk University history professor and honors program director M. J. Lunine were both in attendance at a “general” ICSS conference in Denver in April of 1965 (ICSS, Fd. 3, Box 22). During Cohen’s campus visits to support the development of new programs and continued growth of existing honors programs from 1956 to 1963, he was invited to visit and meet with deans and faculty of Howard University (April 14, 1958; March 1, 1961; December 6, 1961), Southern University (April 22, 1958; November 3, 1959), Fisk University (June 17, 1958; September 11–12, 1962), Morehouse and Spelman Colleges (June 21, 1958), and Virginia State and Hampton Institute (September 28, 1960) (ICSS, Fd. 9, Box 22). In correspondence of June 16, 1959, George Redd, Dean at Fisk University, forwarded Fisk’s honors program plans to Cohen and the ICSS. He wrote, “I have delayed writing to you since the most helpful Louisville Conference because I wanted to give you a complete report. . . . I shall look forward to the increased participation in the services of the Inter-University Committee” (ICSS, Fd. 9, Box 22). Redd had attended the first Southern Invitational Conference at the University of Louisville in November of 1958. The conference “for institutions predominantly Negro,” was the Southern University Invitational Conference at Southern University and A.&M. College in February of 1960 (ICSS, Fd. 9, Box 22).

Redd enclosed a report titled “Recommendations of the Sub-Committee of the Educational Policy Committee on an Honors Program for Fisk University, June 1959,” which described in full detail the purpose and procedure to developing the honors program. The sub-committee’s report proposed that “it is desirable, as far as practical, to create a climate in which superior students will compete more effectively with each other rather than be retarded by the ‘run of the mill’ student” (ISCC, Fd. 9, Box 2:1). The plan indicates not only the university’s commitment but its forward thinking as they envisioned that by fall 1962 their honors students and program would “have its own food service; an academic advisor rather than a personnel advisor; its own library . . . and become a source of intellectual information for the campus” (ICSS, Fd. 9, Box 2). Although a formal honors program had not been established previously at Fisk, courses with this intent had existed for years. A survey of “Fisk University’s General Honors Program” was attached to the report with the following comments:

[S]pecial offerings for superior students are nothing new at Fisk. For more than twenty years, Departmental Honors courses have been given in various major fields; and during the past two years, special Honors sections have been established. . . . [W]hat is new . . . is the systematic effort to provide the top 5 to 10% of the student body with a four-year program. (ISCC, Fd. 9, Box 2:1)

In the 1963–64 ICSS membership brochure, HBCU supporting institutional members included (as printed): Bennett College (North Carolina), Central State College (Ohio), Clark College (Georgia), Grambling College (Louisiana), Langston University (Oklahoma), Lincoln University (Pennsylvania), Savannah State College, Texas Southern University, Tuskegee Institute (Alabama), Virginia State College, and Xavier University (Louisiana). This list represents only dues-paying members, and it is likely that many more HBCUs already had established honors programs or had faculty committees actively engaged in discussions to develop them. For example, Howard University and Hampton, both with honors programs at the time, do not appear on the list.

Pertaining to ICSS leadership, Black historian John Hope Franklin was a member of the executive committee for the national organization. He gave the opening address at the February 1960 conference entitled “To Educate All the Jeffersonians,” which was published in the April 1960 *Superior Student* newsletter, an issue dedicated to the Southern Conference on the Gifted Negro Student. Franklin’s remarks had a powerful magnitude that resonates even today as leaders debate about and advocate for Black education:

[T]he many who sought universal education, or the few who wanted to encourage the superior student, actually had in mind *white* universal education or the encouragement of the superior student *provided* he was white. Perhaps nothing has blighted the drive for universal education in the United States more than the simultaneously held contradictory notion that universal education should be confined to white people. Perhaps nothing has made a caricature of the current drive to identify and encourage the academically talented more than the concurrently prevailing practice of segregated education and cultural degradation that makes such identification and encouragement extremely difficult. . . . It was the view, supported in law, that Negroes should have equality in ignorance, and that no black person should have an education, whether he be moron or genius. . . . [L]aws

were enacted making it a crime for them to learn *or* be taught . . . [to] ensure proper subordination. (5)

Franklin, who later became the nation's preeminent scholar in American and Black History, continued in his remarks to outline the history of Reconstruction, Jim Crow, and segregation in education.

In the conference session discussions, the special newsletter also mentioned that Fisk, Hampton, and other HBCUs were working with local high schools not only to recruit but to begin earlier the nurturing of talented students. In describing efforts of the Hampton Institute to identify talent, William Robinson reported,

[M]ost identification of bright students [by Hampton] was too little and too late. To try to correct this, three local high schools without any programs for their superior students were enlisted in a special effort . . . [to provide] freshman courses in the high school. (*The Superior Student*, "High School" 11)

The conference itself and the active discussion of highly talented Black students illustrate Black colleges' involvement in the late 1950s and early 1960s (some much earlier as with Fisk University) in a significant and evolving trend in higher education, mostly out of a desire to meet the needs of the Black academically talented student population.

Cohen and his colleagues would continue to travel until 1963 in their efforts within the ICSS to transform teaching and learning on campuses across the nation. Cohen wrote, "As director up to 1963, I took on a good share of these [campus] visits. During this period I made roughly 300 visits and participated in 100 conferences" (Cohen, "The First" 32). Cohen's southern-state campus tour was apparently advantageous to his coordinating efforts and the engagement of Black colleges. Because the HBCUs that were involved in ICSS during these early years—Atlanta University (now Clark Atlanta University), Bennett College, Fisk University, Hampton University, Howard University, and Morehouse College, to name a few—were primarily private and boasted collegiate coursework in the liberal arts, the adoption of honors programs was an agile fit.

State-supported Black institutions, though, were also meeting the needs of their high-achieving students, including Morgan State University (then Morgan State College), Florida A&M University (then Florida Agricultural and Mechanical College for Negroes), Grambling State University (then Grambling College, Louisiana), and South Carolina State University (then

Colored Normal Industrial Agricultural and Mechanical College of South Carolina). Among others, these public institutions were deeply engaged with the ICSS and involved in discussions on developing the academically talented youth on their campuses.

This historical analysis has revealed the contributions of a collection of institutions to the development of honors in higher education and bridged the research gap in the role of HBCUs in that development. The omission of HBCUs in historical studies of honors is evident, for instance, in the recent study “College and University Honors Programs in the Southern United States,” the authors fail to make any mention of Black institutions despite the research being conducted in the region of the nation where most HBCUs are located (Owens and Travis). This colorblind oversight indicates that HBCUs are categorically absent from mainstream research considerations by most higher education scholars unless the topic is specifically on Black education. Even if Black institutions had been among the participants in Owen and Travis’s study, their role is unclear to the reader.

The particular histories of HBCUs require that research findings be nested in the distinct characteristics of Black institutions even if they appear on the surface to be conducting similar work as their White counterparts. Any past contributions or current practices and initiatives being carried out at an HBCU, in contrast to a White institution, have typically occurred and continue to occur within a more onerous context given the unique historical and contemporary challenges of these institutions. This context necessitates at least a brief acknowledgement when scholars attempt to understand current trends in higher education, especially within the American South. Understanding the historical strategies of HBCUs in meeting the needs of high-achieving Black collegians will show how institutions of higher education need to respond to and identify these students and will better equip both scholars and educators to achieve the best practices and outcomes in honors education for Black collegians.

Going forward, the NCHC can serve a critical role in the next fifty years in sponsoring research on honors education and the contributions of HBCUs to the field of collegiate honors education. Further, the organization can forge exciting collaborations with its member institutions, in the tradition of Joseph Cohen and the ICSS, that might directly support HBCUs in their efforts to provide innovative educational opportunities for its most academically able collegians.

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Reading Place, Reading Landscape: A Consideration of City as Text™ and Geography

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The fundamental concepts employed by City as Text™ (CAT)—the established experiential learning practice in honors education—and the discipline of geography, specifically the landscape tradition within human geography, share much in common. The overlaps offer CAT practitioners additional intellectual support from a source outside of honors while the differences suggest opportunities for incorporating new material into CAT programs. While CAT and the landscape tradition share the general concepts of professional orientations grounded in place, of close attention to place, and of place as a text to be read, the landscape tradition offers specific terminology to support and build on these shared concepts: landscape as unwitting autobiography, landscape as an act of will, landscape in a continuous process of becoming, landscape as power, and object orientation vs. people orientation. Since readers of *JNCHC* are far more likely to be familiar with CAT than with the landscape tradition, the Appendix offers an annotated list of key texts in human geography's tradition of landscape scholarship that may have immediate use and resonance for those working in CAT programs.

PROFESSIONAL ORIENTATION

Both CAT and geography work with place, be it an urban neighborhood, big-city downtown, suburb, college campus, rural village, state road, hog farm, national park, river watershed, or glacier (see, for example, Allen; Hart; Harvey; Knox; Machonis; Marcus and Reynolds; Muller; Ochs, “Campus as Text” and “You’re Not Typical”; Ostrander; Raitz). CAT and geography, though, work with place for different reasons. For CAT practitioners, place facilitates creative pedagogy. The idea for CAT emerged in the 1970s among a group of honors educators, headed by Bernice Braid, who were inspired by and participants in an overarching critique of the largely passive instruction delivered in college and university classrooms (Braid, “History” 3). Standard academic settings limited student development by making learning a repetitive act, reducing opportunities for student creativity or reflection. Braid and her colleagues responded with the CAT seminars that are one component of Honors Semesters, where students from different universities leave their home institutions to spend a semester in a new place, enrolled in five inter-related courses connected by a site-specific theme. CAT is the “integrative seminar” that anchors three courses from different disciplines and a “Directed Research” course (Braid, “Honors Semesters” 20; National Collegiate Honors Council). A CAT seminar asks students to step out of the classroom and sets them exploring a particular place and the people in it. Successive explorations act as “street laboratories” (Braid, “Honors Semesters” 14) that not only anchor but guide a course’s content. CAT is fluid, organic; students tack back and forth between what they are seeing and hearing in place and a wide array of readings from interdisciplinary academic essays to fiction to newspaper articles (Braid, “Honors Semesters 20). Classroom discussion and reflective writing generate new questions and new explorations. Over the course of a semester, students construct their own frameworks of understanding and meaning, generating knowledge about a particular place as well as themselves by exploring how their perspectives, biases, and feelings affect what they see and the process of learning (see Braid and Long; Machonis; Long).

For geographers, place is a subject of analysis for scholarly research. Geography is, in fact, the study of places and has been since the 1800s when it was established as a formal university discipline in Western Europe. Geographic research on place is diverse, ranging from work that focuses on natural processes such as landform creation and landform evolution—the physical branch of geography—to work that focuses on the organization and

distribution of human activities such as politics, the economy, and religious beliefs, the human branch of geography. Particularly important to a discussion of CAT are those human geographers who focus on *landscape*, a term closely aligned with place. This scholarship traces its origins to the work of Carl Sauer, a University of California, Berkeley, professor whose career spanned the early 1920s to the 1960s. Sauer was interested in analyzing the relationships between people and their environment to understand how physical and human factors intertwine to produce distinct material effects at both local and regional scales (see Sauer, “Morphology” and “Education”). While the scholarship of physical geographers and other human geographers could also have practical use in CAT programs, Sauer’s concept of the landscape tradition, which emphasized the process of human place creation, seems especially relevant to CAT.

ATTENTION TO PLACE

CAT practitioners and landscape geographers attend to place. Attention means concentration on and receptivity to a subject—in this case, place—and such focus requires effort, attention being a limited human resource. The opposite of attention, intentional or unintentional neglect, works to obscure and render invisible. Place, by its commonness and familiarity, gets easily taken for granted and slips into the background of awareness, creating an asymmetry in that what surrounds us most (our built environment) is what we notice least. As geographer Peirce Lewis notes, “For most Americans, ordinary man-made landscape is something to be looked at, but seldom thought about” (11). CAT and landscape geography work to bring the mundane elements of place to the forefront of awareness for the purpose of accessing the content and quantity of meaning embedded in our surroundings.

PLACE AS TEXT

CAT practitioners and landscape geographers approach place as a text that can be read (see Braid and Long; Lewis). To say that places are texts does not merely articulate an interesting metaphor; it means that the diverse elements of place—structures, objects, people’s daily routines, environmental context—form repositories of coded information that can be retrieved. However, the retrieval, the reading of place, requires a fundamentally different practice than reading traditional printed media. One typically sits down to read a book; one opens it, moves one’s eyes over its words line by line, page

after page, and when one is done, closes it and stows it away. Reading place requires one to go there, to move around in it, using not just sight but all the senses. There is no standard way to read a place, no predetermined structure; both CAT practitioners and landscape geographers aim to address this unappreciated form of illiteracy. The quantity of new material (everything that surrounds you), combined with the effort required to learn a new form of reading and the nontraditional location of the texts, is precisely what, for CAT, augments the sometimes sterile and sedated classroom routine and what, for landscape geographers, carves out a methodological niche in academia.

LANDSCAPE AS OUR UNWITTING AUTOBIOGRAPHY

If place can be read like a text, the next question is what kind of text it is. For CAT practitioners, place is a living, working, primary document, a direct, unmediated, and unfiltered source of information about people, their lives, and their experiences (Braid, "Age" 26; see also Daniel). Landscape geographers clarify this idea, viewing place as a specific type of primary document, as described by Peirce Lewis in a canonical reading: "Our human landscape is our unwitting autobiography, reflecting our tastes, our values, our aspirations, and even our fears, in tangible, visible form" (12) through its design, arrangement, and function. This idea appears in the CAT literature, as Low suggests in her description of a specific CAT experience crafted for faculty at the University of Baltimore, Coppin State University, and Bowie State University: faculty were instructed to identify the "social values" reflected in the architecture of buildings and their renovations (Low 30), a reading of tangible, fundamental principles.

An autobiography is a self-authored record of one's life, a firsthand account of events and one's reactions to those events. A central goal of most authors is to communicate along the way their convictions and beliefs, to give the reader a sense of who they are, their identity and character. Lewis distinguishes between these consciously written texts and landscapes, which he calls "unwitting" autobiographies. Most of our ordinary, run-of-the-mill landscapes reveal us unintentionally since gas stations, strip malls, and parking garages, for example, are not typically constructed and arranged for the purpose of conveying a message about our culture. As a result, "the landscape is liable to be more truthful than most autobiographies because we are less self-conscious about how we describe ourselves" (Lewis 12). Given the frequent gaps between what we say we value and what we have done, the built environment can provide confessions of what might not be admitted in speech.

LANDSCAPE AS AN ACT OF WILL

Other geographers felt that Lewis advised a static reading of the landscape as a finished printed page, a looking back at what was already done, and they wanted to emphasize the forces producing landscape, to discern the live impetus at work. Don Mitchell argues that any given landscape is “actively made: it is a physical intervention into the world and thus is not so much our ‘unwitting autobiography’ (as Lewis put it) as an act of will” (34). Every landscape—every structure and object—exists for a reason as a purposeful investment of resources, time, energy, money, and thought. Mitchell illustrates his point by describing through a Marxist lens the basic roles played by landscape in capitalism. In the CAT literature, Carvajal has a similar conceptualization of place. He draws on a tradition of cultural materialism within anthropology and views CAT as a “structured exploration of a sociocultural system” (36). To explore a place is to explore infrastructure (physical resources and features), human use of infrastructure through work and reproduction, and the behavioral and mental patterns that emerge from these interactions. Place is created as people attempt to satisfy their needs.

Mitchell’s emphasis on acts of will highlights relations and relationships. Activity demands negotiated interaction with other people’s resources and needs. This contact can be mutually beneficial or, as Mitchell emphasizes, have unequal effects. Landscapes, therefore, can be sites of agreement or sites of struggle (see Mitchell 34).

LANDSCAPE AS A CONTINUOUS PROCESS OF BECOMING

Building on the idea of observing action and working intentions in the landscape, Richard Schein notes that landscapes “are always in the process of ‘becoming’” (“Place” 662). One never gets to the last page of a landscape autobiography, which has no conclusion, no ending, both physically and ideologically. First, landscapes are always prone to material modifications such as additions or demolition because they are constantly subjected to interaction, evaluation, and engineering for new uses. Second, the landscape does not stand for fixed, unyielding values because the landscape is “implicated in the ongoing formulation of social life” (Schein, “Place” 662; see also Schein, “Normative” 217). Beliefs and convictions unfold as we interact with and modify the built environment.

Physical becoming is readily observable; one can literally see that places are “not static but growing, decaying, and rebuilding,” as Strikwerda commented

about his Faculty Institute experience in Miami and the Everglades (103). Physical as well as ideological becoming is also implicit in Carvajal's discussion of place: as humans use infrastructure, as they work and reproduce, as needs change, place does as well. To understand and explain these processes, landscape geographers focus on "geographical connectivity"; a landscape develops and evolves in one location, but that landscape is "an articulated moment in networks that stretch across space" (Schein, "Place" 662).

LANDSCAPE AS POWER

Another major theorization of place, succinctly summarized by Mitchell, is "Landscape is power" (43). Landscape is influence and control. Geographers break down this idea in three ways. First, landscape is power in a physical sense: it quite literally "determines what can and cannot be done" (Mitchell 43) and where we can and cannot go. Its sheer physical presence tells us what to do. Second, landscape is power in a normative sense; it makes our relationships and interactions seem natural, normal (see Schein, "Place" 676). The landscapes we interact with every day—gas stations, strip malls, parking garages, parks, homes—are simply there as backdrop to the daily routine. As James and Nancy Duncan note, "If by being so tangible, so natural, so familiar, the landscape is unquestioned, then such concrete evidence about how society *is* organized can easily become seen as evidence of how it should, or *must* be organized" (123). Because the landscape materializes values, ideas, aspirations, fears, and convictions, it works to reproduce these as truth simply by being. The physicality of the built environment as unquestioned reality—the way things are—acts as ideological inertia, making it difficult to conceive of alternative ways of being. Third, landscape is power because it does work; it is a medium of action. Through its physicality and normativity, landscape accomplishes all sorts of tasks and puts in motion all sorts of processes. It makes some people very wealthy and marginalizes others; it includes and excludes; it both provides and limits opportunities. The landscape not only reflects inequality or separation, as Lewis would say, but makes it happen. Closely tied to this last theorization of power is the idea that landscape "signals the shape and possibility of [social] justice" (Mitchell 46) by telling us where we are and how long we have to go in achieving goals of equality, opportunity, inclusion, and freedom.

CAT practitioners are attuned to power and social justice as strongly evidenced in the guiding instructions given to participants throughout a

semester. Braid offers a compact summary: “We have always asked people to look at the surface, then beneath, to ask ‘What is it like to live here? For whom?’” (“Founder’s” 6). “For whom” marks a path toward considering the uneven distribution of resources, rights, wealth, influence, and control. Specific questions include:

- “Does everybody seem to belong? Do some people seem lost or out of place? Why? Who talks to whom? In what ways is social interaction encouraged or discouraged? What feeling do you get about people as you watch them? Are they stressed, purposeful, interested, lonely? Try to identify why you get these feelings about people.” (Long xi)
- Talk to people; find out “what matters to them in their daily lives, what they need, what they enjoy, what bothers them, what they appreciate.” (Long xi)

From these instructions come intense insights. For example, participants in Faculty Institutes (a condensed version of semester-long CAT seminars for instructors) have heard painful stories of isolation and abandonment in the Lower Ninth Ward after Hurricane Katrina flooded New Orleans (Allen) and have spoken to people beginning to be priced out of their neighborhood in Miami Beach (Ochs, “You’re Not Typical”): power at work.

OBJECT-ORIENTATION VS. PEOPLE-ORIENTATION

The guiding instructions cited above suggest that CAT practice leans towards the social aspects of place, focusing participants’ attention on observing human behavior—people in place, how people use place—and encouraging participants to ask directly what is on people’s minds. Landscape geography complements CAT practice by leaning its questions toward objects, focusing a great deal of scholarship on directly questioning the built environment itself. The approach can take different angles, which I distill into three categories: the past, connections, and function. Each category is a landscape geographer’s way of saying “if you want to understand the built environment, you must understand this.”

- *You must understand the past.* History matters. The present scene is largely composed of structures and objects not of our own making. We have inherited what surrounds us from people in the past, both long ago and relatively recently. This past shapes contemporary life

both physically and ideologically. There is a caveat to this principle, however: the present scene also hides the past. As Mitchell says, “Sometimes it is the erasure of history that matters the most.” (42)

- *You must understand connections.* Most landscapes are not only the assemblage of materials from other places but are physically connected to other places through transportation, communication, and public utility infrastructure: everything from roads to airports, telephone wires to internet cables, sewer pipes to electric transmission lines. Most landscapes are connected to other places through financial, political, legal, and cultural networks. Always be aware, however, that these connections are often obscured, “anything but self-evident.” (Mitchell 33)
- *You must understand function; how a landscape works, both mechanically and socially.* First, think of any given landscape as a machine. It consists of component parts (buildings, roads, landscaping, light fixtures, garbage cans, benches, etc.) working together to accomplish a task or produce an output, and this machine requires inputs and regular maintenance. Second, the mechanical function of every landscape can be put to diverse social, economic, political, legal, aesthetic, emotional, and ideological purposes. Landscapes, for example, provide basic needs and services; generate profits (or losses); provide jobs; divide or exclude with force (fences, walls, locks) or with subtlety (signage, cost); and provide the space and means to bring people together for work, leisure, consumption, protest, celebration, remembrance.

Each category suggests object-centric questions that guide landscape geography scholarship, both in the field and in archives, libraries, and interviews. Table 1 offers a distilled sample resembling the observation prompts found in CAT instructions. The questions found in the left-hand column focus on firsthand observations, which often lead to the broader, research-based queries of the right-hand column. The landscape geographer’s approach to place encourages not just looking and listening, but measuring, probing, kneeling down, peeking under, lifting, walking behind, figuring out. It asks the observer to consider both this place in relation to others—the visible and invisible, the past and present—and how relationships and identities unfold in and through the built environment.

TABLE 1: LANDSCAPE GEOGRAPHY’S OBJECT-CENTERED QUESTIONS

The Past: History Matters	
Firsthand Observations	Research-Based Questions
How old are these structures and objects?	Who labored to make, construct, assemble these structures and objects? Under what conditions?
How were they made? With what technologies?	Who financed their production?
	Who owned, leased, and/or used these structures and objects?
	With what intent?
How has this structure or object been cared for?	What role do these objects and structures play in peoples’ memories and identity?
Has it been added to or modified in any way?	
Recycled or reused?	
Or has it been preserved in its original form?	
How do newer structures repeat, imitate, and/or reference styles and materials from the past?	
Can you see any traces of the past in the scene before you?	
Connections: Connections Matter, both Material & Intangible	
Firsthand Observations	Research-Based Questions
What objects and structures (or portions of these objects and structures) have been imported from somewhere else? Is their origin obvious or marked in any way?	Who designed these objects and structures?
	Who made them? Under what conditions?
	Who purchased them or brought them to this location? At what cost?
	Who installed them? Under what conditions?
	Who benefited (and benefits) from these connections? Was, or is, anyone harmed?
	Which objects and structures shape local identity and memory? Which reflect local identity and memory?

<p>What transportation and communication infrastructure do you see? What systems of water distribution? Food distribution? Consumer goods distribution? Waste disposal?</p>	<p>What investment in terms of money and resources do these infrastructure and distribution systems represent?</p>
	<p>Who has access? Who does not?</p>
	<p>Who controls these infrastructure and distribution systems? What individuals, groups, institutions?</p>
	<p>How are they regulated?</p>
	<p>Does anyone benefit politically from these infrastructure and distribution systems?</p>
	<p>How are they connected to other places?</p>
	<p>How have they evolved over time?</p>
	<p>Do they play a role in the identity and memory of this place?</p>
<p>What evidence do you see of visitors? Temporary and permanent migrants?</p>	<p>Where do these visitors and migrants come from?</p>
<p>How do they shape the look and functionality of this landscape?</p>	<p>Who benefits from their presence? Who does not?</p>
	<p>How is their presence regulated by laws, custom, culture?</p>
<p>Function: How the Landscape Works Mechanically</p>	
<p>Firsthand Observations</p>	<p>Research-Based Questions</p>
<p>Note the arrangement, number, materials, textures, color, size, and shape of the structures and objects you see, everything from buildings to garbage cans, landscaping to utility poles, seating to manhole covers.</p>	<p>What technologies, machines, time, investments, and people are required to maintain these structures and objects?</p>
<p>How do they relate?</p>	
<p>How do the fronts, interiors, and backs of buildings compare?</p>	<p>Have resources been removed from this place? If so, which ones, by whom, and for what reasons?</p>
<p>How do these structures and objects work, mechanically? Is, for example, the seating movable or fixed? How does a garbage can open to gain access to the trash bag?</p>	

Function: How the Landscape Works Socially	
Firsthand Observations	Research-Based Questions
What basic needs do the structures and objects you see serve?	Who is brought together by this landscape? Who is excluded?
Who uses and benefits from these structures and objects? What individuals, groups, institutions?	Who benefits (or loses) financially? Politically? Legally? Emotionally?

Contrasting the orientation of CAT and landscape geographers is not meant to imply that the former ignores objects and the latter ignores people. Like landscape geography, CAT instructs participants to map what they see—the types and mix of buildings, points of interest, centers of activity, transportation routes—and to observe the detail of what has been mapped, everything from architectural styles to signage, advertising to color, landscaping to decoration. Like CAT, landscape geography recognizes the importance of not just looking but asking and listening in the form of casual conversations, formal interviews, and being both participant and observer. The individual strengths of the two methodologies, however, stand out, which is what makes the integration of CAT with landscape geography theory and practice so compelling, providing the opportunity to expand what it means to attend to place and read more from this dynamic, three-dimensional text.

A CONCLUDING THOUGHT

Another less conspicuous point of connection between CAT and landscape geography is that both embrace the absence of clear answers as a condition productive to learning. CAT gets students out of the classroom silos where they are given history for fifty minutes, then political science for another fifty, then gender studies, then biology, with structured syllabi and fixed sets of expectations. The messy, varied, and dynamic attributes of place prevent access to information in the same neat, comfortable packages characteristic of classrooms. CAT values this disorienting condition that requires students to organize, figure out, and make sense for themselves (Braid, “False Positives”).

Landscape geographers, pursuing a research project focused on a particular landscape, experience their own productive form of disorientation. As Lewis notes, “Common landscapes . . . are by their nature hard to study by conventional academic means” (19). Their background status in public

attention minimizes the availability of information, a problem requiring landscape geographers to pursue obscure sources: trade journals, zoning codes, court decisions, city directories, financial reports, advertisements. This archival hunt exposes researchers to integrated observations that might not have been possible with an easier process. CAT seminars also challenge students to synthesize unconventional sources—their own observations in place, the knowledge and perspectives of people they meet along the way—with course readings and directed research projects, increasing the variety of sources drawn on.

At the same time, direct and persistent questioning of the built environment has the potential to contribute to CAT's goal of moving students toward self-awareness. CAT asks students to view themselves as observers through reflective writing assignments, the spirit of which is captured by Braid: "what is it about how I myself observe . . . that shapes my conclusions?" ("Honors Semesters" 15), a question that requires students to step back and view their normative ways of thinking. Becoming aware of the paucity of readily available knowledge about ordinary landscapes can be a disorienting moment that also results in stepping back from comfortable assumptions. We might think we know what is going on around us, but what we do not know about a place, despite our being in it, is immense. The decisions, relationships, and values of other people physically structure what we experience; we might think we are in control of our own lives, but the forces at work outside us are also immense. Directly questioning the built environment can be a productively unsettling step in the ongoing process of critical self-reflection (see Braid and Palma de Schrynemakers). The opportunity here is for CAT participants to walk away not overwhelmed but with an awed curiosity and desire to know.

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APPENDIX

This appendix focuses on space, place, built environment, and landscape: words—*ideas*—that CAT practitioners and landscape geographers share but that have specific meanings and a long history of usage for landscape geographers and the wider discipline. With the annotated reading list that follows, I make no claim to representing geography as a whole or landscape geography's canon. My references are selective, filtered through my own training and perspective as well as my personal sense of what ideas and readings are simultaneously intriguing and accessible.

Space and Place

Tuan, Yi Fu. 1977. *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Tuan provides a philosophical and phenomenological exploration of how people think and feel about both space and place as tangible ideas. Tuan argues, for example, that although space is abstract, empty, it also suggests movement and freedom while place is about attachment, stasis. Within this discussion he also touches on time and the ideas of home and nation.

Cresswell, Tim. 2004. *Place: A Short Introduction*. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing. Or, *Place: An Introduction*, an expanded version published in 2015 by Wiley Blackwell Publishing.

Cresswell offers a wide-ranging, interdisciplinary history of place as a term and idea in western thought and geography, and he explains the differences between place and space and landscape. He also gets us thinking about the relationships between place and politics, mobility, globalization, sexuality, art, and the Internet, among others, and provides a helpful appendix for further reading.

Landscape & Built Environment

Lewis, Peirce. 1979. "Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Some Guides to the American Scene." In *The Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, ed. Don Meinig, 11–32. New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

This is a key reading for my essay and a touchstone for cultural landscape geographers, establishing the idea of landscape as our unwitting autobiography. CAT practitioners will be interested to know that this piece was born of pedagogy. In teaching undergraduates about the geographic approach

to landscape, Lewis was often befuddled by his students' befuddlement at being told to go outside and look, observe, and think about what they saw. So he wrote what became this essay as a guide for students.

Lewis, Peirce. 1998. "The Monument and the Bungalow." *Geographical Review* 88 (4): 507–27.

In an update to his "Axioms" essay, Lewis stresses that students being asked to read the landscape should ideally learn two things: to attend to the mundane and to learn how to identify and date architectural styles in order to classify and order elements encountered in the landscape, link these places to larger processes. He also provides two examples of reading the landscape with students through a case study in small-town Pennsylvania.

Mitchell, Don. 2008. "New Axioms for Reading the Landscape: Paying Attention to Political Economy and Social Justice." In *Political Economies of Landscape Change*, ed. James L. Westcoat, Jr., and Douglas M. Johnston, 29–50. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer.

In another key reading for my essay, Mitchell updates Peirce Lewis's "Axioms" by drawing on work done on landscape since Lewis published his essay in 1979. His own Marxist approach comes through loud and clear, as does his critique of the limitations of Lewis's work. But the new axioms he provides and examples he gives are clear and cogent. The influence of Mitchell on Table 1 of my essay is apparent.

Schein, Richard H. 2009. "A Methodological Framework For Interpreting Ordinary Landscapes: Lexington, Kentucky's Courthouse Square." *Geographical Review* 99 (3): 377–402.

Schein provides a tutorial for reading the landscape similar to Lewis's "Monuments and Bungalows" and, along the way, provides a clear overview of how different geographers have approached landscape as well as an in-depth look at the work of Don Meinig, editor of *Interpretation of Ordinary Landscapes*, referenced above in Lewis, "Axioms."

Schein, Richard H. 1997. "The Place of Landscape: A Conceptual Framework for Interpreting an American Scene." *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 87 (4): 660–80.

This article offers Schein's theorization of landscape as "discourse materialized," drawing on Michel Foucault, and offers an intense overview of the genealogy of landscape studies in geography. He also puts his theory to

work in a case study: analysis of Ashland Park, an early 1900s-era suburb in Lexington, KY.

Wyckoff, William. 2014. *How to Read the American West: A Field Guide*. Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press.

This book, written by a historical landscape geographer, is geographic pedagogy for the layperson, meant to encourage people living in or passing through America's West to look around and think about what they see. Wyckoff "translates" geographical landscape theory into lucid prose, an inspiration for my essay.

Dwyer, Owen J., and Derek H. Alderman. 2008. *Civil Rights Memorials and the Geography of Memory*. Chicago, IL: Center for American Places at Columbia College.

The focus is specific, but the authors also include a "field guide" for reading civil rights memorials in an appendix as a way to make a museum visit or an encounter with a monument into a richer and more critical experience. The authors are well-versed in cultural landscape theory and, like Wyckoff, are able to distill with clarity. Many of the questions they suggest for "reading" memorials have a stimulating creativity not found in the other works listed, e.g., "If this memorial could talk, what kind of accent would it have? Would everyone be able to understand it? Would it harmonize or rhapsodize? Would it speak in riddles and poetic verse or something official-sounding, like an entry from an encyclopedia?" and "If this memorial was a film, who did the authors cast in the leading role? Who plays the good guy? Who is the villain?" (103).

Stilgoe, John. 1998. *Outside Lies Magic: Regaining History and Awareness in Everyday Places*. New York, NY: Walker and Company. And, by the same author: 2015. *What is Landscape?* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Stilgoe is a Harvard professor in the history of landscape development and studied under the eclectic landscape researcher J. B. Jackson, whom cultural landscape geographers claim as their own. *Outside Lies Magic* implores readers to get outside, walk, bike, and finally notice what is right in front of them, and he takes detailed observation to a new level. His style is rollicking and inspirational. *What is Landscape?* traces landscape as a word and idea but is also a call to explore.

Clay, Grady. 1973. *Close Up: How to Read the American City*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Clay was a journalist-turned-observer of the American urban scene adopted by cultural landscape geographers. His book suggests innovative ways to approach place through concepts such as “beats”—all the regular and cyclical movements of a city—and “stacks”—the concentration of materials, ideas, and resources.

Demography of Honors: Comparing NCHC Members and Non-Members

PATRICIA J. SMITH AND RICHARD I. SCOTT
University of Central Arkansas

Recent research describing the landscape of honors education has demonstrated that honors programs and colleges have become an important and expanding component of American higher education. Since its inception nearly a century ago, collegiate honors education offering campus-wide curricula has spread to more than 1,500 non-profit colleges and universities (Scott and Smith, “Demography”). NCHC has served as the umbrella organization for the collegiate honors community during a fifty-year period in which the number of known programs delivering honors education has experienced a more than four-fold increase (Rinehart; Scott and Smith, “Demography”).

In 2012, NCHC undertook systematic research of its member institutions’ structural and operational features, but we revealed in a previous article that the NCHC membership does not include 43% of institutions offering honors education (Scott and Smith, “Demography”). Since the 2012 NCHC study described only a fraction of the honors landscape, we seek to extend that vantage point to include non-members, examining structural features, engagement with regional honors councils, and reasons that non-member

institutions' administrators give for not joining NCHC. Additionally, we seek to explore information about the location of each campus offering honors education in order to observe how it is distributed throughout the United States.

Regarding the location and distribution of honors programs and colleges, we address the following research questions:

1. How are NCHC member and non-member honors programs and colleges distributed in the United States?
2. What proportion of institutions in each state offers honors education?
3. How are two- and four-year honors programs and colleges distributed in the United States?
4. To what extent is honors education being delivered at four-year institutions in each state and by institutional type?

Additionally, since NCHC's mission is to support honors education through strategic initiatives that include research, professional development, and advocacy, we explore not only the percentage of honors programs that are affiliated with NCHC but to what extent NCHC's support truly reaches institutions offering honors education. To begin to address this issue, we need to understand how institutions without membership vary from those represented among the membership, so we additionally sought to address the following research questions:

5. How do NCHC members differ from non-members in specific structural arrangements, i.e., enrollment of the institutional host, enrollment of the honors unit, title of the honors administrator, and presence of dedicated honors faculty, staff, academic space, and housing?
6. How do NCHC members differ from non-members in affiliation with regional honors councils?
7. What reasons do administrators of non-member institutions cite for not joining NCHC?

METHODOLOGY

To explore the research questions, we created a comprehensive data set from multiple sources. The original dataset was first developed to explore the

national landscape of honors education (Scott and Smith, “Demography”). Starting with the 2016 list of 4,664 institutions in the Integrated Postsecondary Educational Data System, or IPEDS (Carnegie), we eliminated institutions that did not deliver a traditional undergraduate education at non-profit institutions. That focus removed 1,290 for-profit institutions, 261 graduate-only institutions, 479 institutions offering special-focus curricula, 35 tribal institutions, and all 49 institutions located outside of the 50 states of the United States, leaving 2,550 colleges and universities. The 2016 IPEDS dataset uses the Carnegie Basic Classification that distinguished associates colleges (two-year institutions) from four-year institutions and further divides the latter into baccalaureate colleges, masters universities, and doctoral universities in their 2015 report. Note that the IPEDS definitional structure includes a branch campus of multi-campus systems only when the former has its own governance unit, which on rare occasions leads to honors programs with multiple memberships in NCHC having to be classified as one honors program despite operating as multiple programs within one branch campus.

To the dataset we added information about institutions offering honors education based on England’s web-crawl procedure that “defined an honors program as any program so-named online and providing information to off-campus website visitors” (73). Like England, we limited our dataset to those institutions that offer honors education in a campus-wide manner, excluding those having only departmental honors programs. We relied first on the Google search engine and then each institution’s internal search engine to locate the presence or absence of information on honors education at each of the 2,550 institutions studied; when the presence of honors was detected, we further examined whether it was institution-wide and whether it was designated as an honors program or college (for more information, see Scott and Smith, “Demography”). Membership in NCHC was based on its 2013–14 list of institutional members, excluding for-profit companies, organizations that provide study abroad or internships, honors societies, and individual/professional members.

In order to address the first four research questions, we added to the dataset the location of each of the institutions and then created maps of the locations. We additionally recorded the location of each institution within one of the six regions of the United States as defined by the regional honors councils: Southern, Northeast, Mid-East, Western, Great Plains, and Upper Midwest. Consulting the website for each regional council, we identified regional member institutions and recorded membership in the growing dataset.

Survey of Non-Members

Once this dataset was complete, we sought to gather contact information for presiding administrators at the 643 institutions that were identified as having honors education but had no affiliation with NCHC according to the 2013–14 membership roster. By searching their honors websites, we were able to identify working email addresses for 451 administrators. Of the remaining 192 institutions, many did not list contact information, and 45 had contact information that was no longer up to date. The 451 administrators were then sent an electronic survey that asked about the particular features of their honors academic unit and the reasons they were not members of NCHC. Specifically, they were each asked about enrollment at the institution, enrollment in the honors program or college, the administrative title of its chief academic officer, whether they had dedicated honors faculty, staff, academic space, and housing, and why they were not NCHC members. Replies came from 119 honors administrators, representing a 26% response rate and approximately 19% of the total population of non-members. An analysis of the survey respondents shows that a disproportionate number of baccalaureate and doctoral institutions responded to the survey of non-members relative to their distribution in IPEDs. Additionally, the average institution size of respondents is approximately 20% larger than the average institutional enrollment as represented in IPEDs data. Although four-year institutions and institutions with larger enrollments are represented at a higher rate in the survey findings, the distribution of honors programs and colleges in the sample is roughly the same as in the total population according to the study by Scott and Smith (“Demography”).

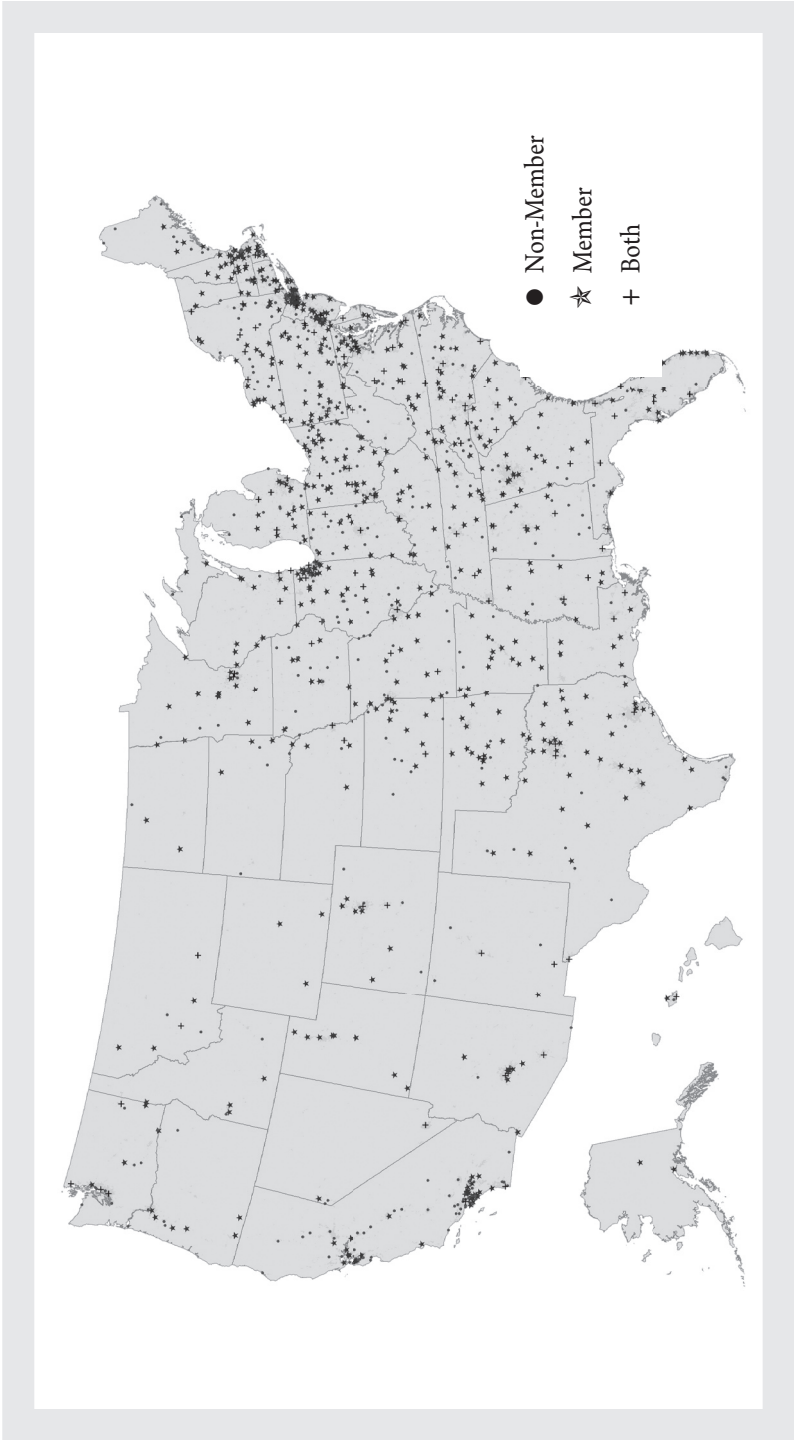
Responses to the survey were then compared to the results of the 2012 NCHC Member Survey (Scott). For the membership survey, 890 institutions with NCHC memberships in 2012 were surveyed; 446 (50%) responded. Summary results about NCHC member institutions are referenced in the following analyses when comparing them to non-members. Use of the 2012 survey results presents several limitations for the present study. First, the data available on NCHC members are now four years old whereas the data on non-members are current. Second, both surveys had relatively low response rates, with the 2012 membership survey having a 50% response rate but the survey of non-members representing merely 19% of the total non-member population. Additionally, the membership list that was used in Scott and Smith’s 2016 demography study is now two years old, so membership status may have changed during this time.

RESULTS

Using the location of each institution in the original dataset, we were able to demonstrate the distribution of honors education throughout the United States. Figure 1 depicts the location of the 1,503 institutions with campus-wide honors education. Cities hosting institutions with at least one of the 860 NCHC members are represented by stars (★) while those with one of the 643 non-members are symbolized by dots (●). Those cities hosting both a member and non-member institution are marked by a plus sign (+). The landscape of honors education map shows that the 1,503 institutions are located in 1,106 communities; 422 locations had 447 non-member institutions (21 of those locations had more than one non-member institution and no member institution); 564 locations had 638 member institutions (55 of those locations had more than one member institution with no non-members); 120 locations had at least one member and one non-member institution (65 locations had more than two institutions). Institutions offering honors education appear to be disproportionately found along the eastern seaboard, in southern and mid-eastern states, and in California, but some of this distribution follows the locational pattern of institutions within the United States offering traditional undergraduate education. To get a different view, one that shows the concentration of honors programs and colleges across the states, see Figure 2.

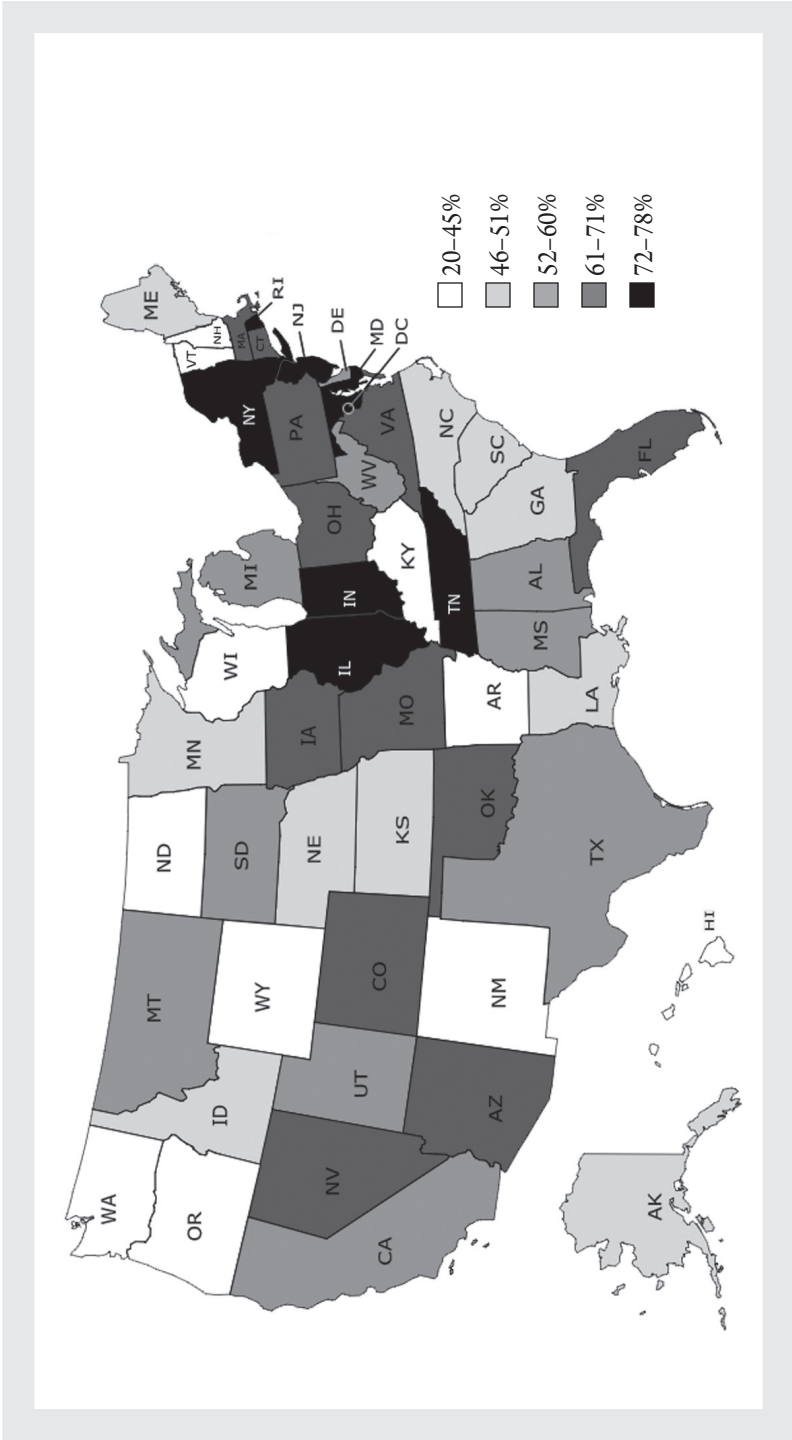
Figure 2 displays the percentage of institutions in each state that deliver campus-wide honors education. The honors concentration map shows that in 8 states more than 72% of undergraduate colleges and universities offer honors education, including 5 states in the northeast along with Indiana, Illinois, and Tennessee. In another 12 states, 61–71% of the institutions of higher education deliver honors, and they are spread throughout the nation. In a total of 35 states, 50% or more of the colleges and universities offer honors education. Six states approach having half of their institutions (44% to 49%) offering honors education. Concentrations of honors education are lowest in six states, ranging from 20 to 38%: Hawaii, North Dakota, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Wyoming. A closer look at these latter six states, however, reveals that at least 44% of the four-year institutions in Oregon and North Dakota offer honors education. In five of the six states, excluding only Vermont, the percentage of private institutions in the state is lower, often significantly, than the national average, with private institutions making up 13% to 35% whereas the national average is 40%.

FIGURE 1: LOCATION OF INSTITUTIONS WITH HONORS EDUCATION BY NCHC MEMBERSHIP STATUS



Note: Map by Stephen O'Connell, UCA Geography, using ArcGIS 10.2

FIGURE 2: PERCENTAGE OF UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS OFFERING CAMPUS-WIDE HONORS EDUCATION



Created with mapchart.net ©

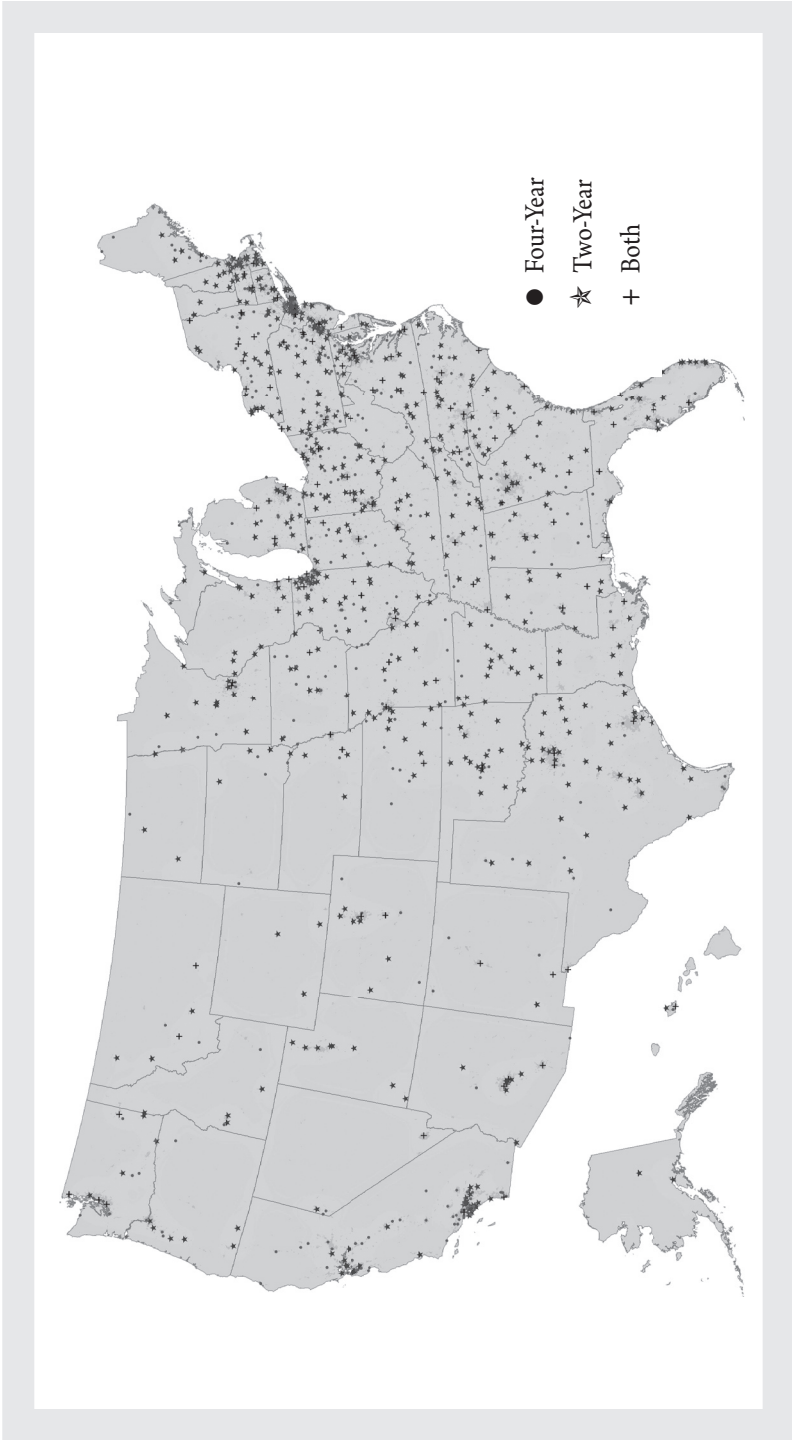
To further understand the presence of honors education, we explored the variation in prevalence between two-year and four-year institutions and institutional classification. While honors education is continuing to spread through two-year colleges and is currently being championed as one of the top five retention strategies for two-year institutions (Noel-Levitz), honors is still a much newer trend in these types of institutions. In fact, honors education is currently present in only 42% of all two-year institutions (389 of 919). Because of these differences, we examined the distribution of honors in each state, looking separately at two-year and four-year institutions. In Figure 3, cities hosting institutions that offer at least one of the 1,114 four-year institutions with honors education are represented by stars (★) while those with one of the 389 two-year institutions offering honors education are symbolized by dots (●). Those cities hosting both a four-year and two-year institution are marked by a plus sign (+).

We further focused on four-year institutions given their greater presence in honors education. Figure 4 demonstrates the percentage of four-year institutions offering honors education and shows that all but seven states (Vermont, New Mexico, Wyoming, Hawaii, North Dakota, New Hampshire, and Washington) have honors education at 50% or more of its four-year institutions. In fact, 26 states are offering honors education at 70% or more of their four-year institutions, with one (Delaware) having honors programs at 100% of its four-year institutions. Overall, the findings show that 68% of all traditional undergraduate four-year institutions are currently offering honors education (1,114 of 1,631), and 74% of all honors programs are located within four-year institutions.

Of the honors programs located within four-year institutions, our dataset revealed that 47% are located at public institutions and 53% at private institutions. These percentages do not show that a greater percentage of private institutions are offering honors, however, because 60% are private while only 40% are public. Of the 517 four-year institutions not offering honors education, 392 (76%) of those are private, so while a greater percentage of honors programs are located within private institutions, a greater percentage of all public institutions are offering honors programs.

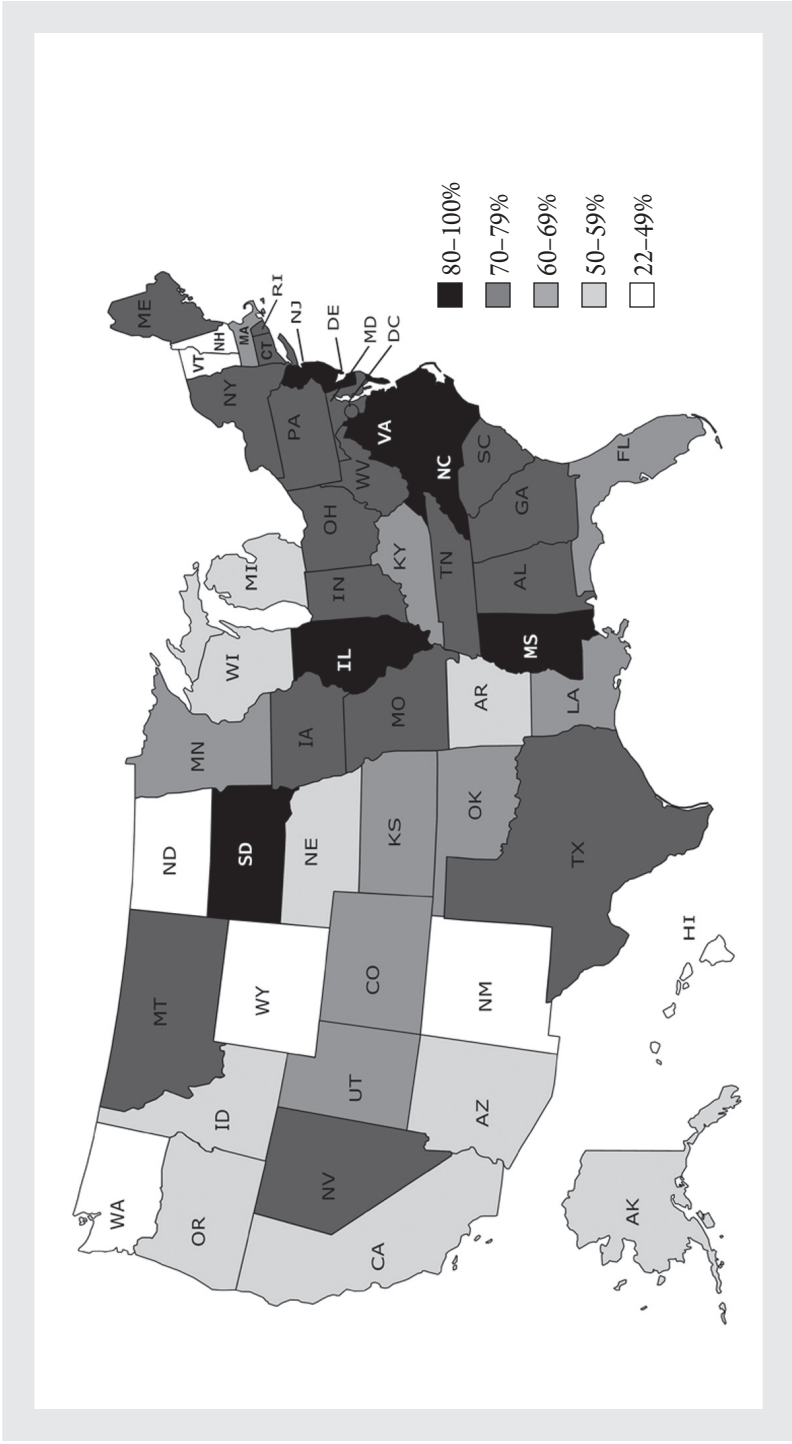
Looking more closely at public four-year institutions, we find that 95% of all public doctoral institutions, 84% of public masters, and 62.5% of public baccalaureate institutions offer honors education. At private four-year institutions, however, masters universities have the highest rate of honors education at 73% while 67% of private doctoral and just 48% of private baccalaureate institutions offer honors education.

FIGURE 3: LOCATION OF INSTITUTIONS WITH HONORS EDUCATION BY INSTITUTIONAL TYPE (4-YEAR & 2-YEAR)



Note: Map by Stephen O'Connell, UCA Geography, using ArcGIS 10.2

FIGURE 4: PERCENTAGE OF 4-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE INSTITUTIONS OFFERING HONORS EDUCATION



Created with mapchart.net ©

Having examined the national distribution of honors, we turn to issues of membership. Previous research revealed that four-year institutions are more likely than two-year institutions to be members of NCHC (Scott and Smith, “Demography”). Additionally, doctoral institutions have higher percentages of NCHC membership, followed by masters and then baccalaureate institutions, regardless of whether honors is delivered through a college or a program. Institutions offering honors colleges are more likely than those offering honors programs to hold memberships in NCHC, regardless of institutional classification, but institutional type was a factor for honors colleges but not for honors programs. Specifically, “honors colleges at public institutions are more likely to be NCHC members than those at private institutions . . . [while] there is very little variation in NCHC membership rates for institutions offering honors programs, regardless of whether they are private or public” (Scott and Smith, “Demography” 89).

Table 1 displays information from IPEDS and the web-crawl about structural features of NCHC institutional members and non-members. Institution type and honors type are repeated here from the Scott and Smith 2016 study “Demography of Honors: The National Landscape of Honors Education” in order to provide a broad vantage point for the analysis that follows. A clear difference in NCHC membership rates emerges between masters and doctoral universities, on the one hand, and baccalaureate and associates (two-year) colleges on the other, with the former having much higher rates of membership. This difference may be underscored by comparing the mean enrollments

TABLE 1: NATIONAL LANDSCAPE OF HONORS EDUCATION
(SCOTT & SMITH, 2016)

	NCHC Members n=860	%	Non-Members n=643	%	Total
Institutional Type					
Associates	177	46	212	55	359
Baccalaureate	151	43	197	57	348
Masters	328	65	178	35	506
Doctoral	204	79	56	22	260
Average Institutional Enrollment	10,676		7,126		
Honors Type					
College	138	76	44	24	182
Program	722	55	599	45	1,321

of NCHC members and non-members, showing member institutions to be larger on average. Member institutions also tend to have higher enrollment in honors—an average 37% higher for members than non-members—with the caveat that the small number of very large member institutions might skew the comparison. Also striking is the much higher membership rate for honors colleges than programs, with more than 75% of colleges being members versus 55% of programs; this difference might result from honors colleges having greater resources for membership fees or from a trend within the NCHC toward conversion from programs to colleges, a trend possibly unnoticed by non-members.

In exploring differences in structural arrangements between NCHC members and non-members, we used the information collected in the 2016 survey of non-members and compared it with the 2012 membership survey results for these features. Table 2 shows that NCHC members are far more likely than non-members to have a director or dean, with nearly a quarter of non-members having other administrative assignments such as coordinators, non-administrative faculty, and staff. In addition, compared to non-members, NCHC member institutions are far more likely to have dedicated staff, academic space, and housing, and they are five times more likely than non-members to have an affiliation with regional honors councils. Though the findings of the 2016 non-member survey appear to show that non-member institutions have a higher rate of dedicated faculty, this difference is likely due

TABLE 2: SIZE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF MEMBERS AND NON-MEMBERS

	NCHC Member	Non-Member
Average Honors Enrollment	378	275
Honors Administrative Type (%)		
Dean	87.0	67.5
Director	13.0	9.4
Other	0.0	23.1
Program Characteristics (%)		
Honors Faculty	20.0	36.8
Honors Staff	74.0	34.0
Honors Academic Space	70.6	29.9
Honors Housing	51.8	23.9
Regional Honors Membership	70.2	14.6

Note: NCHC Member Characteristics are reported from the 2012 NCHC survey while Non-Member Characteristics are reported from the 2016 survey taken for this study.

to the wording of the questions. While the 2012 membership survey asked administrators whether they have faculty that report to honors, the 2016 non-member survey asked more broadly about whether they have faculty specifically assigned to teach in honors. Because the survey of non-members over-represents larger and more comprehensive institutions, institutions with fewer resources are probably underrepresented; consequently, the differences between members and non-members may be even greater than is observed here.

The findings in Table 2 clearly demonstrate that member institutions have greater operational resources than non-members and are far more engaged in their regional honors communities. To explore the latter point further, we turn next to examining the regional distribution of institutions offering honors education. Table 3 lists the location for all institutions with campus-wide honors programs or colleges, placing them into one of the six regional honors council groupings of states. The listings in Table 3 reflect the pattern seen in Figure 1, with the preponderance of institutions found in the more densely populated states of the eastern seaboard, mid-east, and south. Several provisos are necessary in a discussion of affiliation to regional honors councils. In principle, institutions are not restricted to membership in only one regional honors council, nor does any regional honors council consider an institution ineligible to join based on its location. In practice, however, we discovered that only one institution is a member of a council outside its general regional

TABLE 3: REGIONAL LOCATIONS OF NCHC MEMBER AND NON-MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Regional Location	NCHC Members	Non-Members	Total
Upper Midwest	77	106	173
Western	125	130	255
Great Plains	138	63	201
Southern	214	134	348
Northeast	231	164	395
Mid-East	209	186	395
Total*	994 (55.9%)	783 (44.1%)	1777

*Because institutions in states bordering two regions could join either, eligibility for regional membership double-counts some institutions; as a result, the total number of institutions delivering honors education in Table 3 is inflated (1,777 compared to 1,503). But when comparing NCHC members to non-members the proportions are nearly the same (the arrangement slightly deflates the proportion of NCHC members compared to non-members by 1.3%).

location and that just five institutions have memberships in more than one region. States that border two regional honors councils can be deemed as residing in both, e.g., Arkansas is located in a state that is part of both the Southern Regional Honors Council and the Great Plains Regional Honors Council. For institutions in overlapping states we counted their location in both regions, inflating the total number of institutions with honors education from 1,503 to 1,777; however, when the number of member and non-member institutions is examined, the proportion is nearly the same, with NCHC members fewer by only 1.3%.

The degree of engagement with regional honors communities can be readily judged from findings in Table 4; membership percentages show what might be called market share and are derived from the number of member institutions divided by all institutions located in the region (as seen in Table 3). The totals indicate that NCHC members are more than three times as likely as non-members to affiliate with a regional honors council (43.5% to 12.9%). The pattern of greater involvement in regional honors organizations by NCHC members is replicated in each of the six regions. In the Western or Mid-East regions, NCHC members have twice the membership rates compared with non-members, and that ratio doubles in the Great Plains or Upper

TABLE 4: REGIONAL AFFILIATION OF NCHC MEMBER AND NON-MEMBER INSTITUTIONS

Regional Membership	NCHC Members	% of Eligible Members by Region	Non-Members	% of Eligible Non-Members by Region	Total	% of Total Eligible Honors Programs by Region
Upper Midwest	65	84.4	15	14.2	80	43.7
Western	95	76.0	43	33.1	138	54.1
Great Plains	71	51.4	7	11.1	78	38.8
Southern	90	42.1	19	14.2	99	28.4
Northeast	91	39.4	8	4.9	99	25.1
Mid-East	20	9.5	9	4.8	29	7.3
Total*	432	43.5	101	12.9	533	29.9

*Because institutions in states bordering two regions could join either, eligibility for regional membership double-counts some institutions; as a result, the total number of institutions delivering honors education in Table 4 is inflated (1,777 compared to 1,503). But when comparing NCHC members to non-members the proportions are nearly the same (the arrangement slightly deflates the proportion of NCHC members compared to non-members by 1.3%).

Midwest region and more than doubles again in the Southern or Northeast region. Five of the eight states represented by the Mid-East region have eligibility to join other regions, however, which may account for the lower percentage of membership in that region.

Of the participants in the 2016 non-member survey, 16% reported having a regional membership whereas the actual percentage of non-members with a regional association is 12.9%, indicating that institutions with regional memberships were more likely to have participated in the survey and are represented at a higher than average rate in the results that follow. NCHC representatives have attended regional honors conferences in recent years to reach out to non-member institutions. Results in Table 4 show that such an outreach market, while comprising about 100 institutions, taps just over 15% of the entire group of non-members (101/643). The findings make plain that colleges and universities without memberships in NCHC are likely to be disengaged from other professional honors organizations.

To explore the reasons that institutions have not joined NCHC to date, we next examine responses from a survey of non-members that asked participants why they were not members. The survey provided three potential reasons and encouraged participants to select all that apply; it also provided “other” as a fourth option to encourage specifying any reasons not listed. A qualitative analysis of the “other” category revealed one additional theme. Table 5 presents the most frequently occurring responses. Just over 40% said their funding was insufficient to pay membership dues or attend the national conference, and nearly a third were unaware that a national honors organization existed. A cross-tabulation of respondents’ length of administrative service in honors with reasons for not joining NCHC reveals that those with

TABLE 5: REPORTED REASONS BY NON-MEMBERS FOR LACK OF NCHC AFFILIATION (N=116)

Reason Cited	%
Cannot afford membership or the national conference	41.0
Not familiar with NCHC and unaware of a national organization for collegiate honors	31.9
Do not believe NCHC offers programs or opportunities that would be of benefit	23.0
Other	
Intending to join	13.8

Note: Respondents could select more than one reason.

three years or fewer are far more likely (71%) to be unaware of NCHC or of any professional educational association devoted to advancing honors education. Almost one in four said they did not believe NCHC offered any benefits or opportunities for their specific program. Of these, approximately 50% have served as an honors administrator for 10 years or more. Responses in the “other” category revealed that a number of administrators at non-member institutions (14%) were aware of NCHC and expressed an intention to join.

Survey respondents were also asked an open-ended question about what the organization could do specifically to entice them to join as an institutional member. Of the 116 participants, 49 responded to this question. Using qualitative analysis, three basic themes emerged, and they closely resemble the reasons for not having a membership. Participants most commonly suggested that the NCHC explore ways to make membership more affordable (51%); one participant suggested “waiving membership fees for the first year so that membership could be shown to be beneficial,” and another suggested that NCHC offer a “pro-rated membership price based on number of students at (the) institution.” The second most frequent suggestion was that NCHC present more information about itself and the benefits of membership (35%). A third category of responses indicated that NCHC was currently not meeting the needs of their program (12%); specifically, one participant said that in order for NCHC to entice the program to join, “there needs to be a perception change that the NCHC is a strong organization that understands the nuances of a highly intensive research institution,” and a few respondents from doctoral universities expressed their sole interest in belonging to a professional association of their peers, including Honors Education at Research Universities (HERU), the Committee on Institutional Cooperation (CIC), and the Southeastern Conference (SEC).

CONCLUSION

Conducting an examination of honors at an institutional level affords the opportunity to describe the population structure and distribution of honors programs and colleges. NCHC undertook systematic institutional research of its members’ structural and operational features in 2012, but that study described a fraction of the honors landscape because the survey was not sent to non-members. The present study extends that vantage point to include non-members, examining structural features, engagement with regional honors councils, and reasons non-member institutions’ administrators give for not joining NCHC.

These findings show that although NCHC has in its membership more than half of the population of institutions offering honors education (860 of 1,503, 57%), membership could grow further with more than 640 institutions eligible to join. Differences between NCHC members and non-members are extensive. NCHC members are more likely to come from masters and doctoral universities and have more dedicated human and physical resources than non-members. Based on the reasons cited for not joining NCHC, many non-members have few monetary resources. Non-member institutions are also nearly four times more likely to be operating without another type of resource: support from or engagement with regional honors councils. When non-members were asked why they did not affiliate with NCHC, the most common reply other than expense was lack of awareness of the organization or its membership benefits. A small subset indicated a more active intention not to join NCHC because their institutions had needs that, in their view, NCHC was not currently meeting. Given NCHC's mission to "support and enhance the community of educational institutions, professionals, and students who participate in collegiate honors education around the world," NCHC has work to do in bringing the support of the national organization to a greater number of institutions (NCHC).

NCHC can use the most common reasons for not joining—affordability and lack of awareness—as the focus for intensifying its outreach efforts. Respondents' suggestions on affordability included, for instance, variable membership rates depending on institution size and free membership for the first year so that new members could realize the benefits. The latter recommendation also begins to address the issue of awareness of member services and benefits.

Another recommendation might be for NCHC to create a national database of honors administrators and update it on an annual basis. Periodic emails could then inform non-members about the benefits the organization offers. Drawing non-member directors and deans to the publicly visible side of its website through these emails, NCHC could offer webinars, research results, an inclusive index of research on honors education, and analytical strategies for showing the value of honors to central administrations. NCHC could also use the list to promote regional organizations and to advertise the services it provides at regional honors council conferences, e.g., a curriculum development workshop or a condensed version of *Beginning in Honors*.

Overall, dispossession and disengagement are striking elements of many non-members' honors operations. While their honors administrators could

no doubt benefit from training, not to mention greater awareness of the norms and best practices associated with the profession of honors education, it is perhaps even more important to educate those running these institutions that honors cannot be sustained with few resources. NCHC can play a key role in disseminating this message, backed up by compelling data about what it takes to produce student success.

The present study has limitations. A lack of contemporaneous data necessitated comparisons between categories of honors operations based on information collected years apart. Moreover, the comparisons were restricted to structural differences between NCHC members and non-members. These limitations, combined with a compelling research question that remains to be answered by this demographic approach, point to a need for further study.

This remaining research question, arguably more significant than what has been presented here, should address operational variations between NCHC members and non-members. To answer this question, the survey NCHC conducted of its member institutions in 2012 needs to be repeated with non-members as well, basically conducting a census of the national honors community. The operations to be investigated would include curricular offerings, co-curricular programming, presence of a variety of high-impact pedagogical approaches, availability of scholarships, existence of living/learning communities in dedicated honors residence halls, faculty and staff arrangements, and more (Scott). This information would enhance NCHC's efforts to support institutions with honors education by categorizing areas of difference and therefore targeting areas of need, e.g., honors curriculum development, administrative training for new honors directors, documentation of value added in order to defend or grow resources, recruiting and admissions processes, and student success programming.

The period of rapid growth in honors education in the 1980s and early 1990s slowed as funding for higher education constricted. What pushed the earlier growth spurt most likely was intermural competition in attracting a perceived scarcity of high-achieving students, especially in public institutions. With budget constraints now pervasive in American higher education, conditions have shifted toward intramural competition for scarce and highly valued human and financial resources as well as infrastructures. To sustain and improve operations, honors administrators need to do more than just track information about their honors program or college; they also need contextual information about the national honors landscape to provide perspective for successful assessment and evaluation.

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The Effect of Honors Courses on Grade Point Averages

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BACKGROUND AND JUSTIFICATION

High-ability entering college students give three main reasons for not choosing to become part of honors programs and colleges; they and/or their parents believe that honors classes at the university level require more work than non-honors courses, are more stressful, and will adversely affect their self-image and grade point average (GPA) (Hill; Lacey; Rinn). Some of them are likely basing their belief on the experience they had with Advanced Placement (AP) classes in their high schools. Although AP classes are not specifically designed to be more work or more difficult, at their worst they can be little more than that (Immerwahr and Farkas; Challenge Success, 2013). Just as important as the fear of more work and increased difficulty is anxiety about the increased competition within a high-ability cohort. Anne N. Rinn, for instance, cites the “theory of relative deprivation” and the “Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect” as factors that inhibit students from joining an honors program.

Such perceptions of honors coursework are common even among some university advisors and faculty, who often perceive honors courses as entailing more work, being more competitive, and having the potential to lower students' GPAs. As a result, high-ability students who might benefit from an honors education decline participation because they believe honors classes will jeopardize their academic standing (Hill).

Previous published studies have not focused specifically on how honors classes affect GPAs although several have looked at the general impact of participation in an honors program/college (e.g., Austin; Astin; Schuman; Seifert et al.). Only a handful of studies make a specific correlation between participation in honors programs and the effect on GPAs: Pflaum, Pascarella, and Duby; Cosgrove; Rinn; and Shushok in both 2002 and 2006.

The first of these studies, conducted by Pflaum et al. in 1985, looks at the effects of entering students' first-year participation in the honors college at the University of Illinois at Chicago. Specifically, this study considers the effect of honors participation on academic achievement as defined by cumulative GPA after the first academic year and by persistence in the university. It finds that participation in the honors college had a highly significant positive affect ($p < .001$) on academic achievement as defined by GPA but no meaningful effect with regard to persistence. The authors attributed the increase in academic achievement to the interaction that honors students had with their honors peers and faculty members (418).

Although the study by Pflaum et al. finds that participation in an honors college significantly increases the cumulative GPAs of first-year honors students, it does not then conclude that taking honors courses is a factor in raising GPAs. Rather, in response to the possibility that different grading standards in honors versus non-honors courses caused the differences in achievement, the authors conclude that "not only are the honors courses more demanding than the typical freshman courses, but it is also likely that the grading in honors courses is at least equal in severity to nonhonors [*sic*] courses" (419). The authors imply that the greater rigor of honors classes had no effect or even lowered cumulative GPAs.

In the second study, Cosgrove in 2004 looked at the academic performance, retention, and degree completion of a relatively small group of honors students ($n = 112$) at three separate institutions over a five-year period. Some of these students remained in their honors program until graduation, and some did not. The study also includes a control group of non-honors high-ability students ($n = 108$). The study's primary purpose is to compare the

academic performance and graduation rates of students who graduated as part of an honors program to those who started in honors programs but did not finish the program requirements. It finds that the honors students who completed their honors requirements had statistically significant higher GPAs ($p < .001$) than both the students who had started in honors programs but did not finish and the high-ability students not part of honors programs. The author does not comment on what specifically may have led to the higher GPAs for the honors completers.

The third study, published by Shushok in 2006, measured how participation in an honors college affects students. For this four-year study, Shushok initially selected 86 honors college students at a Carnegie-classification “Doctoral/Research Extensive” university in a Mid-Atlantic state. He then matched each honors student with an equally qualified non-honors student from a control group who was a “perfect match . . . in the categories of race, gender, and residency” (87). Among other findings, Shushok found that honors students’ GPAs after their first year of college were significantly higher: 3.41 for honors students and 3.18 for non-honors students. Three years later, Shushok found that the honors students remaining from the original cohort ($n = 79$) had mean GPAs that were not significantly different from their counterparts in the control group: 3.46 for honors students and 3.40 for non-honors students. His study thus indicated that participation in an honors program increases the cumulative GPA after the first year of study but that the first-year increase levels out after the fourth year of study. He makes no comment about the specific effect of honors courses on GPAs.

The fourth study, conducted by Rinn in 2007, examines the academic achievement (including GPA), academic self-concepts, and aspirations of a group of gifted college students who were part of an honors program ($n = 248$) as compared to a control group of gifted college students not part of an honors program ($n = 46$). The study took place at a large university in the Midwest. Results indicated that high-ability students who are part of an honors program have higher academic achievement, i.e., higher GPAs, and higher self-concepts than do high-ability students not participating in an honors program. The two cohorts tested exhibited no difference in aspirations. The author did not comment on what role honors coursework played in the increased GPAs of the honors students.

All four of these studies conclude that participation in an honors program will raise a student’s cumulative GPA in the first year. Shushok’s is the only study that tracks beyond the first year, and it indicates that participation in an

honors program will produce no meaningful difference in the cumulative GPA after four years. None of the studies specifically addresses the influence of honors coursework on the GPA although one study (Pflaum et al.) implies that honors coursework in itself either does not affect or could lower the GPA.

THE CURRENT STUDY

The current study is unique in its focus on how honors coursework affects the cumulative GPA. The study was initially a response to the somewhat common perception that honors courses adversely affect GPAs because they are more work-intensive, competitive, and difficult than non-honors courses. The study does not attempt to draw conclusions about whether honors courses are actually more or less work-intensive, competitive, challenging, or difficult than non-honors courses; its objective is only to test the validity of the perception that honors coursework lowers GPAs.

Study I

The first study began with a cohort of 786 students that was unusual in its makeup and, for that reason, especially apt for the purpose. All 786 students were part of an honors program at a large, public, R1 university. They all had earned their way into the program via a minimum composite ACT/SAT score of 29/1300 and a high school GPA of at least 3.8. Once in the program, they had to maintain a university GPA of 3.33 to maintain membership. The unique aspect of this cohort was that students who achieved the entry requirements for honors were automatically enrolled in the honors program. There were no honors curricular requirements, and the result was that some students took many honors courses, some took several, and others took none at all. Students remained part of the honors program unless they let their GPA fall below the minimum GPA (3.33).

Study 1 Method

Of the original cohort of 786 honors students, the study considered only the 473 students who had remained in the program for at least two years. Data collection spanned two academic years of their grades, specifically the fall semester of 2006 through the spring semester of 2008.

Study 1 Results

The study compared two groups: a control group of honors students who took no honors courses at all and a test group of students who took at least two honors courses, which generally meant at least six semester hours of honors coursework.

By an independent sample t-test, the mean GPAs of the two groups—3.70 for the control and 3.74 for the test group—are statistically the same (p-value > .01).

	Control			Two Honors Courses			P-value
	N	Mean	Std Dev	N	Mean	Std Dev	
Two-year GPA	226	3.70	0.21	161	3.74	0.24	Not Significant

To verify that the data were not biased by establishing a minimum of two honors courses—a number chosen in order to include only students who showed a commitment to honors coursework—the same comparison with the same control group was done with students who took a minimum of one, two, three, and four honors courses.

	Control			Test				P-value
	N	Mean	Std Dev	# honors courses	N	Mean	Std Dev	
Two-year GPA	226	3.7	0.21	1 or more	247	3.73	0.24	Not Significant
Two-year GPA	226	3.7	0.21	2 or more	161	3.74	0.24	NS
Two-year GPA	226	3.7	0.21	3 or more	111	3.74	0.23	NS
Two-year GPA	226	3.7	0.21	4 or more	65	3.72	0.23	NS

As the table shows, initial results based on a two-course minimum were duplicated regardless of the number of honors courses considered. The means and standard deviations were remarkably consistent between populations regardless of the number of honors courses students took.

Study 1 Conclusions

The findings from this first study were that the mean GPA of honors students who took honors classes (3.74) was statistically the same as that of honors students who took no honors courses (3.70).

Study II

The second study, which was done at the same university about five years later (fall 2015), used a different methodology since the honors program had instituted a mandatory curriculum. The subjects of the second study were once again all honors students, this time totaling 450. All of them were 2013 first-year entrants in the honors program, and all at the time of the study had completed the curricular requirement of twelve semester hours of honors coursework within their first two years in the program.

Note that this second study differed from the first in that it compared honors students' GPAs in their honors classes to their GPAs for all their classes. The first study, in contrast, compared GPAs of one group of honors-eligible students who took honors courses to those of another group of honors-eligible students who had not taken honors courses.

Results from this second study were not as straightforward as from the first study although they ultimately were similar. As shown below, an adjustment was made for two popular and challenging honors courses in order to get results that were not skewed.

Study II Method and Results

The second study ran three different scenarios.

SCENARIO 1

In the first scenario, the GPAs of all 450 honors students were calculated for both their university honors courses and all their university courses.

SCENARIO 1 RESULTS

	Overall GPA			Honors GPA			P-value
	N	Mean	Std Dev	N	Mean	Std Dev	
Two-year GPA	450	3.65	0.28	450	3.63	0.39	<.01

Given the results from the first study, the lower GPAs of honors students in their honors courses were a surprise. Although the difference was only .02, it was statistically significant (as per a correlated t-test) and in the authors' opinions warranted additional investigation.

SCENARIO 1 CONCLUSIONS

The suspicion was that two particular courses, taken by about a third of the honors students, might be skewing the results. These two courses, Principles of Chemistry I and II, are lower-level and required for many majors, i.e., they are high-enrollment and foundational. They are also high-risk because the recommended grade distribution for them is stricter than for most other courses in their home college, resulting in relatively higher rates of C's, D's, and F's, withdrawals, and incompletes across all sections (both honors and non-honors) of the courses. In other words, these two courses fit the description of "gateway courses," sometimes referred to as "weed-out courses" (see at <http://www.jngi.org/gateway-courses-definition>).

The honors sections of Principles of Chemistry differ from the non-honors sections in having a single instructor instead of a group of three instructors who rotate through the classes. The lecture session is smaller, although still over a hundred students, with student interaction encouraged, unlike in the much larger non-honors sections. Students in the honors section also hear about current research in chemistry from faculty guest lecturers. At the time of the study, students in the honors and non-honors sections took the same exams, with all grades aggregated in the assigning of letter grades.

SCENARIO 2

A second scenario controlled for the two chemistry courses by considering the GPAs of honors students for all their honors classes except Principles of Chemistry I and II. The mean average of these grades was then compared to the mean of the GPAs of those same honors students for all their university classes.

SCENARIO 2 RESULTS

	Overall GPA			Honors GPA (w/o Chem)			P-value
	N	Mean	Std Dev	N	Mean	Std Dev	
Two year GPA	439	3.70	0.31	439	3.68	0.23	NS

These two means—3.70 and 3.68—were determined to be statistically the same.

SCENARIO 2 CONCLUSIONS

When the data were controlled for the two gateway classes, there was no difference in GPAs for honors versus non-honors courses.

SCENARIO 3

In order to confirm the assumption that the two gateway courses were indeed skewing the results, the study examined a year's worth of data specifically on the two gateway courses.

SCENARIO 3 RESULTS

First, the average grade for all university students who had taken Principles of Chemistry I in the fall 2014 semester was calculated and compared to the average grade for students who had taken the honors section. The process was repeated for Principles of Chemistry II in the spring 2015.

	Non-Honors Chemistry			Honors Chemistry			P-value
	N	Mean	Std Dev	N	Mean	Std Dev	
Principles of Chem I Fall 2014 grades	990	2.51	0.91	269	3.13	0.71	<.01
Principles of Chem II Spring 2015 grades	590	2.56	0.88	132	3.26	0.71	<.01

An independent t-test indicated a statistically significant difference in the average grades between the honors and non-honors sections of the same class.

SCENARIO 3 SUPPLEMENT

In order to address the possibility that the honors students might have gotten higher grades in honors chemistry sections simply because they are high-ability students, the study established a control group of students with academic ability comparable to the honors cohort based on high school GPA and ACT. Students in this control group were honors-eligible but did not take the honors sections of chemistry either because they were not members of the honors program and were restricted from enrolling or, if members of the program, were unwilling or unable because of scheduling conflicts to take the honors chemistry section. Their grades in the non-honors chemistry sections

were calculated and compared to the grades earned by honors students in the honors chemistry sections for both fall 2014 and spring 2015.

	Honors Eligible in Non-Honors Chemistry			Honors Chemistry			P-value
	N	Mean	Std Dev	N	Mean	Std Dev	
Fall 2014 grades	134	2.78	0.84	269	3.13	0.71	<.01
Spring 2015 grades	143	2.70	0.95	132	3.26	0.71	<.01

The average grades for this control cohort of high-ability students were, to a statistically meaningful degree (via an independent t-test), lower than the grades that similar high-ability students earned in the honors section of these courses.

This comparison indicates that the honors sections of Principles of Chemistry I and II did not lower mean GPAs more than non-honors sections of those courses did; in fact, they had significantly less negative effect. In other words, taking an honors section of a Principles of Chemistry course lowered GPAs less than non-honors sections did.

SCENARIO 3 CONCLUSIONS

The data from the third scenario revealed that the Principles of Chemistry classes were indeed gateway courses in the sense that the average grade for the honors sections (3.20) was significantly lower than the average grade (as indicated by the mean GPA) of honors students in all their honors classes (3.63).

The data from the third scenario also indicated that the honors sections of the Principles of Chemistry courses produced higher grades than the non-honors sections: the grade averages were around 2.5 in all sections of Principles of Chemistry I and II compared to around 3.1–3.2 in the honors sections of both courses. In addition, a control group of equally high-ability students confirmed that the higher average grades for the honors sections of the two Principles of Chemistry courses did not correlate to levels of student ability.

These results justify controlling for the two Principles of Chemistry courses when calculating mean GPAs.

Study II Conclusion

The second study showed that honors students' GPAs in their honors courses are statistically the same as their GPAs in all their classes. Thus, the conclusion for the second study is the same as for the first study: honors courses do not adversely affect the GPAs of honors students.

RESULTS

The first study showed that honors students who took honors classes attained a GPA statistically the same as that of honors students who did not take honors classes. The second study further indicated that the GPA of honors students who took honors classes was statistically the same as the GPA for all their university courses. Although the collection of data took place at a single Carnegie-classified large, public, R1 university, the findings show that the perception of honors courses as adversely affecting GPAs is invalid.

DISCUSSION

This study makes no claims about the difficulty of honors courses, the amount or level of work they involve, or how challenging and competitive they are. Its findings that honors courses do not adversely affect GPAs may nevertheless lead someone to conclude that honors courses are no more challenging or difficult than non-honors courses, a conclusion that is likely not the case and certainly not determinable by looking only at GPAs. Because the format (e.g., class size) and pedagogy (e.g., learner-centered rather than lecture) of honors courses typically differ from non-honors courses, comparing mean GPAs of the two will not produce meaningful results about levels of difficulty or challenge. Indeed, in the ideal honors class, students typically find more challenge and will often cover more material or go more deeply into the subject matter.

The findings of this study, however, do provide a corrective to the perception that becoming part of an honors program or college adversely affects academic performance as measured by GPA. This information should be useful to those who recruit for honors programs, those who advise high-ability students at both the secondary and undergraduate levels, and especially those high-ability students who fear that they might be overwhelmed by honors coursework.

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Honors Thesis Preparation: Evidence of the Benefits of Structured Curricula

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A recent study of honors curricula across the nation indicates that 75.6% of honors programs and colleges at four-year institutions have thesis or capstone requirements (Savage and Cognard-Black). In addition to institutions with thesis requirements, many more also have the option for students to complete theses. For example, an earlier study found that 94.3% of honors colleges offered the opportunity to complete an honors thesis (Sederberg). As Anderson, Lyons, and Weiner indicate, the origins of the honors movement in the United States included an emphasis on the completion of an honors thesis. While discipline-based modes of research and creative scholarship are the most common, alternatives to the traditional thesis rooted in experiential education have also been encouraged (Gustafson and Cureton). In short, the honors thesis in its several forms is an established element of honors education. Despite the centrality and prevalence of the honors thesis requirement, however, little research has been conducted to understand the preparation that students should have in order to write a thesis.

Expectations for honors theses are generally high and often approximate the level of rigor one expects from masters-level students. Unfortunately, many students complete these projects without specific coursework to prepare them for projects at this level of rigor. A growing number of scholars have advocated for courses and curricula to provide students support as they develop honors theses (Anderson, Lyons, and Weiner; Coey and Haynes; Levinson and Mandel). While the arguments for these courses are strong and some report positive evaluations of these courses, there is scant empirical evidence for the success of such courses. This study draws on data from nearly four hundred students over a six-year period to demonstrate the effectiveness of curricular models in supporting students' completion of honors theses.

CONTEXT

Starting in 2007, the Georgia Southern University Honors Program began developing seminars for students in their final semesters to provide them support as they developed their thesis projects. All honors students must complete a thesis project that includes a written component. The course content has been designed to help students through steps such as developing a topic, identifying a mentor, understanding previous research, identifying an appropriate methodology, collecting data, and presenting findings in both a written thesis and an oral presentation. The content in these courses is similar to that covered in other thesis courses discussed in the literature (Anderson, Lyons, and Weiner; Coey and Haynes; Levinson and Mandel). Unlike some institutions, however, GSU has designed courses rooted in departments or colleges. In other words, they are not generic preparations for the thesis but are instead taught by professors in the students' major disciplines, thus allowing for more specificity in the course content and more discipline-specific guidance in building a substantial research project.

Because these seminars were designed to be discipline-specific (or at least specific to a cluster of majors within a college), a question arose whether it would be desirable and feasible to develop such courses for all majors, and some disciplines opted out. In the natural sciences, for instance, engaging undergraduate students in substantial research projects has been a standard practice for some time, typically involving a research mentor who guides the student through the steps of carrying out and presenting research. This norm renders a fair amount of the content of thesis seminars redundant. Consequently, the decision was made not to develop the seminar sequences in the natural sciences, except for one department that developed a pre-research

methodology sequence in which students earned directed research credits for the work they did with their mentors

During the timeframe for this study, the majority of honors students completed theses in the natural sciences or in disciplines where seminars were developed. Nevertheless, a consequential number carried out their thesis projects without curricular structures designed to support thesis work. This situation occurred for two reasons. First, some departments have very few honors students and find it difficult to justify offering a discipline-based thesis seminar. Second, some degree programs are so structured and full of required courses that it is impossible to add additional credits into the course of study. In these cases, students are permitted to contract courses for honors credit—typically nine credits are required at the upper-division level—and are encouraged to use these contracts to build toward a thesis. There is not, however, a requirement to make the contract work be incorporated in the thesis. Consequently, the contract work, while allowing students to dig deeper into a subject in their major, does not always have relevance to the honors thesis.

While it would have been ideal to offer the students in all these majors structured curricular support to develop and complete honors theses, the actual situation presented an opportunity to compare the outcomes for students completing honors theses in one of three distinct curricular models. First, a cadre of students—mainly in the social sciences and humanities—carried out their thesis research in the context of a disciplinary thesis seminar. From 2010 through 2015, 40% of honors graduates participated in these courses. Hereafter, students in this group will be designated as falling into the “seminar group.” Second, students in the natural sciences carried out their work in a lab or field environment (typically as part of a team) to complete their thesis projects. Between 2010 and 2015, 35% of those who completed honors theses fell into this category, and following Zimbardi and Myatt, we label them the “apprenticeship group.” Finally, the third group, which includes those who completed theses without structured support, represents 25% of students who completed theses between 2010 and 2015 and are labeled the “unstructured group.”

The primary research question in this study concerns the learning benefits of these various curricular approaches. Based on the existing research, we should assume that a structured approach would yield better results than an unstructured approach. While offering support to students seems intuitively to be better than not offering support, none of the existing studies

demonstrates the value of structured curricula to support honors students. Given the lack of data, some might persuasively argue that honors students do not need this type of support: they are supposed to be bright and hard-working, and if they can't complete a thesis on their own, perhaps they are not cut out for honors. Determining the efficacy of curricular structures is thus important, especially since these structures take time, effort, and financial resources to implement.

METHODOLOGY

As the call for greater undergraduate research opportunities has become more frequent, a good body of scholarship has emerged on the effectiveness of undergraduate research experiences. One of the most extensive efforts in this area of research has been led by David Lopatto, who in 2004 developed the Survey of Undergraduate Research Experiences (SURE) that has been administered thousands of times over the past ten to fifteen years. The survey is constructed with dozens of items listed as statements, and respondents are asked to rate their learning gains on a five-point Likert scale. The chief goal of SURE has been to provide quantitative evidence of the benefits of undergraduate research experiences. Lopatto further grounded his work in a qualitative study carried out by Seymour et al., which identified a variety of benefits in categories such as personal/professional, thinking and working like a scientist, skills, and clarification of career goals. Based on the work of Seymour et al., Lopatto conducted factor analysis on the individual items of the SURE, and they clustered into similar categories (*Science in Solution*).

The author obtained permission from Lopatto to adapt SURE to examine learning gains among students who completed honors theses. Starting in May 2010, each student graduating from the Georgia Southern University Honors Program completed a senior exit survey that included items from the SURE instrument. Since Lopatto's work was focused on students in the sciences, the SURE items were adapted to make them relevant for a broader variety of disciplines. The final version for this study included twenty-two items which, based on Lopatto's work, cluster into six distinct areas of growth (see Table 1). The priming instructions for students reporting on this section of the survey were the following:

Students may gain from their undergraduate research experience in a variety of intellectual, attitudinal, and social ways. The following section is designed to measure what you consider to be the gains (the

benefits) you derived from your research experience. Remember to mark N/A if any proposed gains do not apply to your experience. The following responses apply to the entirety of your experience in completing your Honors Thesis or Capstone Project. From your research experience, how much of a gain occurred in [the items listed in Table 1]?

TABLE 1: HONORS THESIS SURVEY ITEMS AND CATEGORIES OF LEARNING DIMENSIONS ADAPTED FROM THE SURE

Individual Items	Category
Learning a topic in depth	Knowledge Synthesis
Ability to read and understand primary literature	Information Literacy Skills
Ability to see connections to your college coursework	
Ability to collaborate with other researchers	Interaction and Communication Skills
Your skill in oral communication	
Your skill in written communication	
Learning to work independently	
Becoming part of a learning community	Professional Development
Understanding of the research process in your field	
Understanding of how professionals work on real problems	
Understanding of professional behavior in your discipline	Professional Advancement
Sense of contributing to a body of knowledge	
Developing a continuing relationship with a faculty member	
Enhancement of your professional or academic credentials	
Readiness for more demanding research	Personal Development
Shows pride in academic work; maintains a consistent effort	
Sense of accomplishment	
Tolerance for obstacles faced in research process	
Interest in a discipline	
Clarification of a career path	
Self-confidence (in general)	
Learning to persevere at a task	

A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted, with curriculum type (seminar, apprenticeship, and unstructured) treated as a between-subjects factor to determine the effect on student learning gains within each of these six categories (knowledge synthesis, information literacy skills, interaction and communication skills, professional development, professional advancement, and personal development). In total, there were 392 students who completed the survey over the period 2010–2015 with no changes to the wording of the items. Since the thesis seminars were implemented at different times in different majors, students were categorized into the different curricular models based on the offerings for their major at the time they participated in honors.

FINDINGS

Overall, the students in structured curriculum models reported larger learning gains than those in unstructured settings, but not uniformly in all areas. The means and standard deviations for each of the learning gains, broken down by curriculum model, are presented in Table 2.

Two of the six dimensions of growth (information literacy skills and personal development) indicated no significant differences in reported learning gains across the curriculum models. The finding regarding personal development can be explained by the fact that, regardless of one's major or curricular structure, completing an honors thesis is a result of perseverance and leads

TABLE 2: MEANS AND STANDARD DEVIATIONS FOR LEARNING GAINS IN THE DIFFERENT CURRICULAR MODELS

	Seminar		Apprenticeship		Unstructured	
	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean	Standard Deviation
Knowledge Synthesis	4.44	0.72	4.38	0.79	4.22	0.78
Information Literacy Skills	4.12	0.85	4.13	0.75	3.94	0.84
Interaction and Communication Skills	3.75	0.87	4.02	0.75	3.78	0.82
Professional Development	4.02	0.73	4.29	0.66	3.87	0.75
Professional Advancement	4.15	0.76	4.32	0.68	3.90	0.78
Personal Development	4.08	0.75	4.16	0.72	4.03	0.74

to a sense of accomplishment and other personal dimensions of growth. Accordingly, one would expect students who persist through completion to have roughly similar reported learning gains of personal growth across curriculum models.

On the topic of information literacy skills, all students completing a thesis are immersed in a thorough process of reading and analyzing primary literature in the discipline and often making connections across their coursework. They should not be able to complete a project without these skills, leading them to report similar learning gains in information literacy skills across the curriculum models.

The remaining four learning dimensions did demonstrate significant differences, however. The curriculum model had a significant impact on knowledge synthesis, $F(2,387)=2.35$, $p=0.097$. There was a significant difference in knowledge synthesis between students in a seminar ($M=4.44$, $SD=0.72$) and those in an unstructured program ($M=4.22$, $SD=0.78$), with the former reporting higher knowledge synthesis. There was no significant difference between seminars and apprenticeship ($M=4.38$, $SD=0.79$) nor between apprenticeship and unstructured curricula, indicating that the seminars did help students gain greater depth of knowledge than those in unstructured settings.

For interaction and communication skills, the curriculum model had a significant impact, $F(2,347)=4.26$, $p<0.05$. There was a significant difference in interaction and communication skills among students in an apprenticeship ($M=4.02$, $SD=0.75$) and those in seminars ($M=3.75$, $SD=0.87$) and those with unstructured curricula ($M=3.78$, $SD=0.82$) such that those in an apprenticeship reported higher gains in interaction and communication skills. There was no significant difference between those in seminars and those without a structured curriculum.

Student reports of professional development were also significantly correlated with the curriculum model, $F(2,378)=9.80$, $p<0.01$. There was a significant difference in professional development between students in an apprenticeship ($M=4.29$, $SD=0.66$) and both those in seminars ($M=4.02$, $SD=0.73$) and those with unstructured curricula ($M=3.87$, $SD=0.75$). In other words, those in an apprenticeship model indicated stronger learning gains than those in the other two curriculum models. There was no significant difference between those in seminars and those without a structured curriculum.

Finally, the curriculum model had a significant impact on the students' sense of professional advancement, $F(2,381)=8.37$, $p<0.01$. There was a

significant difference between professional advancement reports between those without structures ($M=3.90, SD=0.78$) and those in seminars ($M=4.15, SD=0.76$) as well as between those in unstructured majors and in an apprenticeship model ($M=4.32, SD=.68$). Students without curriculum structures reported significantly lower gains in professional advancement than students in seminars or apprenticeship.

CONCLUSION

In sum, structured curricula led students to report stronger learning gains than did students in unstructured settings without coursework to support them in writing an honors thesis. On none of the six learning dimensions did students in unstructured settings have statistically significant higher learning gains than the two structured models. It is noteworthy that the apprenticeship model, common in the natural sciences, yielded stronger results than the seminar model. The apprenticeship model led students to stronger gains over the other two models on three dimensions: interaction and communication skills, professional development, and professional advancement. Seminars led to stronger results over the other two models on only one dimension: knowledge synthesis. For professional advancement, while lower than apprenticeship, seminars led to statistically significant results that were higher than the unstructured model. These results provide evidence that the careful mentorship of students does make a difference in how they see their experience in completing an honors thesis.

While important, this study has some limitations. This study examined only those students who completed theses. The study also did not include consideration of potentially positive effects of structured curricula in areas such as persistence and retention; future research should examine the effects of different curriculum models on retention and graduation rates. Future research should also examine the effect of curriculum models on objective measures of thesis quality, a characteristic this study did not examine. In addition, this survey instrument was administered shortly after the completion of the thesis project when students are happy to be done. Of the 392 respondents, 83% rated their overall research experience as a four or five on a five-point scale; since most of them felt they had had a positive experience in writing a thesis, the responses fell into a more limited band of variation and made it harder to discern the differing effects of the curriculum models. This limitation nevertheless highlights the fact that, despite the limited variation

among respondents, there were statistically significant variations among the different curriculum models. Finally, the SURE instrument was developed for students completing research projects in natural science fields. An effort was made to delete science-specific items and adapt others to all disciplines, but the stronger results of the apprenticeship model raise the question whether the instrument had some effect on the results.

Despite these limitations, the present study provides quantitative evidence for the benefits of curriculum structures designed to help students complete honors theses. The apprenticeship approach that has developed in the natural sciences provides obvious benefits for students, and in social science and humanities disciplines the seminar curriculum model leads to positive effects for students. Leaving students to their own devices to negotiate the process of writing a thesis leads to less meaningful learning experiences. Honors programs and honors colleges exist not just to challenge students but also to support them. Since the honors thesis is a central component of the honors experience, we should do more to provide structured support for students who take on this challenge.

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A Digital Literacy Initiative in Honors: Perceptions of Students and Instructors about its Impact on Learning and Pedagogy

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Researchers acknowledge the necessity of acquiring digital competencies to participate adequately in society (Ala-Mutka; Boyles; Cobo; Davies; Littlejohn, Beetham, & McGill; Teske & Etheridge; Tryon; Warf). Although the development of digital competencies has become increasingly important in higher education, integrating digital literacies in the college classroom has occurred at a slow pace. Honors programs and colleges represent one area of the academy that typically values a more traditional approach to skill development while resisting technology. My research study describes a digital literacy initiative in the Georgia State University Honors College, a large urban research university, and explores its perceived impact on teaching and learning. The study examines the activities introduced in the classroom and various disciplines, and it seeks to determine if the initiative's goals were met. This study does not attempt to make any sweeping claims about whether digital literacy should be a primary focus of honors education; rather, its purpose

is to discover how adapting pedagogy to include digital competencies might meet the objectives of undergraduate honors education. The research question asks how the intentional inclusion of digital competencies into the honors classroom affects learning and pedagogy, with the goal of providing a model for other honors programs and colleges seeking to implement and evaluate similar programs.

DIGITAL LITERACY AND HIGHER EDUCATION

The current climate of digital literacy development in higher education provides the context for examining the status of digital literacy in the honors community. The term “digital literacy,” introduced in 1977 by Paul Gilster, is pervasive in society. Technology has become an integral part of a student’s life, but digital competencies are not always introduced in higher education classrooms. With the analogous terms “computer literacy,” “information and communications technology (ICT) literacy,” or “digital competence” (Nelson, Courier, and Joseph), a simple Boolean search of digital literacy returns a multitude of definitions that are abstract, technical, and pragmatic in nature (Joint Information Systems Committee; Media Awareness Network; New York City Department of Education). One definition from a report by the European Commission describes digital competencies as follows:

knowledge, skills, attitudes (thus including abilities, strategies, values, and awareness) that are required to use ICT and digital media to perform tasks; solve problems; communicate; manage information; collaborate; create and share content; and build knowledge effectively, efficiently, appropriately, critically, creatively, autonomously, flexibly, ethically, reflectively for work, leisure, participation, learning, socializing, consuming, and empowerment. (Ferrari 43)

The range of definitions underscores the complexity of attaining digital skills.

As a result of this complexity, digital literacy development is proving a challenge in higher education in the United States (Jeffrey et al.). The low level of development is disturbing when major governing bodies, such as the U.S. Department of Commerce, acknowledge the necessity of digital literacy for today’s jobs and for taking advantage of educational, civic, and health advances. The literature cites several possible reasons for the lag in developing digital literacy at the college level: instructors’ unwillingness to adjust their pedagogies (Schmidt), overestimation of students’ ability to use technology to solve business and real-world problems (Murray & Perez), students’

illusion of knowing and overconfidence in career readiness (Hart Research Associates), and issues of access and self-efficacy (Jeffrey et al.).

In a 2014 study, Murray and Pérez used an exam to evaluate the digital competency of graduating seniors from a variety of majors in a capstone course. They collected data from four semesters, and the results showed that only 12% of students answered 80% of the questions correctly. The study results elicited a mantra by the researchers: “exposure does not equal understanding” (95). Students may regularly interact with certain digital tools, but more often than not these interactions do not translate to comprehension, critical thinking, and problem-solving. Although teachers should not use technology just for the sake of using it, they should use technology to advance learning and teaching by developing skill sets among both students and instructors. The development of digital competencies, however, will not happen naturally.

DIGITAL LITERACY IN HONORS PROGRAMS AND COLLEGES

Honors programs and colleges, like higher education as a whole, have been slow to incorporate digital literacy into the curriculum, and often the pace has been deliberate. Mariz eloquently summarizes the division between thought and practice in the use of technology in honors:

For some this electronic revolution threatens to undermine established values and traditional academic practices, while for others it represents unprecedented ease and access to information with even greater benefits on the horizon. . . . Both faculty and student opinions of the electronic revolution seem divided: proponents vigorously promote the virtues of this brave new world of culture and research while adversaries see only disruption, degradation, and trivialization in its wake. (17)

Some faculty and administrators in the honors community view technology as a barrier to positive student development and are apprehensive about using technology in the classroom. Alger acknowledges that digital solutions change the landscape of learning and teaching, and he prefers learning environments that inspire students through mentorship and peer engagement. Some instructors believe that going digital will perpetuate passive learning and place students in isolation by cultivating a myopic view of the world (Badenhausen).

On the other hand, supporters of integrating technology into the honors classroom acknowledge its usefulness in moving students from passive to active learners. Students can use technology to discover information on their own that in the past they got only from instructors (Kelleher & Swartzlander). In her article “Building a Better Honors Learning Community through Technology,” Johnson recognizes the value of leveraging technology to create a more dynamic learning experience in honors. Johnson states that she has used blogs, wikis (online collaborative workspace), and Wordle (a word cloud generator) in the classroom without compromising the integrity of the course.

Some instructors have recently incorporated technology into their classrooms (Corley & Zubizarreta; Doherty & Ketchner; Frana; Scott & Bowman). Corley and Zubizarreta, for example, have reported on the use of electronic portfolios in the honors program at Minnesota State University, Mankato. During the program’s 2008–2009 curriculum redesign, the faculty agreed to replace honors theses with electronic portfolios as honors capstone projects. The objective was to place more focus on competencies that included demonstrable leadership, research, and global citizenship. The faculty selected electronic portfolios as the tool to carry out those goals because of its storage capabilities, adaptability, and flexibility. Preliminary results demonstrated the usefulness of electronic portfolios in providing real-time updates of students’ progress.

THE DIGITAL LITERACY INITIATIVE

Although the honors community is dedicated to innovation, Johnson wrote in 2013 that it remains divided on how or if technology fits into the inherent features of honors courses. The Georgia State University Honors College sought to answer the questions “how” and “if” by partnering with the GSU Office of the Chief Innovation Officer (OCIO) to pilot an initiative that intentionally integrated digital literacy skills into honors courses. The mission of the initiative was to teach students to leverage digital competencies in solving complex issues, provide students with access to technology, and enhance pedagogy through the use of technology. The honors college was an appropriate foundational group for the university’s Digital Literacy Initiative (DLI) because it is the kind of incubator for pedagogical innovation recommended in National Collegiate Honors Council’s Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College. Also, the honors college offered a cohort of students who exhibit an advanced understanding of the skills needed for

success, faculty with an affinity for instructional innovation, and small class sizes conducive to a valuable digital literacy experience.

The initiative took place during the 2015–2016 academic year. The OCIO provided instructors with the resources to include technology purposefully in their classrooms. For example, instructors had access to course-specific hardware, software, and curriculum design ideas. In turn, the instructors provided students opportunities to develop digital competencies within their courses. The courses aimed to provide a “distinctive learning environment for selected students,” which is part of the NCHC’s 2013 “Definition of Honors Education.” Honors students received a lightweight laptop to use for the year if they needed one because access to a device was pivotal to the success of the initiative and some students could not afford to purchase one. Even though all honors students were eligible to participate in the initiative, incoming honors students were the group of interest because the majority of DLI courses cover classes that are typically taken by students within their first two semesters at the university.

The university population consists of a substantial number (26%) of first-generation college students, mostly from lower- to middle-class families. Nationally, these socioeconomic groups face unique challenges, including a growing digital divide between them and their wealthier peers (Cohron). Of the undergraduates at the university, 58% receive Pell Grants, and 88% are awarded need-based scholarships. The honors college reflects these demographics. Honors students were informed about the initiative through email and at the mandatory new student orientation sessions. Students received a software tutorial when they picked up a laptop.

Faculty members were recruited to participate in the initiative through a call for proposals to apply for the Digital Literacy Innovation Fellowship. Eligible instructors included those who taught a three-hour, stand-alone, honors course in fall 2015 or spring 2016. Participating instructors were asked to restructure their curriculum to include digital competencies for their field in order to aid students in developing digital skills for post-graduate success. Participating faculty received \$3,000 in professional development funding to be used for graduate student assistance, conference attendance, travel, or other professional expenses. They also received help in developing course materials, support from a community of participating peers, and instructional support.

For the initiative to reach its stated goals with a group of this size, campus-wide support was essential. The primary stakeholders were the GSU

Honors College, the Office of the Chief Innovation Officer, and the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning. The digital literacy planning committee included twenty-five to thirty professional staff and faculty.

METHODS

Participants

Participants were honors students ($N = 60$) and instructors ($N = 8$) at GSU who participated in the program for fall 2015. Survey submissions yielded a 30% and 80% response rate, respectively. Student participants included 34 females and 26 males, with 98% between the ages of 18 and 24 and 2% between the ages of 25 and 34. The ethnicity of student participants consisted of 50% Caucasian, 22% African-American, 18% Asian, 7% Hispanic, and 3% other. Most students (75%) were pursuing majors in the College of Arts and Sciences; other students represented the J. Mack Robinson College of Business, the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, and the College of Education and Human Development (17%, 5%, and 3% respectively). Five colleges serve the undergraduate population at the university. Students from the Byrdine F. Lewis School of Nursing and Health Professions did not participate in this study. Student classification consisted of 48% freshman, 38% sophomore, 7% junior, and 7% senior.

Instructor participants were all from the College of Arts and Sciences with an average of fourteen years of university-level teaching among them; the highest was thirty years and the lowest was six. Half of the instructors reported that they had not taught a course that intentionally incorporated digital competencies before the initiative. Instructor academic rankings consisted of 38% associate professor, 25% senior lecturer, 25% lecturer, and 13% professor.

Materials

The digital literacy framework adopted for this initiative (see Appendix A) is based on previous models of learning outcomes (Appel; Belshaw; Joint Information Systems Committee) and guided the construction of survey items. Two separate surveys were designed for students and instructors to determine the extent to which the DLI affected learning and pedagogy in honors courses (see Appendices B and C). The surveys sought both quantitative and qualitative data.

Procedures

Fourteen DLI courses were offered during the fall 2015 semester, as shown in Table 1, and taught by eleven instructors (one instructor taught three courses and one taught two courses). Table 1 presents each digital literacy course offering with information about available seats and actual enrollment. During student registration, each class was labeled as being a part of the Digital Literacy Initiative in the comments section of the registration screen.

After the Institutional Review Board granted approval and participants were invited, the study included the 202 students and 10 instructors. The number of students who participated in the study differs from the 237 enrollment figure because some students registered for more than one DLI course. The Chief Innovation Officer was a DLI instructor, but he was excluded from the study to avoid bias, which reduced the chosen sample for instructors from 11 to 10. Students were asked to take part in the study through email, the

**TABLE 1: FALL 2015 DIGITAL LITERACY COURSE OFFERINGS
(GROUPED BY DISCIPLINE)**

Course	Seats Available	Enrollment
Honors Advanced English Composition	20	20
Honors Advanced English Composition	20	20
Honors Advanced English Composition	20	13
Honors Survey of World History to 1500	20	13
Honors Survey of U.S. History	20	11
Honors Freshman Seminar: Finding a Satisfying Career	17	17
Honors Freshman Seminar: The Emotional Life of Your Brain	17	17
Honors Freshman Seminar: 21st-Century Leadership	17	17
Honors Freshman Seminar: Grimm: Fairy Tales and Pop Culture	17	17
Honors Colloquium: How We Think	17	17
Honors Calculus of One Variable I	25	21
Honors Calculus of One Variable II	24	22
Honors Multivariate Calculus	25	17
Honors Introduction to General Psychology	20	15
TOTAL	279	237

honors college's weekly newsletter, the honors college Blackboard page, and flyers around the honors college. Instructors were invited through email and also in person at biweekly DLI instructor coffee hours.

The study included quantitative and qualitative data analysis because methodological pluralism can aid in the development of robust insights (Venkatesh, Brown, & Bala). Likert scale ratings on the student survey were analyzed using median averages for each item to determine the presence of significant group differences. Table 2 shows the categorization of similar courses by discipline and the number of students who participated in the study and were enrolled in those courses. Instructor survey data were analyzed using cross-tabulation to view differences among groups by the frequency of ratings. Open-ended questions were analyzed differently on both surveys because of differences in sample size. For the student survey, the Computer Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) Nvivo was used to explore collective thoughts and ideas from student responses. The analysis software was used to enhance the reliability of the qualitative analysis. The size of the instructor sample did not warrant a CAQDAS, and non-thematic comments provided further insight on how instructors perceived the impact of the initiative.

RESULTS

Overall, students and instructors reported that the initiative had a positive influence on their learning and teaching. Student and instructor ratings on the Likert scale items and responses to open-ended questions offer insight into the positive impact and challenges that may accompany incorporating digital competencies in honors courses, leading to recommendations for meeting DLI's objectives and maintaining the integrity of honors education.

**TABLE 2: FALL 2015 DIGITAL LITERACY COURSE OFFERINGS
(GROUPED BY DISCIPLINE)**

Course	Study Participants Enrollment
English	26
History	9
Honors Seminars and Colloquium	31
Mathematics	15
Psychology	7

Quantitative Analysis

Cronbach's alpha for the nine items on the student Likert scale was .93. The sample size for instructors does not meet the requirements for the reliability analysis. Figures 1 and 2 show the average mean for Likert-scale items on each survey. Participants were asked to rate each statement on a 5-point Likert scale, with the following options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. Students rated highest the item about the course's helping them create digital solutions to complete tasks in class or at work (4.38 out of 5). Students rated lowest the item asking about the DLI course as an aid in locating and purchasing digital solutions when needed (3.52 out of 5). The instructors rated highest the item about the initiative's accomplishment of its goal to enhance students' digital competencies (4.88 out of 5) and rated lowest the item about the initiative's positive influence on their teaching effectiveness (4.00 out of 5).

For student data, a Kruskal-Wallis (nonparametric) test was conducted to examine any significant differences in Likert-scale items across the disciplines. The test uses median averages to compare variances of ordinal data. Disciplines, grouped into five categories for the analysis shown in Table 2, yielded no significant differences ($p < .05$). The analysis treated all responses as independent samples. Of the students participating in the study, 92% rated their experience as excellent or good. For instructor data, a cross-tabulation was conducted based on years of teaching (groups: 6–8 years, 10–12 years, and 30+ years) and frequency of ratings by groups. Individually, all items were rated 3 or higher, and items 6, 8, and 9 were rated 4 or higher by instructors (see Appendix C, Section 2).

Student Qualitative Analysis

Student comments about their course experience revealed that the initiative had a positive impact on four distinct areas: 1) perceptions of the learning experience, 2) creating digital solutions and problem-solving, 3) perceptions of instructional knowledge and support, and 4) access to technology. Their commentary both supports the idea of introducing digital literacy to honors education and indicates potential improvements of future initiatives.

Enhanced Learning Experience

Although technology in the classroom can be a distraction when its presence becomes a barrier to student engagement rather than a catalyst for

learning, most students did not believe that the technology posed any distractions. On the contrary, students were aware of the DLI skills acquisition and

FIGURE 1: STUDENT PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF THE DLI ON LEARNING

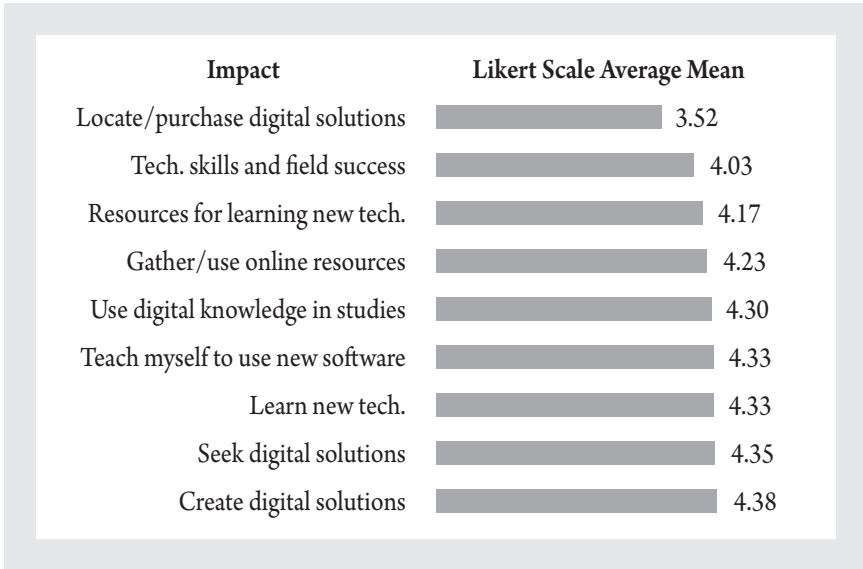
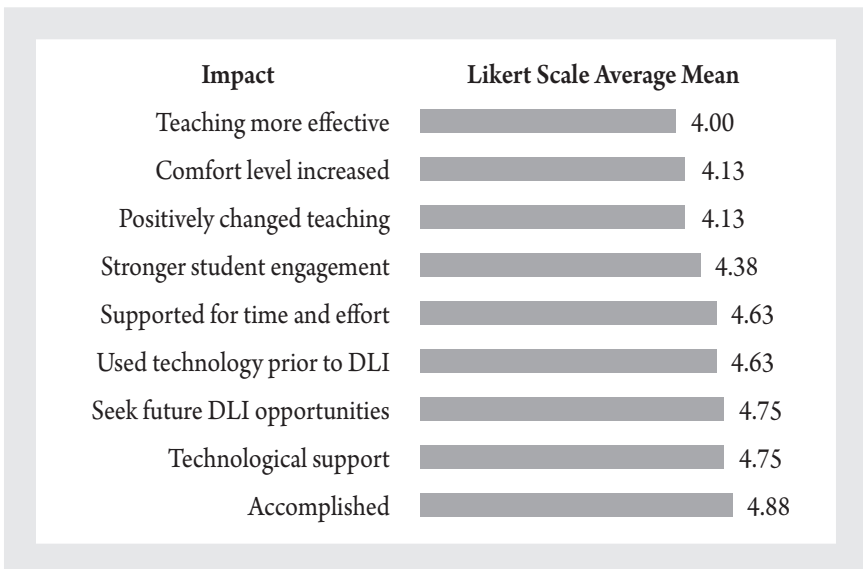


FIGURE 2: INSTRUCTOR PERCEPTION OF THE IMPACT OF THE DLI ON PEDAGOGY



its application to future educational endeavors. Student comments indicated the value they saw in the DLI experience, as in these two examples:

I enjoyed it and definitely preferred it to my traditional classes. I learned to use programs and software that will become invaluable tools in the future.

My digital literacy class has been one of my favorites since my time here due to its relevance. The importance of the skills learned is ever increasing, and this initiative is very up to date.

Although most comments were positive, some students provided suggestions to enhance the learning experience. Some students focused on their lack of familiarity with the technology, feeling that instructors should have taken the students' level of technological skills into consideration when assigning projects, e.g., "Assume that the students know nothing and give trivial easily doable assignments to promote familiarity with the new software." Another student felt that the course relied too heavily on digital skill attainment: "It should not be advertised as an English class because the entire class was focused on building a website." A student in one of the math courses expressed similar sentiments:

If it were just used to demonstrate concepts, not being graded at a test level on how well you could use those products, it would have been fine. I think it weighed too much on our grades for something we've never touched before, and since the software we used didn't work the way that the subject worked. For example, we used Mathematica and the syntax for Mathematica was probably the worst I've seen, and the learning curve was way too high, especially if you were taking 17 credit hours while commuting 3 hours a day, but it was a good way to visualize problems and have a deeper understanding of what each problem was solving.

Creating Digital Solutions and Problem-Solving

At the core of honors education is the creation of environments where students can critically analyze problems and create innovative solutions. Technology is one way honors students can leverage resources to perform more efficiently in their given field as the following comment reveals:

The Digital Literacy courses were very beneficial to my overall academic career. I learned a lot about mathematical and computational software that I could use to find answers to calculus problems (i.e., Wolfram Mathematica and Desmos). We were able to create presentations online and share them with our classmates using Air Media. The Digital Literacy Program was a great way for me to spend my freshman year.

Other students felt that their DLI course made them realize “how much work could be expedited with digital assistance” and how the software introduced in those courses “helped visualize problems (3D graphs, etc.).” Also, quantitative data showed that students felt confident about seeking and creating digital solutions to complete tasks in class or at work.

Instructor Knowledge and Support

A student in an advanced English composition course commented:

I was nervous about having to incorporate digital literacy in my course work, but it went well. My professor always made sure we understood and had the knowledge and skills to complete any digital assignment given and was available to give extra help when needed. The digital assignments complemented the course schedule and did add to my learning.

Most of the students who participated commented on the high level of support they received from the instructor and the knowledge the instructor brought to the course. They were especially appreciative of the “melding of [course] concepts and digital literacy concepts into one cohesive and interesting course” and their newfound abilities to use software like Photoshop and Movie Maker as professors “made incorporating technology into the class so seamless.”

Although most students had positive comments about instructor knowledge and support, a few mentioned negative experiences. Students stated that one of their instructors “didn’t seem to have much digital literacy himself so it was hard learning from someone who was learning at the same time.” Another student suggested that instructors “should be evaluated on their own personal digital literacy” before teaching one of the courses.

Access to Technology

Participants in the initiative were loaned a laptop for the 2015–2016 academic year to use in their DLI courses. Of students participating in the DLI, 79% chose to receive a laptop (160 out of 202). Students might have elected to obtain a laptop because they did not own a personal computer, the university-provided laptops had better functionality, or they simply wanted a new device to use for the year. One student listed financial reasons for receiving a laptop:

I strongly advise having some kind of leverage that would encourage students to maintain their grades at high standards. For example, telling students that if they meet a certain GPA by the end of the semester, they are welcome to keep the laptop. This was such a big help to me, and I wish I could have kept this laptop. I have never had a true laptop before, and my family doesn't have the financial aid to help obtain a laptop for me like this one. Although it GREATLY helped me this year, it will be absent my next and I hope that for future students this can change.

Another student offered solutions for students to maintain their laptops at the initiative's end:

I think there should be a way in which someone could do volunteer work or do anything extra in order to keep the laptop for those that are financially struggling.

Students also reported that having access to a laptop dramatically improved their ability to complete coursework, expand their computer skills, and organize their work.

Instructor Qualitative Analysis

Instructors were asked to discuss how they incorporated technology in their course as well as their relationship with their instructional designer and their overall experience. Table 3 presents data collected from instructors about the software used in their courses, revealing that a variety of software was used in the classroom to improve learning and introduce students to tools that could enhance future academic and professional performance. In most cases, instructors gave examples of products used in the classroom; in

TABLE 3: MOST USED DIGITAL TOOLS IN DLI COURSES

Product	Description	Product uses in course
Air Media	A media streaming and live conversion application that allows users to share data across multiple platforms wirelessly.	Students shared work from their computers during class for peer review.
Audacity	An open-source multitrack audio recording and editing program	Students recorded and edited sound to accompany videos and animated slide shows.
Desmos	An online graphing calculator that incorporates digital mathematics activities.	Students interactively visualized calculus concepts and observed how variables change the graphical representations of formulas.
Edublogs	Blog used for educational purposes, which provides a fully customizable WordPress platform.	Students displayed projects on their blogs and portfolio items; collaboratively and independently, particularly in English composition courses. Projects were either password protected and only visible to class members or the public.
Mathematica	A computer software that allows users to calculate and visualize the solution to mathematic, physics, and engineering problems.	Students constructed models defined through higher-level calculus equations. For example, students sought to answer questions like “What does the shadow look like for a square-shaped object when the light source is positioned on the horizon?”
Photoshop	Digital image-editing software.	Students created visual media. For example, a Photoshop Remix assignment in a composition course asked students to juxtapose two images to articulate a complex idea about pop culture.
PowerPoint	Software for presentation slides and animations.	Students created slide shows with animation on individual slides, accompanied by audio recording and edited in Audacity.
Sway	Web software used to create websites.	Students created interactive widgets within the Blackboard platform and developed papers with integrated charts, videos, and images.

Tableau	Data visualization software.	Students analyzed raw data to set up their displays. For example, students visualized historical data from the National Lynching database to show concepts and demographics of affected geographical areas.
Timeline JS	An open-source tool that allows publishers to create quickly and easily interactively, media-rich timelines.	Students created timelines that enable users to interact with their research. For example, timelines were created by news coverage of the AIDS epidemic in a local newspaper, starting with a primary source. Another example includes analyzing the history of a word by creating a timeline of the evolution of its use and meaning.
Voice Thread	An interactive collaboration tool that allows users to add commentary through a variety of media tools.	Students in a composition course used time-based visual and audio annotations to provide analysis of graphics. For example, students analyzed the rhetorical elements of vintage cigarette ads.
Windows Movie Maker	Video editing software.	Students produced video projects, such as in Biology or Pre-Calculus, and provided a video summary of a concept from the course.
WordPress	Web software used to create websites.	Students created their websites. They were able to share information and embed or attach artifacts (e.g., YouTube video, audio, pdf, etc.).
Zotero	Data management tool that allows users to gather, organize and analyze sources for research. Mendeley is a similar software.	Students compiled resources in the form of journal articles, news articles, etc., to use for assignments and projects.

*Other products used included **Brackets** (open-source code editor for web designers and front-end developers), **Omeka** (open-source web-publishing platform for the display of library, museum, archives, and scholarly collections and exhibitions), **Twine** (open-source tool for telling interactive, nonlinear stories), **Voyant** (web-based reading and analysis environment for digital texts), and **WeVideo** (video editing software)

instances of missing examples, only a description of the product is presented at the bottom of the table.

Each instructor was assigned an instructional designer, and the two met as frequently as necessary. The instructional designers were also available for further assistance at weekly coffee hours. Support ranged from standing meetings to being available during an entire class period. Instructors reported that instructional designers helped them “identify useful technology, pulled together a list of resources for students to use when they had questions about using the technology, and discussed ideas about course design.” One complaint was that “the instructional designer had way too much work assigned” and “could not meet with me as often as I needed.”

Overall, instructors’ comments demonstrated that they welcomed digital inclusion into their existing instruction even though one instructor noted that the DLI course proved time-intensive:

I would have liked to spend the professional development funds to take the students on a digital field trip. I feel like I needed a course release because of the time I spent doing prep for the DL course. My four-class load made it hard for me to spend as much time as I wanted on the class.

Nonetheless, instructors felt that participating in the initiative made their teaching more effective and led to stronger student engagement (see Figure 1). One instructor categorized the experience as “awesome” and stated that he saw “a difference in the quality of student work,” and another praised the DLI experience as follows:

[My] classroom has moved away from lecture format and more toward roundtable discussion. The students are far more engaged when they feel that they can create arguments using digital formats in which they are more expert than I. We learn from each other in this way.

DISCUSSION

The present study introduces a digital literacy model for honors education, provides concrete examples for implementation, assesses the impact of the model on learning and pedagogy, and continues the digital conversation in the honors community. The study’s goal was to discover how adapting

pedagogy to include digital competencies might meet the objectives of undergraduate honors education.

The data collected in this study indicate that the goals and implementation of the DLI are consistent with at least four propositions of the NCHC's "Definition of Honors Education and Modes of Honors Learning":

- **an opportunity “appropriately tailored to fit the institution’s culture and mission”**

The DLI accommodated GSU’s diverse campus demographic, which supports a high percentage of students from a low to middle socioeconomic status. Access to technology is not guaranteed in every household, so we cannot assume that students will eventually become digitally literate.

- **“carefully selected teachers and students who form a cross- or multi-disciplinary cohort dedicated to achieving exceptional learning and personal standards”**

The initiative’s call for proposals added a layer of new vetting of honors courses. Courses not only had to obtain approval for meeting the standards of an honors course but also to meet innovative standards to qualify as a DLI course.

- **“measurably broader, deeper, and more complex learning-centered and learner-directed experiences”**

Curricula emphasized exploration, addressed real-world issues with digital solutions, and provided student-centered projects.

- **an opportunity for student “development or transformation” in the form of “problem-solving, often with creative approaches”**

At an end-of-semester DLI showcase, students discussed their progression, provided specific details about completed projects, and interacted with a broad range of digital tools.

The overall goal of the initiative was to provide digital resources that would lead to enhanced problem-solving skills for students and more relevant and engaging class sessions for instructors. The DLI courses provided a laboratory for students to experiment with various technologies that could improve efficiency in their chosen fields of interest and professions. For example, one of the primary attributes of undergraduate research is its ability to strengthen critical thinking skills. Some of the DLI courses introduced

students to research management tools such as Zotero and Mendeley (see Table 3) that allow students to spend less time manually organizing their references and more time constructing a well-developed research project.

The present study provided baseline data for the impact that technology can have in honors education. A larger sample size could have led to more robust feedback, but the main limitation of the study was that it did not test specific competencies like those introduced by Murray and Pérez. Although foundational digital skills span all areas, the study focused on tools that increase efficiency and productivity in a chosen field. Digital skills differ by discipline and profession so should be evaluated accordingly.

As Johnson stated, limited research is available on honors pedagogy as it relates to technology. This study explored the perceptions of students and instructors about a specific initiative after one semester, but future studies could collect longitudinal data to assess the initiative's long-term influence on learning and pedagogy in order to substantiate claims of lasting positive impact. Additionally, a study could be conducted to determine which learning constructs—i.e., critical thinking, motivation, and creativity—are affected by technology integration. Discipline-specific digital competencies could also be identified to develop a pre-test/post-test study design to assess skill level before and after an intervention. A broader range of research on this topic could lead to general insights about the current digital climate in honors and what is needed.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

Students were vocal about the preparedness of the digital literacy instructors and the advantages of having access to personal computers. Most students were pleased with the level of preparedness of their instructors, but some expressed disappointment in the lack of instructor preparation. An attempt to learn and teach a tool simultaneously along with an absence of well-established course goals can attribute to perceived unpreparedness. Students expect instructors to explain assignments thoroughly; if instructors are unable to do so, students may lose trust and disengage, so thorough training before the beginning of the course is necessary. When integrating technology into the classroom, the instructor may need to structure the curriculum in a way that does not confound topics with the new technology. Goals should be established to clarify whether the expectation is to master the material or the technology or both; if it is both, then resources should be presented to ensure goal attainment, and instructors should explicitly describe how the

digital projects meet the learning outcomes for the course. As one instructor mentioned, having an instructional designer present during class sessions would be helpful, but this may not always be possible. At least instructional designers were available to instructors, and it might be beneficial for a similar resource, maybe a graduate assistant, to be available to students.

Although providing laptops is ideal for an initiative of this type, a department, college, or university cannot always provide these resources. If resources are limited, forging partnerships may be a viable option, e.g., seeking assistance from technology services on campus to discuss rental options.

The digital literacy initiative is ongoing in the GSU Honors College. Digital literacy courses are being offered in the fall of 2016, and instructors have leveraged the initiative to promote interdisciplinary approaches to learning. For example, the honors college established the Honors American Studies Cluster. Students interested in American Studies who also want to improve their personal digital literacy skills have the opportunity to sign up for the Honors Cluster, which, using a cohort model, offers a group of linked courses that focus on American studies. The professors teaching the six honors classes collaborate to deliver assignments related to the primary topic: 1) Mapping Atlanta: Community Mapping and Geospatial Storytelling (an honors seminar), 2) Graphic Novels: American Issues (a perspectives course), 3) Advanced English Composition, 4) American Literature, 5) American Government, and 6) U.S. History.

Technology is altering the landscape of education and offering unique opportunities for the honors community to champion this shift to enhance learning. Instructors do not have to abandon standard models of knowledge attainment in the classroom; rather, an environment should exist that promotes multiple pedagogical approaches. The honors community must continue to provide comprehensive educational models that resemble the real world to support successful student transition out of college. The positive results from the present study suggest that intentional technology integration is appropriate for honors education. When digital competencies are incorporated into the curriculum in a meaningful way, students and instructors can benefit from the experience.

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APPENDIX A

Digital Literacy Initiative Framework

1. Find and vet information online: Students need to be able to determine the quality and validity of online information.
2. See problems from digital perspectives: Students should be able to analyze a problem and determine how to use digital tools to solve it.
3. Become self-directed learners: Students should know how to take advantage of online information and become lifelong learners.
4. Buy digital solutions: Technology is continuously changing, and students should learn how to evaluate and purchase the right digital tools.
5. Learn software quickly: Students need to be able to teach themselves new tools quickly.
6. Design and create digital solutions: Students should be comfortable customizing and combining tools to create a complete solution.

APPENDIX B

Student Survey

Section I

Demographics

1. I identify my gender as
 - a. Male
 - b. Female
 - c. Other

2. Age:
 - a. 18–24 years old
 - b. 25–34 years old
 - c. 35–44 years old
 - d. 45–54 years old
 - e. 55–64 years old
 - f. 65–74 years old
 - g. 75 years or older

3. Ethnicity:
 - a. African American
 - b. Caucasian
 - c. Hispanic
 - d. Asian
 - e. Other

4. College
 - a. School of Policy Studies
 - b. School of Nursing and Health Professions
 - c. College of Arts and Sciences
 - d. College of Education & Human Development
 - e. College of Law
 - f. School of Public Health
 - g. College of Business

5. Classification
 - a. Freshman
 - b. Sophomore

- c. Junior
 - d. Senior
6. Please check the digital literacy course(s) you were enrolled in during the fall 2015 semester.
- a. ENGL 1103
 - b. HIST 1111
 - c. HIST 2110
 - d. HON 1000
 - e. MATH 2211
 - f. MATH 2212
 - g. MATH 2215
 - h. PSYCH 1101

Section II

Please respond (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree) to each statement regarding your experience in the DLI during the fall 2015 semester.

Statement: Participation in the DLI increased my ability to

- 1. gather information and use online resources.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 2. seek digital solutions to complete tasks in class or at work.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
- 3. teach myself to use new software and online applications.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

4. locate and purchase digital solutions when needed.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
5. learn new technology.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
6. locate resources to assist me in learning new technology.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
7. create digital solutions to complete tasks in class or at work.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
8. use digital knowledge and skills gained in my future studies.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
9. use the technology skills needed to be successful in my field.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

Section III

1. My overall experience in my digital literacy course(s) was:
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Good
 - c. Fair
 - d. Poor

2. Please provide any feedback in regards to your digital literacy course(s).
(optional)

APPENDIX C

Instructor Survey

Section I

Demographics

1. Years of university level teaching: ____.
2. College:
 - a. School of Policy Studies
 - b. School of Nursing and Health Professions
 - c. College of Arts and Sciences
 - d. College of Education & Human Development
 - e. College of Law
 - f. School of Public Health
 - g. College of Business
3. Academic ranking:
 - a. Assistant Professor
 - b. Associate Professor
 - c. Clinical Assistant Professor
 - d. Clinical Associate Professor
 - e. Clinical Professor
 - f. Instructor
 - g. Lecturer
 - h. Professor
 - i. Professor of Practice
 - j. Senior Lecturer
4. Did you teach a course that intentionally incorporated digital competencies prior to participating in Honors College Digital Literacy Initiative (DLI) during the fall 2015 semester?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Section II

When responding to each statement, please keep in mind your experience in your digital literacy course(s) during the fall 2015 semester. Respond using the Likert scale below (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree).

1. Prior to participating the DLI I used technology in my classroom to enhance learning.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
2. My comfort level with using technology in the classroom has increased since participating in the DLI.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
3. My participation in the DLI helped me to teach more effectively.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
4. My participation in the DLI helped me to foster stronger student engagement in learning.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
5. My experience in the DLI positively changed my teaching methods.
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
6. The DLI provided technological support when needed in my classroom.
 - a. Strongly agree

- b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
7. I felt adequately supported for my time and effort while participating in the DLI.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
8. I will seek opportunities to teach digital literacy courses in the future.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
9. I believe the DLI accomplished the goal of enhancing students' digital competencies.
- a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neutral
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree

Section III

When responding to each question, please keep in mind your experience in your digital literacy course(s) during the fall 2015 semester.

1. What were the specific technology needs in your class?
2. What was your relationship with your instructional designer? How was the relationship formed?
3. Please describe the format of your course and how you incorporated digital competencies.
4. Please provide any additional feedback you may have regarding the DLI.

Helping the Me Generation Decenter: Service Learning with Refugees

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INTRODUCTION

Recent research has empirically demonstrated that young adults today are different from prior generations in their decreased empathy, increased narcissism, and decreased civic engagement. The formative years of young adulthood are a critical period for the development of civic values and civil ideologies, a time when college-age adults need to acquire the experiences and skills to decenter and develop into civic-minded stewards of their communities. Engagement in service learning with individuals unlike themselves, i.e., outgroup members, is the approach we have taken at the University of North Florida to encourage this decentering through service learning engagement with refugees embedded in an honors colloquium during students' first term in college.

We took a three-pronged approach to the assessment of the impact of this service learning engagement. In the first approach, evaluations of student

responses to open-ended questions provided evidence of a reduction in their self-centeredness and increases in social empathy and multicultural competence. The second approach confirmed these changes in decentering by showing that honors students who were engaged in more interactive service projects with refugees scored higher on two measures of empathy—i.e., the Basic Empathy Scale Basic Empathy Scale (Jolliffe & Farrington) and the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (Spreng et al.)—than did students engaged in less interactive service projects with refugees. In the final approach, evaluations of artifacts from the course suggested that levels of decentering, empathy, and civic action differed for students who had intensive versus superficial interactions with refugees.

Taken together, findings from the three assessment approaches converged to offer support for the value of intensive and interactive service learning experiences in which students interact closely with individuals unlike themselves. We discuss implications for the impact of service learning experiences like those in the honors colloquium described here on decreasing self-absorption and increasing civic engagement. We then outline limitations of the three approaches as well as the potential for future research.

BACKGROUND

Every generation seems to complain about the following generation. Although we are always in danger of just showing our age, college students do seem to have changed over the years as American culture has increasingly promoted individualism (Bellah et al.; Twenge). Young adults also increasingly endorse materialistic values (Schor). According to the Pew Research Center in 2007, college-age adults overwhelmingly reported that becoming wealthy was one of their most important goals.

Another way that college students appear to have changed is increasing self-centeredness, which is measured through assessments of narcissism and empathy. Narcissism is characterized by self-aggrandizement, a sense of entitlement, and a lack of empathy (Campbell, Rudich, & Sedikides; Twenge, Konrath, et al.). The increase in narcissism in recent generations has been associated with declines in prosocial traits such as empathy, concern for others, civic orientation, and concern over social issues (e.g., Campbell, Bush, et al.; Smith et al.; Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman). Smith and colleagues reported that 96% of Americans age 18 to 29 were uninterested in civic affairs, community activism, or politics. This same generation reported that they would be less willing to donate to charities, less interested in social programs,

less willing to adjust their diets to help starving people, and less willing to change their behaviors to save energy or help with other environmental issues (Twenge, Campbell, & Freeman).

Similarly, a notable decrease in empathy has occurred among more recent generations (e.g., Campbell et al.; Konrath et al.). Several prosocial behaviors are associated with empathy: people high in empathy are more likely to engage in civic-minded activities, put in volunteer hours (Unger & Thumulari), donate money to charity, give money to a homeless person, help a stranger carry belongings, or care for a friend's plants or pets (Wilhelm & Bekkers).

Ehrlich defined civic engagement as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference” (vi). The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) maintained that civic engagement also requires civic behaviors in which people participate in activities that address concerns relevant to an individual as well as a community; by so doing, individuals involved in civic engagement feel personally enriched, and their communities benefit collectively.

Since the formative years of young adulthood are a critical period for the formation of civic values and civil ideologies, colleges and universities have a special obligation to encourage these values, and service learning accomplishes this goal. Researchers employing meta-analysis have identified a link between service learning and civic engagement (Celio, Durak, & Dymnicki.; Yorio & Ye). In addition to enhancing cognitive development and personal insight, service learning enables students to develop a deeper understanding of social issues (Yorio & Ye). Students engaged in service learning also tend to (a) develop more positive attitudes toward learning, (b) improve their social skills, (c) enhance their academic performance, and (d) increase gains in civic engagement (Celio, Durak, & Dymnicki). Furthermore, any enhancements in learning and engagement associated with service learning are above and beyond enhancements found in community service unassociated with courses (Astin et al.; Vogelgesang & Astin).

Evidence indicates, moreover, that certain kinds of college diversity experiences are related to civic engagement (Bowman). Dovidio and colleagues determined that interpersonal contact fosters intergroup empathy. Increased empathy and perspective mediate the relationship between intergroup contacts and prejudice (Pettigrew & Tropp, “How Does Intergroup Contact”). Integration of service learning and diversity experiences might, therefore,

promise to affect college students' social empathy more fully. Segal maintained that social empathy may be fostered through exposure, explanation, and experiences with individuals different from ourselves. In order to most effectively help college students decenter and become beneficent stewards of their communities, the ideals may be to (a) promote exposure to people different from students (in our case, refugees), (b) provide opportunities in which students observe firsthand the experiences of others, e.g., observing struggles to learn a new language, and (c) guide students in deriving explanations for other people's reactions to these experiences through service and reflection, e.g., reflective discussions and journal writing.

PURPOSE OF CURRENT INVESTIGATION

In the studies reported here, we attempted to assess the impact of a first-term honors colloquium on incoming freshman honors students' degree of decentering. Honors students self-selected into one of ten service groups that provided services to refugees in the local community either in direct ways (i.e., events, soccer, mentoring, English tutoring) or indirectly (i.e., documentary film, fundraising, clothing drive, geographic information system (GIS), research, public relations). The majority of the 182 participants were 18 years old (86%), female (58%), and Caucasian (76%), and 90% were native citizens of the United States. These students also tended to have been high-achieving high school students, e.g., mean GPA = 4.35, mean SAT = 1231, mean ACT = 28, and mean AP/Dual Enrollment college credits = 18 hours. These students had typically been in special high school programs that offered significant college credit, had special admittance requirements, and likely segregated them into smaller and less diverse groups than a typical high school in terms of race and socio-economic class.

Immediately prior to beginning college, students admitted to the honors program completed an intensive 4-day retreat exclusively for honors students during which they engaged in community-building activities and exercises. One purpose of this retreat was to help these incoming students identify with the honors program and develop a sense of community, which made them an even more homogenous group. When these students who had typically been advantaged throughout high school came into contact with a group starkly unlike themselves, we hoped to see a significant increase in decentering. By selecting a colloquium subject (immigration and national identity) that is controversial and topical, we also hoped to provide an opportunity to decenter by thinking deeply and critically about their own assumptions and about

what they learn from the media. Finally, we hoped that the required contact with a group unlike themselves in terms of privilege and experience would be vivid enough to change the students' understanding of their place within the context of global privilege. We hoped that the sharp contrast in backgrounds between the students and the refugees as well as the intensely experiential nature of the class would cause a measurable change even in the short time of one semester.

During the honors colloquium, the entire group of honors students met weekly for ninety minutes of lectures, presentations, and class activities. Faculty members from different departments gave lectures: for instance, a historian talked about the history of immigration to America, an economist talked about the economic impact of immigration, and a biologist talked about what genetics tells us about human migration over the very long term. Some activities were specifically designed to foster empathy. For example, in a "refugee simulation" students went through a process similar to that of refugees arriving in the United States; they assumed roles as members of refugee families in different stages of acculturation and undertook a series of tasks in four fifteen-minute "weeks" trying to become economically self-sufficient. They then participated in a class discussion about the experience.

Following the large class meetings, small breakout groups of fifteen to twenty students met for ninety minutes to discuss the lectures and readings and to organize the service projects. Two upper-class honors student-facilitators, who had completed the colloquium and attended training sessions over the summer, led each breakout group. During breakout sessions, students engaged in reflective discussions about lectures, readings, and their specific service projects.

Other course assignments included more direct experiences designed to build empathy and reflect on connections with their service projects. For example, all students had to attend three "diversity activities" of their choice. These activities included eating at ethnic restaurants and attending events sponsored by groups to which they did not belong. The activities pushed students out of their comfort zone and put them in contact with people who had different experiences or worldviews. Students then wrote reflective papers on each of these diversity experiences. These reflective papers required students to conduct research to understand the cultural logic of the other groups and to understand their discomfort. Another assignment required students to research and write their family's immigration history. Students identified why their family came to the United States and compared their families' reasons to why people come to the United States today.

The service project was the activity designed to build empathy most directly. Service activities required contact with people who had arrived as refugees fleeing persecution and war in a range of countries that included Burma, Ethiopia, Iraq, Syria, Bhutan, Congo, and Colombia. Some of the adult refugees were highly educated whereas others could not read and write in their native language. Some came from wealthy backgrounds while others grew up in severe poverty. They arrived in the United States with very few belongings to start the arduous process of adapting to a new culture.

Each group of students had a different role in the project, and it offered them differing levels of engagement with the families who arrived as refugees. Students in the events group organized and hosted two events on campus for the refugee families: *Boo in the Q*—a Halloween party for refugees in Q building of the residence halls—and a Thanksgiving event that included a traditional dinner and a soccer clinic. Students in the soccer group coached refugee children and organized soccer games for the refugees. Students in the two mentoring groups worked directly with refugee children to help them adjust to relocating to the United States. The English tutors met with refugee adults and assisted them in learning English. These groups required weekly interaction with refugees and were termed "interactive." Another set of students had minimal interaction with the refugees and were termed "non-interactive." The documentary film group recorded various interactions between students and refugees and created a film that showed the impact on students and refugees. The fundraising group held activities like a dodgeball tournament and a talent show to raise money for the Halloween and Thanksgiving events. Students in the clothing drive collected coats and jackets as well as soccer balls and soccer cleats for the refugees. Students in the GIS group mapped the location of refugee resources, such as cultural food stores in the community, and then gave the maps to the community. The research group studied the histories and customs of the various ethnic and national groups among the refugees and made presentations to their fellow students during the colloquium to help them be more effective in their interactions with the refugees. The public relations group promoted the fundraisers and the Halloween and Thanksgiving events to the university community and beyond.

One goal of the course was to foster decentering and community stewardship among these young adults. In 1906, the influential social scientist William Graham Sumner, after assembling detailed anthropological observations, determined that people have a common tendency to differentiate themselves into "in-groups" and "out-groups." For more than fifty years, researchers have

studied intergroup dynamics and confirmed that people hold in-group/out-group biases (e.g., Allport; Pettigrew & Tropp, "How Does Intergroup Contact"; Quellar, Schell, & Mason; Tajfel et al.). In addition, researchers using neuroscientific approaches have determined that people feel less empathy for out-group members than for in-group members (e.g., Avenanti, Sirigu, & Aglioti).

The service projects were designed so that the in-group of honors student would interact with an out-group of refugees who differed from them in culture and socio-economic status. Although students shared some characteristics with some of the refugees, none of the students shared the salient experience of fleeing from their native country to avoid persecution or death, so asking them to decenter in relation to this group would increase our confidence in the results of our study. In order to gain an accurate picture of the impact of the honors colloquium and specifically the service project on honors students' decentering, we took a three-pronged approach in which we examined (a) students' responses to open-ended questions (qualitative evaluation), (b) students' self-reported responses to measures of empathy (quantitative data), and (c) students' course posters (artifactual examination).

METHODS AND RESULTS

Qualitative Examination

In this colloquium 171 participating students responded to questions about their perceptions of their service project and of immigration. Responses were predominantly positive (92.3%). The negative responses typically came from students in groups that had less direct contact with refugees and who were unhappy about their lack of involvement. One student wrote, "Personally, I didn't get very much out of the service project since I was secluded from the refugees for the most part."

In contrast, students in the interactive groups tended to respond with positive statements indicative of decentering. Many students were moved by the sacrifices immigrants made to gain skills they needed to prosper in a new country. Students were inspired by the refugees' determination to take advantage of opportunities that would make them more successful. One student who served as an English tutor responded, "It was such a humbling experience to see grown men and women diligently coming to class at night despite having worked a full day already. They inspired me to take advantage of my education and to work to my fullest potential." Interactions with the refugees

clearly had a significant impact on students' ability to process the refugees' experiences and to decenter more fully. Another student working directly with refugees noted, "Working with a Burmese family really broadened my worldview—watching the film on Burma was one thing, but I was able to empathize more with those on the screen because I've met four people who lived through it."

After contrasting their situations with those of the refugees, many of the students who were engaged in interactive service experiences expressed a sense of newfound gratitude for their circumstances. One student remarked, "It also helped me realize that not everyone has it as lucky as I do, and that I need to be more understanding with people and grateful for the things I have been blessed with." Another student who worked directly with refugees noted, "I am now more appreciative of the freedoms that our nation has provided me as well as the benefits of being in a first-world country that can assist others." Another student put it this way: "It blew my mind that people would have to wait in camps for years until they were found a place to go."

Other students expressed a sense of responsibility. One student described an epiphany: "My eyes have been opened to more current events across the world and to the people that need our help because they have no place to go." Another student simply and directly stated, "It made me want to get involved and help." Like many other students who interacted with the refugees, these students expressed a sense of empowerment in situations where they saw injustice, bigotry, or intolerance.

Students also noticed the connection between the interactive impact of their service experiences and other elements of the colloquium, e.g., lectures, readings, and assignments. One student noted,

This course allowed me to fall into the shoes of a refugee family, to see their struggles from their perspective. Prior to taking this course I had no idea that Jacksonville was home to so many refugees. From my experiences through mentoring, I can put an image to what was talked about in the lectures, specifically about the direct and indirect costs. Through the past 3 months I have learned how much the indirect costs affect a refugee family, how they struggled with our customs, and our language. I have gained a sense of appreciation for refugees, because I have seen how much they struggle and how much effort they have to put in to become adapted to our society.

This student acknowledged that serving as a mentor enabled him or her to put a face on the immigration issues discussed in lecture. Another student noted that assigned readings, panel discussions, and diversity assignments, in conjunction with the service element, “really opened my eyes to the different perspectives of people.” The influence of the other course elements on the service experience was a repeated theme in student responses.

Even those students who were themselves immigrants came to realize that their experiences and immigration stories were not necessarily typical of other immigrants. One immigrant student noted, “Learning about the struggles and pain of thousands who live here as refugees made it that much more real to me, and that empathy with their pain gave me a greater appreciation of their strength, happiness, and values.” For this student, decentering enabled her to empathize and engage in alternative perspectives.

The service learning experience and other course activities did not apparently promote decentering among a few students. One student wrote,

This course didn't help me at all in either area. I already view myself as a fairly aware person about what goes on in different things. While I may not have specifically acknowledged the specific aspects, none of them surprise me and I realize why things happen the way they do so I don't feel that my perspective has changed, only become more specific and less general in this area.

This student, while acknowledging a lack of knowledge about specifics, wanted to make it clear that he or she was already informed about service and immigration and had not benefited from the course in any way. Such comments tend to reflect some of the characteristics associated with narcissism, such as an inflated positive self-image, particularly agentic traits such as importance and power. Typically, however, students who claimed they had experienced no evidence of decentering nonetheless acknowledged the benefits to their classmates and the refugees.

Taken as a whole, the large majority of students' comments illustrated various forms of decentering, including increased empathy and appreciation of alternative perspectives. Relatively few students clearly remained resistant to decentering and stayed focused on themselves, inflating the value of their contributions or devaluing the impact of the refugee experiences. This preliminary, summative examination of emerging student observations of the course, specifically the service learning component, suggested that students decentered to varying degrees.

Quantitative Examination

Of the original sample, 136 honors students volunteered to participate in a study of “Views of Yourself and Others.” In exchange for their participation, students were awarded course credit in the honors colloquium. Prior to beginning the survey, students indicated their willingness to participate after reading an online informed consent form. All responses were anonymous, and participants were able to discontinue the study at any time without penalty. All participants were treated in accordance with the 2010 ethical principles of the American Psychological Association.

As part of this survey, participants completed measures of empathy including the Basic Empathy Scale (BES) (Jolliffe & Farrington) and the Toronto Empathy Questionnaire (TEQ) (Spreng et al.). We chose these scales because of their psychometric properties concerning reliability and validity: for BES, see D’Ambrosio et al. and Mehrabian; for TEQ, see Baron-Cohen et al. and Spreng et al.

We employed two scales to establish convergent validity. For the BES, responses to items indicating a lack of empathy (e.g., “My friends’ emotions don’t affect me much”) were reverse-scored such that higher scores for all individual items indicated greater empathy. We then averaged scores on items, and higher average scores indicated greater empathy (for our sample, $\alpha = .81$). For the TEQ, responses to items indicating a lack of empathy (e.g., “I remain unaffected when someone close to me is happy”) were reverse-scored such that higher scores for all individual items indicated greater empathy. We then averaged scores on items, and higher average scores indicated greater empathy (for our sample, $\alpha = .72$). In our study, scores from these two measures were correlated, $r = .72, p < .01$.

Based on our review of the literature, we hypothesized that greater engagement in service learning with refugees would be related to decentering as exhibited by higher empathy. Specifically, we predicted that scores on the BES and TEQ would be higher for students in the interactive groups than for students in the non-interactive groups. There was a statistically significant difference in scores on the BES for students in the interactive and non-interactive groups, $t(153) = 2.83, p = .005$. Students in the interactive group ($M = 3.83, SD = 0.38$) scored higher on the BES than did students in the non-interactive group ($M = 3.66, SD = 0.35$). Not surprising given the correlations between the BES and TEQ, this pattern of scores was also true for the TEQ, with students in the interactive groups ($M = 3.98, SD = 0.46$) scoring higher than students in the non-interactive groups ($M = 3.84, SD = 0.37$), $t(153) = 1.90$,

$p = .06$. Although there were gender differences in scores on the measures of empathy, including gender as a factor in our analysis did not alter our other findings.

Artifactual Examination

In addition to other assessments of student empathy, independent reviewers assessed 44 group posters produced by students while completing the honors colloquium. In their poster presentations, students discussed their service experiences and connections to course content (readings, lectures, guest speakers). Two independent evaluators who had not heard the oral presentations later used a rubric to assess an 8.5" x 11" printed replica of each poster. On a 4-point scale, posters were evaluated on three dimensions: Civic Action and Reflection, Connections to Experiences, and Intercultural Skills (AAC&U). Interrater reliability for scores on each of the scales—Civic Action and Reflection ($r = .88$), Connections to Experiences ($r = .87$), and Intercultural Skills ($r = .51$)—as well as on the combined scales ($r = .86$) was statistically significant (all $ps < .001$).

Civic Action and Reflection is conceptualized by the AAC&U as “working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community, through both political and non-political processes” (Ehrlich vi). Civic Action and Reflection relates to decentering because, in order to attain these values, people must consider what is beneficial to members of the larger community and participate in actions that address community concerns rather than focusing on individual or personal concerns. To understand and appreciate the concerns of a community, an individual must be able to engage in alternative perspective-taking.

Connections to Experience demands that students broaden their points of view by linking what they learn in the classroom to experiences beyond it. The AAC&U suggests that to make these connections, individuals must at a minimum compare academic knowledge to “real world” experiences in order to ascertain associations and distinctions and recognize alternative perspectives. This focus on alternative perspectives is essential to decentering.

Intercultural Skills focuses on intercultural knowledge and competence. Intercultural knowledge and competence demand cognitive, affective, and behavioral capabilities that enable respectful, functional interaction in an array of cultural circumstances (Bennet). According to the AAC&U, development of intercultural skills necessitates an examination of one’s own cultural

imperatives and preconceptions, the ability to ask complex questions and seek answers that reflect multiple cultural perspectives, and an openness to alternative viewpoints.

These three dimensions were selected because they reflect the perspective-taking and openness that underlie decentering. Openness to new and unfamiliar experiences presumably enabled students to engage more fully in their interactions with the refugees as well as the information provided in the classroom. A capacity to assume alternative perspectives was crucial to understanding fully the plight of the refugees served by these students.

We found a similar pattern of assessment scores of the posters for the interactive versus non-interactive groups. There was a statistically significant difference in mean combined scores for the interactive groups ($M = .91$, $SD = .43$) compared to mean combined scores for the non-interactive groups ($M=.42$, $SD=0.30$), $t(42) = 4.48$, $p < .01$. There was no statistically significant difference in scores between the service groups that were interactive. There was, however, a statistically significant difference in scores between service groups that were non-interactive such that the research group ($M=0.00$, $SD = .00$) scored significantly lower than all other non-interactive service groups: clothing drive ($M=0.56$, $SD=0.14$), public relations ($M=0.67$, $SD=0.58$), GIS ($M=0.50$, $SD=0.19$), fundraising ($M=33$, $SD=0.00$), and documentary ($M=54$, $SD=0.04$), $F(9,34)=4.34$, $p=.001$.

Interactive groups also differed from non-interactive groups on each of the three dimensions. Interactive groups ($M=1.28$, $SD=0.43$) scored significantly higher than non-interactive groups ($M=0.83$, $SD=0.47$) on Civic Action and Reflection, $t(42) = 3.25$, $p=.002$. Interactive groups ($M=0.55$, $SD=0.82$) scored significantly higher than non-interactive groups ($M=0.12$, $SD=0.29$) on Connections to Experiences, $t(42) = 2.52$, $p=.016$. Finally, interactive groups ($M=0.89$, $SD=0.21$) scored significantly higher than non-interactive groups ($M=0.31$, $SD=0.35$) on Intercultural Skills, $t(42) = 6.29$, $p<.001$.

Across all three indices, mean combined scores for all artifacts ($M=.62$, $SD=.43$) with average scores positively skewed (1.14, $SE=0.36$) indicated that there were many more artifacts rated below the median than above the median for the scale. These low scores may not be surprising given that these were first-semester college freshmen.

DISCUSSION

Taken together, results from these three assessments provide support for the effectiveness of the honors colloquium and its related service learning

projects in helping students decenter. The same pattern of results emerged in each of the assessments, indicating that students engaged in service activities that provided greater interaction with refugees appeared to decenter more than students participating in service activities providing less interaction. Our findings are consistent with previous literature in which researchers have noted the value of sustained interaction with people of different backgrounds to increase diversity awareness (Marulla) and develop multicultural competence (Boyle-Baise). Students in the interactive groups received the exposure and experiences to arrive at explanations for the differences between themselves and the refugees that promote social empathy and discourage narcissism (Segal).

Our findings make sense in light of intergroup contact theory (see, e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, "When Groups Meet"). Intergroup contact theory assumes that interactions between members of different groups will improve attitudes toward the other group members. Researchers have demonstrated the benefit of direct contact in reducing prejudice and improving attitudes about members of another group (Pettigrew & Tropp, "A Meta-Analytic Test"). Other researchers have determined a benefit of indirect forms of intergroup contact as well, albeit to a lesser degree than direct contact (Crisp et al.; Miles & Crisp; Park; Wright & Aron). The difference in benefits between direct and indirect contact may explain the differences between interactive and non-interactive groups in decentering.

Researchers have also determined that the benefits of direct (Pettigrew, "Contact's") and indirect (Schmid et al.) intergroup contact are generalizable to the out-group as a whole as well as to outgroups not involved in the contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, "When Groups Meet"). Researchers have not assessed well the mechanism by which intergroup contact improves attitudes.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This preliminary research examining the impact of an honors colloquium and its related service component has two primary limitations. Students self-selected into service groups whereas random assignment would have allowed us to rule out the impact of third variables on decentering. Additionally, we conducted all assessments only after the students completed the course, so we could not determine whether differences in decentering resulted from differential levels of interactions with refugees or from students' preexisting levels of decentering. Because of these limitations, we cannot make any causal inferences about the impact on decentering of the colloquium or of the differential

interaction with refugees. We can, however, establish a relationship between the level of interaction with refugees and degree of decentering.

The results from this first assessment of the honors colloquium are encouraging. Although random assignment of students to service groups would be desirable in terms of research, students in the colloquium will continue to self-select into service groups because their interest in a subject enhances their perception that service is a learning experience and positively affects their understanding of academic course material (Astin et al.). Because students may be more or less interested in soccer, tutoring, technology, and other focuses of the service element, we intend to continue permitting students to select their service groups. We have also devised a method for matching pre-test and post-test scores on quantitative measures for future studies that will enable us to address in part the directionality problems identified in the current study.

Another issue is that assessments of posters were unusually low, possibly because posters were a visual aid and not meant to stand alone in communicating students' perceptions, attitudes, skills, or awareness. Reviewers had access only to posters and did not attend the poster presentations, and although students wrote reflective papers during the colloquium, they did not write a reflective paper related to the poster. Consequently, reviewers had nothing but the visual aid to review, putting them at a significant disadvantage. In future studies, students will also write a reflective paper to be included with posters and enable reviewers of artifacts to better assess the impact of the colloquium and service project on students.

Little if any previous research has been done on the impact that service learning has on students who work with refugees. Most of the research involving refugees or immigrants has focused on the implications of the service for refugees or immigrants rather than the students. Such research has also not focused on the outcome of decentering. As a result, we cannot compare our early findings to other student populations. Future research with other student populations would be beneficial in determining the degree to which service learning with refugees influences various indicators of decentering among college students more generally. Future studies could also focus on service learning with other out-groups, e.g., seniors, to determine if serving out-group members has a different impact on students than serving in-group members, e.g., tutoring college students.

These limitations notwithstanding, the results of the three investigations reported in this paper are a cause for optimism in helping students to decenter,

build empathy, and decrease egocentrism. Many of the service projects with refugees offered the colloquium students an intensive diversity experience, as described by Bowman, and promoted social responsibility (Kezar & Rhoads). As suggested by Dovidio and colleagues, the intergroup contact created by engaging in service learning with refugees apparently aided these students in developing empathy. The question remains whether the impact of these service learning projects will translate into a decentering that is sustained over time and generalizes to other contexts so that the students become stewards of their communities.

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The Honors College Experience Reconsidered: Exploring the Student Perspective

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Yazoo Family Healthcare in Yazoo County, MS

INTRODUCTION

Often administrators overlook the student voice in developing strategic plans, mission and vision statements, marketing strategies, student services, and extracurricular programming. Engaging students in these areas may enhance students' cooperation, interactions, responsibility, and expectations. In order to assess honors students' perspectives and experiences, the present study, rooted in a phenomenological approach, conducted three focus

groups of traditional honors students, senior honors students, and honors college ambassadors. Students described their honors experience in three contexts: connectedness, community, and opportunity. This study informed a new vision and a new set of goals for the University of Southern Mississippi Honors College, and it might serve as a model for other honors colleges and programs.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

Founded in 1910, the University of Southern Mississippi (USM) is a public, mid-sized, research university located in the central Gulf South, with campuses in Hattiesburg and Long Beach, Mississippi. In the fall 2015 semester, the university enrolled nearly 15,000 students in more than 140 undergraduate and 200 graduate programs with approximately 1,000 academic staff members. USM first offered honors classes in 1965, and by 1976 the honors program had developed into a full-fledged honors college. This evolution was an indication of the university's increasing commitment to honors programming as an institutional priority and underscored the role and influence of the USM Honors College, among other colleges within the university, in shaping the academic mission of the institution.

The present study generated data related to student perspectives on the experiences associated with being an honors college student at USM. Such data are useful to a variety of stakeholders, including the dean, staff, and faculty affiliated with the USM Honors College as well as institutional administrators and both current and future honors college students. This knowledge of student perspectives may inform the college's strategic planning processes and the alignment between its mission and marketing. Additionally, the findings of the study may influence honors college programming, student services, and planned activities in order to meet the needs of students more effectively. Such realignment may contribute to increased retention and recruitment efforts.

The willingness of the USM Honors College administrators, staff, and students to initiate and participate in this self-assessment demonstrates a commitment to program quality and greater student engagement. These dynamics enhance student success among honors college students and contribute to the campus-wide academic community. In addition to revealing unknown or unanticipated areas for future assessment and evaluation, the study demonstrates the effective use of student perspectives in mission realignment and rebranding at USM and quite possibly at other universities as well.

FRAMEWORK

The pursuit of improved undergraduate education has remained the focus of extensive discussion, research, and strategic planning for institutions and systems of higher education for decades. In the 1980s, Chickering and Gamson proposed principles for good practice in the education of undergraduates; they argued that, when applied consistently, these guiding principles lead to enhanced cooperation, diversity, interaction, responsibility, activity, and expectations among undergraduate students. The pursuit of such outcomes serves as a significant motivation for self-study, program evaluation, strategic planning, and mission realignment designed to improve recruitment, retention, and student success initiatives.

As student success and retention become increasingly relevant as topics of discussion in the ethos of American higher education, so does the need for effective program assessment and evaluation. Outcomes assessment among general student populations in higher education is an ever more frequent and essential part of data-driven decision-making, and in an evolving culture of higher education management driven by perpetual demands for cost-cutting, honors colleges are not exempt from having to justify the need for and the effectiveness of their programs. Lanier (2008) reinforced this notion by posing the question, “how often have those of us who have been in honors for even just a few years heard cries for help from a program director under fire from a provost who wants to downsize, eliminate, or radically change an honors program?” (83). Outcomes assessment data can be helpful in providing the help that Lanier calls for, enabling the design of effective program evaluation.

Discussion and research on the factors that influence student outcomes are extensive in the literature on higher education as they relate to individual development, learning, and success. In 1991, Pascarella and Terenzini offered a compendium of research on theories and dimensions of student development that can aid in assessment design. In 2000, King and Howard-Hamilton argued that the interpretation of outcomes assessment data benefits from designing research protocols and analyzing findings from a conceptual framework built on student development theory. In relation to student development theory, Rinn in 2005 described research aimed at distinguishing between general college student populations and honors students. Then in 2006, Radomski argued that honors programs, in the aggregate, offer programming and services aligned with a generalized set of academic characteristics but fall short in offering specialized, non-academic services that may be needed by this evolving population demographic, indicating that strategic planning and

honors outcomes should include academic and non-academic dimensions of students' experiences.

The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) has addressed both academic and nonacademic characteristics of honors colleges in contemporary higher education by identifying and describing core principles and practices in its Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College and in the 2008 monograph *The Honors College Phenomenon*, edited by Peter C. Sederberg. The monograph includes case studies of honors colleges from across the United States that operate within varying institutional contexts, exploring the relationship between institutional dynamics and the development, assessment, and evolution of honors colleges. The monograph also describes the challenges associated with sustaining vitality in older, developed honors programs, challenges that are particularly relevant to the present study. The self-assessment of the USM Honors College described here is, as Sederberg noted, "an opportunity for reflection upon the challenges of sustaining vitality" (121).

PURPOSE

The primary purpose of this study was to assess student perspectives on programming and experiences among current honors college students at USM. As part of a strategic planning, marketing, and mission realignment process, the administration and staff of the honors college sought student input on its strengths and its needs for improvement in providing services, programming, and guidance to its students.

METHODS

The dean of the honors college approached the research team and requested that it conduct a study in order to gain a deeper understanding of students' perspectives as a part of a strategic planning and redesign process. Prior to conducting the research study and collecting data, the researchers obtained Institutional Review Board approval (Protocol #1410 1001).

Design

The research team adopted a phenomenological approach to explore the experience of students within an honors college at a comprehensive Carnegie research university with Southern Regional Education Board-Level 1 designation. This approach, which attempts to understand people's perspectives

and perceptions within a particular circumstance (Munhall), was appropriate since little was known about students' honors college experience at USM.

Sampling

The honors college sent out invitations to participate in the study to three types of honors college students: traditional honors students, senior honors students, and honors college ambassadors. Traditional honors students are academically talented students who enter the honors college as freshmen; these students intend to remain in the honors college for four years, take foundational honors courses in their first two years (including a university forum lecture series), and complete a thesis involving original research, usually in their academic major, under the guidance of a faculty advisor. Senior honors students are academically talented students who have completed a minimum of forty hours of college coursework, typically entering the college as rising juniors; these students intend to remain in the honors college for two years and, like the traditional students, complete a thesis involving original research, usually in their academic major, under the guidance of a faculty advisor. The ambassadors are honors college students who assist with a wide range of college activities and recruitment efforts; most often these are traditional students although any student can apply to become an ambassador.

The honors college sent an email to each of these groups of students inviting them to participate in the focus groups. Students who expressed interest received information about the time and location of the focus groups, which took place in a private student lounge of the honors college. Fifteen students (11 females, 4 males; 13 Caucasians, 1 African American, and 1 Asian) participated in three focus groups.

Data Generation

Three focus groups were conducted lasting approximately two hours each. One focus group was primarily traditional honors students, one was mostly senior honors students, and one was mainly honors ambassadors. Researchers attempted to keep each group separate while allowing flexibility to meet participants' schedule needs. Refreshments were provided during the focus groups, and each student received a \$15 gift to the bookstore at completion. Two experienced qualitative researchers conducted the focus groups. After an oral presentation was given and questions answered, consent was obtained. Focus groups were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim by an experienced transcriptionist with all identifying information removed.

Each focus group was asked a similar set of questions or statements while allowing for individual group discussions:

1. How do you see the honors college?
2. What attracted you to the honors college?
3. Tell me about your experience at the honors college.
4. What does the honors college mean to you?
5. What are some aspects of the honors college that have been helpful?
6. What are some areas for improvement?

Data Analysis

Interview transcripts were analyzed in two separate, independent processes using thematic analysis for identifying commonalities within and across groups (Munhall). Initially, the two focus group facilitators analyzed the transcripts. For confirmability, a three-member team with varying experience in qualitative research separately analyzed the transcripts without prior knowledge of the initial findings. The three-member team was not involved in the facilitation of the focus groups and was independent of the data collection process. The five members, ranging from a student to a seasoned academician, had varied expertise, with backgrounds that included higher education administration and health-related fields. This diversity provided a rich perspective that allowed for a more thorough analysis.

In both data-analysis processes, each team member independently read the transcripts and developed thematic interpretations for each focus group and across the groups. The team members brought their interpretations to their respective analysis team for discussion. Dialogue among the members clarified the analyses, and conflicts between interpretations were resolved by returning to the texts. Team members identified and explored themes that cut across texts. New themes emerged and previous themes were continuously refined, expanded, or combined. When each team reached consensus, both teams met to compare results in the same iterative process until they also reached consensus.

RESULTS

The students stated that the honors college brought them together in a communal experience with the staff, faculty, and other students, enriching

their educational and professional growth. They expressed this experience within three themes—connectedness, community, and opportunity.

Connectedness

One of the key themes to emerge from the qualitative analysis was students' sense of social connectedness among their fellow honors college students. According to Lee and Robbins, whose seminal 1995 research on "Measuring Belongingness" helped establish the foundation for current studies, social connectedness was defined as "an enduring and ubiquitous sense of interpersonal closeness with the social world in toto" or "one's opinion of self in relation to others" (239). Social connectedness represents a fundamental psychological need that, if met, promotes social, emotional, and physical well-being (Lee & Robbins, "Understanding Social Connectedness"). Conversely, as Lee and Robbins wrote in 1998, individuals lacking a sense of connectedness and belonging are prone to low self-esteem, chronic loneliness, and a negative perception of their surroundings.

In 2011, Pym, Goodman, and Patsika examined the role of social connectedness in students' transition to higher education. Results indicated a positive relationship between social connectedness and academic performance. Additionally, participants acknowledged that social connectedness helped provide a sense of belonging as well as a supportive, encouraging, and nurturing environment. Later, in 2014, Irani, Wilson, Slough, and Riegar explored social connectedness and perceived isolation in graduate students enrolled at the University of Florida, examining students residing on and off campus. Their findings validated the hypothesis that students residing off campus feel less connected to their home departments and experience a greater sense of isolation than do students residing on campus.

Although the concept of social connectedness has been studied in various academic settings, there is a paucity in the literature regarding social connectedness among students in a unique environment such as an honors college. Analysis of the qualitative data suggests that the experiences implicit in the USM Honors College have fostered a unique element of social connectedness, both within and among the three focus groups in this study. The participants attributed social connectedness to the similarity of student experiences, rigor of the program, and unique opportunities afforded to honors college students. This sense of connectedness is a prominent theme in the following student comments:

It's a group of like-minded students who . . . hold each other accountable for what we are going to achieve. (Participant 2, Focus Group 1).

[Facilitator question:] "If someone asked you at home or someone you went to high school with, or your family, to describe the honors college in one word, what word would you tell them?" "Connection." (Participant 2, Focus Group 1).

There's a sense of family here 'cause we all are going through a very similar process that other students aren't going through . . . but, at the same time, other students in our majors aren't having to deal with that, so you do get closer to your honors students. And you have your honors student friends who you call and freak out about, "Oh my goodness, this class is ridiculous! I'm never going to pass. My thesis is killing me. I'm just going to drop out of everything and die." [laughter] . . . and when we're doing recruitment events that's how we pitch it. We pitch it as a family environment and especially like our mentor groups and stuff. (Participant 2, Focus Group 2).

I think it's started to mean more to me now as I've been working on my thesis. I feel more connected now. Like I'm not going to drop if it gets hard cause like when I first started, I wasn't that connected with it. . . . I feel like I'm more connected to my work and . . . the honors college does offer you a lot of opportunities if you do want to get involved. There's a community here, you know, that wants to spend time with you, to help you on your journey to complete your thesis. It's nice. (Participant 3, Focus Group 2).

I would say more for me the honors college has offered opportunities of knowing professors one-on-one so then you can get those connections. (Participant 2, Focus Group 3).

There's a feeling that they really care about us. They want to help us. If you go to my department and get advised, of course they'll do everything they can but they don't actually care. They don't know who you are or what you want to do . . . unlike everyone here. (Participant 4, Focus Group 3).

Well, for me it's not just . . . it's the fact that everyone I meet through honors instantly becomes that connection on campus. I mean the people I talk to everyday as I'm walking from one end to the other are

honors people . . . whether I'm talking to someone about a class we are in together or whether I'm talking to someone about an honors ambassadors event, or their thesis . . . the people that I think of when I think of USM are honors students that I've met, that I know, that I connect with. (Participant 2, Focus Group 3).

For me, since I'm a junior, I'm thinking about grad school and not beyond that, yet . . . but it connects you to people who are doing the same things you are doing and have the same goals you have . . . like, my friends who aren't in honors college can't help me with the GRE and can't answer my questions. They're like "what is that?" Honors college people are like my personal mentors because they are helping me through . . . they've already done the GRE and they've already applied to grad school in the honors college . . . so they are lined up with your same goals and accomplishments. (Participant 2, Focus Group 3).

Community

Another aspect of the student experience was a sense of community, a theme that emerged in all three focus groups. When students were asked what the honors college at USM meant to them, many responded by stating that it provided them with "a sense of family" (Participant 2, Focus Group 2). Students stated that writing a thesis during their senior year and taking required honors classes were factors that brought them closer to their peers. Many of the students felt they were "all going through a very similar process that other students aren't going through" (Participant 2, Focus Group 2). The students credited their community with their success in the college: "There's a community here that wants to spend time with you, to help you on your journey to complete your thesis. It's nice" (Participant 3, Focus Group 2).

Forming communities within academic settings is an invaluable tool that can potentially improve overall student involvement and retention (Chickering & Gamson). The community formed within the honors college provides students with a network that enables them to succeed in future academic endeavors and employment opportunities. According to Schlossberg's 1989 study, one of the most challenging aspects of building a community is helping students overcome the feeling of marginalization: "It can take time for students to feel central to a group, as if they matter to others" (3). Students reported that the honors college at USM provided a community that made

them feel that they were important, that their presence mattered: “It’s all about being part of a community that cares about your future. We’re thinking about what we can do as part of this community through our thesis” (Participant 3, Focus Group 3).

Opportunity

When asked to describe in one word what being a part of the honors college meant to them, students in all focus groups consistently mentioned opportunity as one of the honors college’s most significant strengths. In particular, they described opportunities for more personalized education, leadership, and individual research. Their comments were in line with what Hammond, McBee, and Hebert reported about honors college students in 2007: that honors students are “offered numerous possibilities” such as “opportunities for research with faculty” that provide motivation for achievement. Participants in our study also felt that they had more opportunities for social networking, extracurricular activities, and making connections than they would have had otherwise. One student stated, “I feel that we are more willing to take advantage of opportunities and the things that are available to us as far as student resources and just extracurricular activities” (Participant 2, Focus Group 1). Honors students at USM have their own “honors college calendar” encouraging them to take advantage of extracurricular events with other honors students. “We are part of the elite that get more opportunities,” one student stated, going on to say, “We are offered things that other students aren’t: more experiences and opportunities and leadership positions and connections and personal education than other students on campus” (Participant 2, Focus Group 3). One participant noted that “opportunities to do research, opportunities to network, opportunities to make . . . useful contacts with people, opportunities to put some things on your résumé” (Participant 3, Focus Group 2). These kinds of special opportunities are characteristic of honors according to Owens and Travis; in their 2014 survey of honors program directors, 94% ($n = 159$) reported that “special opportunities for social interactions were perceived to be a benefit to participating students.”

DISCUSSION

The findings of the focus group study have informed a variety of initiatives and propelled a number of ongoing changes in the honors college, suggesting the value of soliciting student input in an informed, intentional, and unbiased

fashion both for honors education and for other student-centered educational programs. An immediate result of the focus group findings, for example, was the creation of a new honors college mission and vision statement, one that focuses on and highlights what students indicated they valued in their honors college experience. The new mission statement has led the college to create new promotional materials, revise the website, and create a new communication plan for recruitment and outreach. Perhaps most significantly, the dean of the college has taken the findings as an impetus to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the honors college curriculum and has continued to solicit student input in strategic planning, program analysis, and reform. In short, the student perspectives emerging from the focus groups have profoundly shaped the direction of and procedures within the USM Honors College. With its focus on student engagement and student voices, this study might serve as a model for other honors colleges and other academic units considering or designing program evaluation and assessment strategies.

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ABOUT THE NCHC MONOGRAPH SERIES

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

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

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

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NCHC 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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Inspiring Exemplary Teaching and Learning: Perspectives on Teaching Academically Talented College Students edited by Larry Clark and John Zubizarreta (2008, 216pp). This rich collection of essays offers valuable insights into innovative teaching and significant learning in the context of academically challenging classrooms and programs. The volume provides theoretical, descriptive, and practical resources, including models of effective instructional practices, examples of successful courses designed for enhanced learning, and a list of online links to teaching and learning centers and educational databases worldwide.

NCHC Monographs & Journals

The Other Culture: Science and Mathematics Education in Honors edited by Ellen B. Buckner and Keith Garbutt (2012, 296pp). A collection of essays about teaching science and math in an honors context: topics include science in society, strategies for science and non-science majors, the threat of pseudoscience, chemistry, interdisciplinary science, scientific literacy, philosophy of science, thesis development, calculus, and statistics.

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

Partners in the Parks: Field Guide to an Experiential Program in the National Parks edited by Heather Thiessen-Reilly and Joan Digby (Second Edition, 2016, 268pp). This collection of recent photographs and essays by students, faculty, and National Park Service rangers reflects upon PITP experiential-learning projects in new NPS locations, offers significant refinements in programming and curriculum for revisited projects, and provides strategies and tools for assessing PITP adventures.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council (JNCHC) is a semi-annual periodical featuring scholarly articles on honors education. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education.

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

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