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An historical look at honors student characteristics in higher education

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An historical look at honors student characteristics in higher education

Abstract

Having the opportunity to listen in on several Honors Committee Meetings at the University of Northern Iowa proved to be very thought provoking. The UNI Honors Committee had been discussing plans for a new honors program design when a question was asked, one that proved to be very important and needs serious consideration. "What type of student are we looking for?" What seemed to be a simple question with a simple answer gave rise to further questions and an issue which is the heart of any honors program. What characteristics will potential honors students possess? How will they be selected? What will their impact be on campus? What are these students looking for in education and in life? What can be learned from these students and the programs they demand?

AN HISTORICAL LOOK AT HONORS STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

A Research Paper
Presented to
the Department of Educational Administration
and Counseling
University of Northern Iowa

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Class
Master of Arts in Education

by
Daniel E. Key
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Entitled: AN HISTORICAL LOOK AT HONORS STUDENT CHARACTERISTICS
IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

In 1955 the National Merit Scholarship Corporation began research on: 1. the identification of talent; 2. the origins of talent; 3. and the education of talent, hoping to develop a better method of identifying "students who have the potential for outstanding achievement in college and in their subsequent vocations" (Austin, 1964). In an article entitled "No Royal Road" (1958), it is noted that many institutions of higher education select honors students fresh out of high school, while others wait until the students' junior or senior year in college; some choose to give honors students fewer courses, while others increase the load; some push the brightest students to graduate in three years or less while others insist on a full four years of study; some separate their honors students from the regular curriculum, placing them in special courses, while others keep them in the regular curriculum. Though the processes vary for each institution, all are striving for excellence in education. Weir (1962) suggests that "in order to ensure that the pursuit of excellence becomes more than a mere pursuit, honors programs will need to be examined and evaluated continuously."

Statement of the Problem

Having the opportunity to listen in on several Honors Committee Meetings at the University of Northern Iowa proved to be very thought provoking. The UNI Honors Committee had been discussing plans for a new honors program design when a question was asked, one that proved to be very important and needs serious consideration. "What type of student are we looking for?" What seemed to be a simple question with a simple answer gave rise to further questions and an issue which is the heart of any honors program. What characteristics will potential honors students possess? How will they be selected? What will their impact be on campus? What are these students looking for in education and in life? What can be learned from these students and the programs they demand?

The importance of these questions can be of concern to both the individual honors and nonhonors students, and to the various honors programs. For in selecting potential honors students some are chosen and some are not. These questions seek to find those qualities in students selected for honors and to "learn" from their learning. And it is hoped that these questions and research will give rise to more questions concerning the quality of education for all students.

Purpose of the Study

The general purpose of this study is to examine information on the characteristics of honors students in

higher education since about 1930 in hopes that through this small piece of history some honors student qualities and other honors student information can be gathered which will prove helpful to honors programs, students and higher education as a whole.

More specifically this study will present a brief look at what characterizes honors programs, to put into focus what honors students are involved in. The study will then examine honors student selection processes, campus impacts and various other characteristics which past research holds. History has often provided present society with words of wisdom to enhance our daily living. Through this historical study the purpose is to gather this information and present some valuable honors student characteristics and some general honors impressions based on this information. The thoughts and ideas are many, and through the combining of various studies some new light can be shed on the subject.

Definition of Terms

Austin (1975) defines "Honors" as consisting "of the total set of ways by which an academic institution attempts to meet the educational needs of its ablest and most highly motivated students."

Honors Students--Refers to students in higher education who achieve high academic success. Honors students may or may not be participating in an honors program and may also be referred to as "honor students," "gifted students," and "able and ambitious students."

Honors Programs--Refers to programs in higher education which are designed for students of high academic quality. Honors programs usually take different approaches to student development than do traditional higher education programs and are often considered a more intense form of academic study.

This study will take a more indepth look at what defines and characterizes honors type students and will provide some information which will better define honors programs.

Limitations of the Study

This study has been limited by those materials available, from 1930 to the present, through the University of Northern Iowa Library and the interpretation of these materials. Furthermore, the study focuses a majority of its attention on traditional type students, making only a small number of

references to nontraditional type students. The conclusions and recommendations drawn from the study will be limited by these factors.

Chapter 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Honors Programs: Some Characteristics

An honors program in higher education has many characteristics similar to those of the established institution. Honors programs have administrative officers, counselors, "a clearly identified student body", admissions and dismissal criteria and procedures, and often its own faculty and curriculum (Austin, 1970).

In a study by Brumbaugh (1933) approximately 37.5 percent of the accredited institutions in the United States were offering honors work during 1929-30. During this time student eligibility for honors work often consisted of special programs added to the regular programs of students, requiring about ten to sixty extra hours of study per week. He further explains that these programs received mixed reviews. Brumbaugh cites Rockwell who suggests the requirements were too demanding, and Brooks who suggests that students were in favor of the programs, which required increased amounts of reading time and often increased the reading time of nonhonors student who followed honor student examples. These programs included characteristics such as: Individual instruction; special remedial instruction; and sectioning classes on the basis of ability. Eells (1964) also notes

that honors programs are having a favorable impact on student reading habits. "Students are buying books which they are not required to obtain" because of the pleasurable experience they find in reading.

According to Cohen (1961), more and more institutions are developing honors programs. In the past these programs were found mainly in the small or ivy league colleges having high academic standards. Cohen suggests that more institutions are seeing the importance of meeting the needs of the abler students who are growing in number. The programs these institutions are offering differ from those of years past in that entering freshmen are now stepping right into an honors program. In the past, students may not have participated until their junior year. Included in many of these new honors programs are: "special counseling; special sections and courses; honors seminars and colloquia; interdisciplinary as well as departmental offerings, research and independent study opportunities from early on; pre-registration summer retreats; summer projects; ...(all) with a deliberately fostered climate of motivation and engagement."

Austin (1975) makes the observation that "the history of honors education is coexistent with the history of higher education. The Socratic dialogue, the Oxford tutorial, and the German seminar method continue to serve as models for contemporary honors programs."

In a research study comparing the characteristics of college and university honors programs, Neidich (1967) shows that, of the 292 colleges and universities (participating in the study) having 2,000 or more students and having Liberal Arts Programs, 184 (63%) have honors programs. Neidich notes that there are two main types of honors programs reported: general honors programs; and departmental honors programs. In an editorial for the March 1960 issue of The Superior Student it is noted that general honors programs are those which are outside the students' major. They are usually "adjusted to the individual needs of the students by special honors counseling and by utilizing many types of offerings, such as, honors sections of regular general education and departmental courses, special courses colloquia, seminars, independent study...". It is further noted that a general honors programs' main concern is "depth in interdisciplinary study". The departmental honors program according to Heffner (1958), offers students both "depth and breadth" in their major. Heffner points out that often "broad coverage" is so overly stressed within a specific department that students have "little time or energy left for truly penetrating inquiry". Heffner seems to stress allowing students the choice of how specialized or broad based they wish to become, since each student will take their education to different areas in society.

In some cases institutions of higher education will have either departmental or general honors programs. While in other cases institutions will have both. Angell (1960) suggests three possible policies for the supervision of honors programs for both underclass students and upperclass students:

1. "Transfer responsibility for all honors work to a college-wide body of some kind."
2. Place the underclass honors work under a college-wide body but leave upperclass honors work to departments.
3. "Put general responsibility in the hands of an honors council, but with much authority delegated to departments at the upperclass level."

During a June 1957 conference on the superior student at Boulder, Colorado, the following suggestions were made for the designing of an honors program: (Superior Student, April, 1958)

1. Adjust honors programs to individual campuses.
2. Faculty support and understanding is important in the development of honors programs.
3. Honors programs should be a part of the total offering of the college, not separated from it.
4. Adequate budgeting and structure are needed for secure honors programs.

5. Students should begin participation in an honors program as early as possible.
6. Identifying, selecting, retaining and advising students requires that honors program have well thought out policies and procedures.
7. Honors programs should provide an appropriate meeting place for students and provide special permits and recognition.
8. Honors counselors need to have the authority to modify requirements to meet the best interests of the student.
9. An evaluation procedure should be included in honors programs to offer continuous information for improvement.
10. Honors programs should be made clearly visible to heighten the impact on students, on and off the campus.
11. Honors programs should work with high schools to encourage abler students to have an honors attitude.

An honors program can meet certain institutional objectives. (Austin 1975) points out that honors programs can:

1. "enhance the public image of the institution as a place where superior scholarship is honored and encouraged"

2. "assist in attracting students of outstanding academic ability"
3. "assist in attracting and retaining faculty members committed to quality education"
4. "assist in attracting funds that would not otherwise be available"

The University of Northern Iowa Honors Committee in a March 7, 1984 meeting listed the following objectives for an honors program: (Quoted from the minutes of the March 7, 1984 UNI Honor Committee Meeting, Dr. Robert D. Talbott, Chairperson) (used by permission)

1. To attract and select students with the qualities of intellectual capacity and curiosity, creativity, self-motivation and emotional maturity and to provide those highly gifted students with exceptional opportunities to enhance and accelerate their educational growth.
2. To provide an opportunity for students and faculty to work together as teaching, learning, and research partners within a flexible framework of scheduling and programming.
3. To encourage meaningful experimentation which can later be adapted to the needs of the more traditional programs within the institution.
4. To allow for cutting across disciplines in a manner that permit the student to experience the interrelationships of knowledge and to gain greater depths of understanding within all academic areas.
5. To give to the entire campus a feeling of freshness of ideas and methods that would do much to counteract the present feeling of an educational lock-step, even for those students and faculty not directly involved in the honors program.

Austin (1975) in an article promoting honors programs suggests four specific objectives of an honors program:

1. Identify those students whose academic needs require more than the existing program has to offer, because of high ability and motivation.
2. For these students provide academic opportunities that challenge their capabilities and help them become independent learners.
3. Provide an environment that encourages the students to reach for their potential while developing dignity and self-esteem.
4. Provide the benefits in an honors program to the other areas of the academic community, increasing faculty involvement and attracting campus speakers.

McMahon (1960) notes that professional education is different from liberal or general education and lists the following objectives to help professional schools provide both liberal and professional education in their honors programs:

1. "The search for truth taken from the tradition in liberal education."
2. "The concern of professional education that knowledge be useful and relevant."
3. "The honors goal of maximum utilization of the intellectual capacities of superior students."

With all these thoughts in mind, it was suggested by 48 educators at the Boulder, Colorado Conference that:

"There is no royal road to an honors program. The hope that one can devise a foolproof honors program which can be packaged and exported for use on any campus is delusory. Institutional differences and the practicalities of each campus must be faced frankly in creating a successful honors program." (Editorial, The Superior Student, June 1958)

Selection of Students for Honors Participation

Neidich (1967) who prepared a comparison of the characteristics of selected college and university honors programs, lists the following admissions criteria for freshman and/or nonfreshman: high school grades; Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT); American College Test (ACT); high school recommendation; interview; letter of application; merit exam; essay; exemption (placement) tests; institutional tests; state-administered tests; unspecified entrance tests; college grade point range; and faculty recommendation.

In one honors program at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) students are eligible for the program if they have completed at least one semester, in residence, at UCLA with a grade-point average of not less than 3.5 (on a 4-point scale) on all courses taken at the undergraduate campus (Langland, 1965). In another program at UCLA called the "Gifted Student Program or Freshman Honors", the selection process includes various combinations of the following tests: (Langland, 1965)

1. "Scholastic Aptitude" - American Council on Education Test, Miller Analogies, College Boards (SAT), Terman Concept Mastery.
2. "Skills" - Cooperative Reading Test, Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal.
3. "Achievement" - College Qualifications Test (Information Sections). Graduate Record Examination (Area Tests)
4. "Interest and Values" - Strong Vocational Interest Blank (Male form). Allport-Vernon-Lindzey - Study of Values.
5. "Personality" - Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Edwards Personal Preference Scale, Rotter Level of Aspiration Board, Omnibus Personality Inventory, a version of Osgoods' Semantic Differential, the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.

Fricke (1965) concerned with "the optimum use of the nation's human resources" suggests a "multiple cut-off selection technique" including: high school grade record, tested academic ability, tested academic motivation and tested creative potential. He explains that selecting students solely on the basis of an interview, case study, or academic ability is not reliable.

Riley (1959) writes that the "identification of students with superior ability should not depend on any single criterion". Riley suggests that teachers' opinions can prove to be valuable in looking at scholastic achievement and intelligence ratings, and lists several qualities which may be helpful in identifying gifted students:

1. "Extraordinary memory".
2. "High level of abstract thinking".
3. "The ability to apply knowledge and illuminate experience".
4. "Intellectual curiosity".
5. "Intellectual honesty".
6. "Persistent goal-directed behavior".
7. "Facility of expression and discriminating vocabulary".
8. "Variety of interests".
9. "Physical well-being".
10. "Pattern of sound values".

Angell (1960) suggests that academic averages and test batteries should be relied upon when selecting honors students. He further suggests that high school guidance personnel recommendations are not very helpful since they naturally speak highly of students ranked in the upper five percent of their class.

Viewing the issue somewhat differently, the University of Illinois has developed the following guides for its honors program selection process: (Phillips, 1968)

1. Students recommended, without reservation, as likely to benefit from the honors program by their high school guidance counselor will be admitted automatically, without further review. The University of Illinois seeks to trust the judgments and personal knowledge of high school guidance personnel. The selection committee will, however, review the applications of those students recommended, but with some hesitation.

According to a study by Damrin (1965), entering freshman honors nominees are assessed using the following information (Damrin, 1965):

- a. High School Rank in graduating class (HSR).
- b. American College Test Scores (ACT).
- c. National Merit Scholarship Test rating.
- d. College Entrance Examination Board Test Scores (CEEB).
- e. "Participation in the CEEB's Advanced Placement Program."
- f. "Participation in the honors program in high school."

- g. "Enrollment in college courses as a high school senior."
 - h. Participation in Academic Programs, contests, fairs, etc.
 - i. Area of Study at the University.
 - j. High School Teacher evaluation of "scholarly interest" and "study habits" in the students' chosen area of study.
 - k. "Students self-evaluation of scholarly interests and study habits."
2. No student who applies to the program will be rejected until that student has completed one semester on the campus. Phillip points out that past research has shown that "about one-third of the rejected applicants do as well, or better than, the appointed James Scholar." (Students selected to their program are labeled James Scholars.)
 3. Instead of the selection committee always selecting the students, it chooses to trust the judgment of honors-minded colleagues "to identify and appoint as James Scholars students beyond the freshman year who are worthy of the title".
 4. To reinforce "sustained superior performance" special recognition will be awarded based on cumulative averages and faculty and peer group nominations.

In an article by McColloch (1959), three recommendations are cited to improve the search for talented students:

1. Provide more information to the high schools "regarding the nature and scope of college honors programs and the competencies required for success in them".
2. Improve the communications, regarding student records and new academic approaches, between schools and colleges.
3. To benefit college admissions officers, review and clarify high school grading systems.

The Office of Testing and Research at Brooklyn College has been concerned with the strength of its admission criteria for selecting freshman students to its honors program. Heil (1960) explains that Brooklyn College is examining personality factors in its freshman students and has found that 60 percent of all their students are capable of pursuing independent study in their freshman year with no indicated sex differences.

Riley (1959) identifies "motivation" as the first step in identification of the able student. "If the able student has not been inspired to do his best, there is no performance on which to base an estimate of his ability." Hawkins (1959) suggests that the measure of academic superiority depends upon "factors that are within the control of the educational

system... The concept of superiority pertains not to the individual but to his education; not to the plant but the soil."

College Honors programs are continually looking for ways to improve their selection process. Holland (1964) asks whether the following should be considered as admissions criteria:

1. "Does the student have any substantive knowledge."
2. Does the student show signs of "persistence, independence, and originality".
3. Does the student show an ability to think critically.
4. What other signs of intellectual and personal development does the student show.

Holland (1964) points out that the honors program selection process needs further and continued research to help bring about a more solid ground to the acceptance and rejection of potential honors students. He writes:

It seems useful to speculate what would happen if we compared a group of honors students and a group of nonhonors matched for their intellectual potential, socio-economic background and perhaps their initial aspirations for educational level and choice of career. I cannot answer this question, but the administrators of honors programs should... They can give the selection process a rationale which will foster a more rational honors program.

Robertson (1966) suggests that "High school records, aptitude and achievement test scores, and honors, scholarships and prizes won" are useful data providing a "common

denominator" for selection. However, he stresses that it is a mistake to use these as the sole consideration, citing that current student tests scores "of good native ability but poor cultural background are not a fair index to their intellectual potential" and that further, these tests do not provide data measuring personal qualities, such as, values, motivation, aesthetic sensitivity, and creative potential. Robertson also finds that "estimates of a student's willingness and readiness to grow" by high school teachers and counselors prove helpful in the selection process. But, no matter what selection process is used, Robertson points out that "admission to and retention in honors should rest on periodic reviews of each student's achievements" and that "selecting participants should be a continuing, dynamic process, not an isolated, static one".

Austin (1970) explains that the concern with identifying honors students has no simple answer. He stresses that a selection process based on academic achievement and test scores has many fallacies and then notes an honors brochure from one university which speaks of an honors student as, one "defying quantitative description", and going on to say:

The curiosity which motivates the student to take the initiative in finding the resources for his own education is as important as native intelligence. The honors student has the power to handle ideas, to see relationships, and to integrate experience and insights. He may be activist or loner, well-rounded or single-minded, career-bound or searching, liberal or conservative, as long as he is moving away from the provincial and parochial into an exploration of everything that has been thought, believed, and experienced.

Honors Students: Characteristics, Comparisons and Impacts

"It is known that high mental ability does not necessarily guarantee academic success in college, since some students who are no better than average in aptitude for college work earn academic records that are above average, and since many intellectually superior students have inferior academic records. Such inconsistencies are often related to certain attitudes, problems, habits and activities which influence scholarship." (Brown, 1953)

Damrin (1965) finds that students who "hardly had to study at all" in high school to receive good grades "because of their reputation for brightness" were significantly less successful in college honors than were students who had to work hard for their grades. Also students who had participated in an honors program in high school and who later were unsuccessful in college honors found their high school honors work easier than their regular course work and often received higher grades in honors than in nonhonors classes.

Robertson (1966) points out that bright and able students experience the same anxieties, social triumphs and failures, problems of choice and meeting deadlines, self-questioning as do all other students in search of "personal identity and a useful place in the sun". Honor students just entering college have often felt uncertain about their intellectual abilities and have felt inferior both academically and socially as they noticed a dramatic difference between the high school and college atmosphere. To provide both "reassurance" and "escape" freshman honors often felt the need for intensive study.

Brown (1953), in a comparison of Honors Students and Probation Students having similar intelligence quotients, found the following:

1. "Honor students enjoyed study activities more than the probation students."
2. The transition from high school to college was more difficult for probation students than for honors students.
3. When settling down to study honors students more often than probation students planned how much work to accomplish.
4. Honors students proved more successful at:
outlining and notetaking; remembering what they read; picking out the important points in an assignment.

5. Probation students were less efficient in their use of time and planning than honors students.

Brown points out that I.Q. alone cannot be used to predict student success or failure in college.

In a study by Ellis, Parelius and Parelius (1971) a relationship was found between an undergraduate's college experiences and the subculture which that student identifies and affiliates. The study, conducted on the University of Oregon campus, divided the campus into four subcultures:

1. Collegiate scholar subculture - students belonging to both a fraternity and the Honors College.
2. Honors Student Subculture - those affiliated with the Honors College alone.
3. Fraternity Students - those affiliated with fraternity system alone.
4. Independents - those students unaffiliated with both the Honors College and the fraternity system.

The findings of this study show that the honors student group participate less in campus social activities than any other group. Also, honors students seem to show less interest in occupational goals and the post-college years. Honors students do rank highest scholastically. However, the study found that percentage-wise more collegiate scholars graduated than did honors students and that the collegiate scholar showed a stronger commitment to the student role emphasizing a well-rounded undergraduate experience.

The Collegiate Scholar was characterized as coming from an upper middle class Protestant family whose parents had most likely graduated from or attended a four year college.

Robertson (1966) finds that though honors students come from a variety of cultural and economic backgrounds, which directly affect a student's college experience according to Lehman and Nelson's study. They all seem to reveal similarities in the "misgivings, self-questionings, frustration, triumphs, and discoveries that chart the way toward personal and intellectual maturity". According to Robertson, honors students " 'yearn' for more free time to browse, to reflect, to explore inviting byways, to be alone," rather than fill up their time with socializing, partying, committee work, and student politicking, though these activities were not always neglected.

A study by Gatzke (1970) comparing personality traits of female honors and nonhonors students shows that nonhonors students had a higher concentration on social life while in a study by Gottsdanker, cited by Gatzke, "able students scored higher on scales showing preference for independence, intellectual commitment and abstract ideas". In relation, Baker (1966) finds that there were differences in the way freshman honors students and freshman nonhonors students viewed the university environment. Honor students tended

to perceive the University environment as pressing for greater strength on aspiration level, student dignity, self-expression, group life, and play-work as measured by Stern's College Characteristics Index.

Kell and Kennedy (1966), in a study examining attitude changes in Honors and Nonhonors female students between their freshman and junior years find the following:

1. As freshmen, honors students placed more value on the "uniquely personal aspects of human experience" than did freshmen nonhonors students.
2. As freshmen, honors students were less concerned with social and group pressures "to get what they wanted" and "placed less value on economic security."
3. As juniors "attitudinal differences no longer held" between the honors and nonhonors students.

In a study examining the personality attributes of gifted college students, Warren and Heist (1960) use the following to characterize honors students:

1. A strong disposition toward intellectual activity.
 - a. Liking reflective and abstract thought.
 - b. "Interest in ideas and conceptualization".
 - c. "A rational, cognitive approach to reality".
 - d. "A positive, functional approach to scholarly pursuits".

2. A stronger esthetic orientation with the majority of them reacting "preferentially to the artistic rather than to the utilitarian components in their environment".
3. "Independent, confident and generally mature in their interactions with external world."
4. "Have more complex perceptions and reactions."
5. Less authoritarian and less rigid.
6. "Risk takers in the world of ideas."
7. Most react with "greater originality, imagination and resourcefulness to the stimulation they receive".
8. "Intellectually imaginative, critical, somewhat rebellious, and free to express themselves."
9. Are not as emotionally expressive or impulsive as the average student.

Capretta, Jones, Siegel and Siegel (1963) in an examination of *noncognitive characteristics of Honors Program* Candidates express that successful honors students are "intellectually oriented toward academic work" and are also flexible thinkers.

Lehmann and Nelson (1960) present some characteristics of freshman honors students in a natural science course at Michigan State University:

1. A large percentage of the honors students were in the top third of their high school graduating class.
2. Generally, honors students come from better socio-economic and educational backgrounds.
3. A large percent of the honors students hoped to obtain more than four years of college training.
4. Honors students did not want to move so rapidly through the course that "thorough mastery was jeopardized".

Day (1982) lists the following characteristics of Honors students at Maricopa Community Colleges:

1. Part-time - Full-time status - 65% of the honors students were enrolled full-time - honors students tended to carry heavier course loads;
2. Sex - 66.5% females and 33.5% males:
3. Age - 53% of the honors students were 24 and younger (33% were 19 and younger); 47% were 25 and older (6% were 50 and older).
4. Ethnic Background - American Indian, Oriental, Black, Hispanic, White, and others who chose not to answer the ethnic background question.
5. Admission Status - College Transfer, High School Graduate, G.E.D., Able and Ambitious, Maturity, and Others not coded.

6. Curriculum - 50% of the honors students were interested in transfer credit; about 28.4% were interested in an occupational program and 21.6% were interested in general curriculum. Honors students showed a wide variety of interests including:
Accounting, Automotive, Technology, Data Processing, Electronics, Technology, Food Service Administration, Legal Assistant, Medical Technology, Music, Psychology, Social Work, etc.

By deciding to participate in an honors program a student places himself in a position where he is expected "to perform like the academically oriented student" (Baur, 1969). These expectations come from advisors, professors and fellow students. For those honors students who have chosen an academic orientation, the honors program has become a commitment where among other things good friends are made. However, Baur suggests that not all students in honors programs are happy to be there. Often there are honors students who express a collegiate orientation, holding an unfavorable image of honors students and therefore, avoiding friendships with them. These students tend to feel strained by all the expectations placed on them. Baur does state that most honors students liked the honors class sections better than the regular classes because "they learned more, the quality of the teaching was higher... there was more freedom

to pursue individual interests." While special honors sections are nice for honors students, Brumbaugh (1933) points out from another study that "segregation of superior students gave them an advantage but that other sections were 'loggy', due to the absence of the superior students".

Adams and Blood (1965) in a study to determine the creative potential in honors students suggest "there is some evidence that the individual with creative ability is overlooked and sometimes even penalized when people are appraised on the basis of their I.Q.s. Bednar and Parker (1965) in their study of the creative development of exceptional college students find that creativity shares no significant relationship with enrollment in an honors program. Lovelace (1963) notes from MacKinnon the characteristics of creative persons.

1. Independence of judgment.
2. Originality.
3. Perceptiveness and curiosity.
4. Intuitiveness.
5. Theoretical and aesthetic interest.

Lovelace suggests that a student with these characteristics is going to think and behave differently than the average student. Alan and Blood (1965) found that there was support to the idea that honors students are more creative than their peers.

Honors Student Views and Voices of Experience

Lovell (1959) suggests that the most rugged test of a college Honors program is student attitudes towards that program. At an Inter-university Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS) Southern Invitational Conference held at the University of Louisville in Kentucky a session was devoted to a panel of eight university Honors Students from different universities around the country. The students analyzed the strengths and weaknesses of Honors programs and Lovell notes the following:

Strengths

1. Selected and stimulating teachers.
2. Well-directed courses.
3. Activities which placed regular educational work sharper perspective.
4. Freedom for independent study.
5. Inspiring associates among fellow students.
6. Small classes.
7. Superior counseling.
8. The opportunity to meet and talk with distinguished visitors to campus.
9. Discovering and developing latent talents.

Weaknesses

1. Unsolved individual problems.
2. Unsound basic educational philosophy.

3. Limited fields of interests.
4. Insufficient challenge in many courses.
5. Lack of enthusiasm by some departments.
6. Badly balanced programs.
7. Excessively tight curriculum control.

McKeoun (1959), an undergraduate at Arizona State College, suggests three advantages in having an Honors program:

1. More indepth learning occurs which is not found in an ordinary classroom situation.
2. The boredom caused by unnatural compartmentalization is eliminated.
3. "Intellectually oriented people stimulate one another."

At an ICSS Western Invitational Conference held at the University of California in Berkeley, April 10-13, 1960, a panel of nine students from universities around the country expressed the benefits they received from participating in Honors Programs (The Superior Student, September 1960):

1. The opportunity to work directly with enthusiastic and exciting teachers such as: those who came across as liking teaching, students and their subject; and those who were teaching outside of their specialities and worked with the students in search of knowledge.

2. More contact with able, intelligent and creative students, made possible by smaller class sizes.
3. Broader intellectual horizons based on the interdisciplinary character of honors courses.
4. "Relief from ordinary routines and requirements."
5. "The sense of being treated like professional scholars by instructors."
6. Continuously being challenged by both teachers and students to work to full potential.
7. "The rigorous examination of assumptions and generally held values."

Moving in a somewhat different direction Garner (1970) explains that a large percentage of honors students and other highly talented students are finding their particular academic settings are failing to provide a "complete educational process necessary for one to live in the 'real' world". Rainsford (1970) also expresses that "honors students are increasingly to be found among those beating the new drum beat of student discontent". Bright students find that many faculty members are more concerned with teaching their subject rather than teaching their students. Robertson (1966) finds that honors students praise the personal impact of dedicated, able teachers who express a sincere interest in both material and students, and who express a real love for their field

which motivates the students to express "some real, original, creative effort of their own". Rainsford (1970) quotes Joseph Katz who wrote:

The adolescent likes to work with great ideas, comprehensive in scope, and his ideas are closely related to his own emotions, confusions, and gropings. He likes to use ideas as a guide out of his confusion and as a way to sever ideationally what he cannot yet experience emotionally, sensually, or in relations with other people. But the professor is aghast at the inaccuracies, grandiosities, and vaguenesses, confusions, and emotionalities of the student's ideational production. He wishes to clamp down almost immediately and give the student a sense of what cool, detached, accurate scientific investigation is like, whether in history, literary criticism, or in physics. The student can conform, if he must, because his previous training has already taught him what the coin of the realm is. But it is not what he likes to do...

Robertson (1966) notes that most Honors students consider the system of grades as unimportant. One student expressed that grades and intelligence are more often unrelated than they are related. It was expressed by another honors student that, it really doesn't matter what grade the teacher assigns you. What matters more, the student further suggested, was that you decided what would be gained from the course, and that then upon completion of that course you knew what had been gained, regardless of the grade.

Another concern of students is the irrelevance of some curriculum which is "overwhelmingly professional or preprofessional" and is often "packaged in unrelated air tight compartments (known as disciplines)" (Rainsford, 1970). Honors students want to be participants in the learning

process, the evaluation process, the decision making process, and the governing process. They feel that "a relevant education answers not only the human, political, and economic needs of society, but also the personal, psychological, and spiritual needs of each individual student and teacher." Change, however, comes to many systems like "a pearl develops in an oyster--only out of sheer irritation".

But it is a change which Carleton (1948) calls for in a speech delivered at a dinner in honor of "A" students at the University of Florida. Carleton expresses a point made by President Compton of Massachusetts Institute of Technology who suggested that "We in America are long on putting into practice the theoretical discoveries of others but short on making those discoveries ourselves." Carleton then expresses that "it is high time we became mature in our educational institutions and ceased being ashamed of using our intellects creatively in pure science, in philosophy, and in the arts.

While Carleton expresses a strong view of the academic situation, he does so to arouse students to their potentials as creative human beings. Lovell (1959) points out "that the talented undergraduate is ready, willing and able to be challenged to the utmost; that he will not be moved by mere rumblings and fustian and frantic calls upon him to do his best; and that he will respond to and cooperate with bold and imaginative teachers and programs that both inspire and set him upon a course of rigorous intellectual self-activity."

Chapter 3

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The research cited in this study has provided a unique blend of many areas which can help to characterize an honors student. By looking at honors programs, selection processes and honors student characteristics it has been found that both the students and the programs vary tremendously.

Honors programs suggest that the impact of honors students on campus can be a valuable one in presenting the institution as being a place where scholarship is encouraged. Students participating in honors programs can serve as important examples for nonhonors students, by the time they spend studying and the joy they find there. Honors programs vary in the amount of services and programs they offer their students and these services tend to be similar to that offered to the campus as a whole, including: counseling, seminars, research projects, individual instruction, special courses, etc. All honors programs seem to provide for "breadth" and "depth" while further seeking to show the relationship of areas to each other. Students can come away from the program with as "broad" or as "penetrating" learning experience as they wish. But whatever the case, honors programs seek to challenge the student, to tap into their intellectual capacity, and provide a learning experience which best focuses in on

the individual students' needs. The concern for the student is clearly seen through the various program offerings and through the attempt to challenge and enhance student abilities. These student needs are not met by a single type honors program, but by the many various honors programs which are designed with the institution and the student in mind.

There are as many honors selection processes as there are honors programs. These student selection processes are constantly being evaluated to check for the use of invalid criteria and to seek out new and better means for identifying the honors student. Depending on the program students are evaluated and selected based on a combination of the following criteria: high school grades; ACT and/or SAT; high school recommendations; interview; letter of applications; various other state and institutional tests; college grade point range; faculty recommendation; and a variety of other criteria. To provide for a strong selection process it is emphasized that no one criteria should be used alone to determine whether a student is admitted or not. A variety of criteria should be used to bring out the most information on a student, as possible. Students often have characteristics which may or may not be appropriate in an honors program and which often are not picked up by a single piece of admissions criteria. By using a variety of criteria which measure not only academic ability but also interests, motivation levels, physical

well-being, among others, the student as a whole can better be evaluated and a more appropriate determination of where the student should be placed can be made. Also, students admitted to honors programs should be continually reviewed and evaluated to determine a student's progress and changing needs.

Just as with honors programs and their selection process, research also shows a variety of honors student characteristics. If there is a common theme among honors student characteristics it would seem to be, a strong disposition toward intellectual activity. Other characteristics expressed by research suggest that honors students are curious, and searching, seeking to challenge themselves and express their thoughts. Research seems to show that there are no specific background characteristics that stand out for the majority of honors students. While most succeeded very well in high school this often failed to be a valid determiner of college success. Honors students have fears and concerns like any other student, and it is suggested that these students are often more critical and demanding of themselves, thereby compounding fears and concerns they may have. One common characteristic of many honors students on the college campus is the minimal social life they seek. Research suggests that, while these students do not totally neglect social functions they often prefer

to be alone, to think, to browse, to consider. Also, a student's potential success in college is often not based on I.Q. but on the habits and discipline which that student has developed. Many students not considered to be highly brilliant academically have passed through an honors program successfully because of the discipline and habits they had developed, so, in a sense have proved themselves to be brilliant academically.

Honors students speak very openly about the strengths and weaknesses they see in honors programs. They suggest a deep love for the instructor who proves stimulating because of the love he expresses in teaching. Students seek to be free to explore, to discuss and to independently seek out their interests and express that many honors programs provide for this opportunity. Also, many suggest that constantly associating with other honors students is stimulating and provides another avenue for growth. There are, however, those programs which fail to meet the needs and desires of many honors students. In some cases, students tend to feel boxed in by the demands of a specific program which allows for little individual expression and learning. These students, though independent in nature, place a heavy value on the instructor in determining the success of a program. They demand that an instructor capture their imagination, that he provide "threatening" experiences for them intellectually

to spark their thinking. Students wish to work directly with the instructor to explore, discuss and research various topics of interest. These students seek avenues of learning, and the instructor acts as one of these avenues.

There is a concern by both students and others, that education is not tapping into the students' creative potential. Some feel that too much effort is spent going through the motions in basics of educational thought without exploring individual imagination, and creativity. It has been suggested that we spend too much of our energy on that which has already been developed, never seeking to expand until someone else expands. Students need to be encouraged to explore and express their individual creativity, to develop new ideas, to risk finding new discoveries. Honors students express openly that they are ready, willing and able to bring out those creative juices and to explore and learn in ways which will inspire the desire to be educated.

Conclusions

The following conclusions have been gathered from this study, based on the facts and research findings given and the many thoughts which these facts and research have inspired:

1. Honors students are not concerned with just getting a job and then sitting back for the ride; they wish to "shape their world" by being a creative part of it.

2. Honors students come from no specific economic background but are shaped by that background bringing to higher education their own uniqueness.
3. Honors students are not characterized solely by specific I.Q. levels, high school accomplishments, etc., but bring to higher education a discipline and desire to investigate and learn.
4. Honors students do not thrive on comfort, but seek to be threatened in an intellectual manner, to spark their creative juices.
5. Honors programs need to be flexible to adjust to the individual needs of the student.
6. Honors students' respect for the inspiring instructor comes from the fact the instructor provides a stimulating avenue of learning for them.
7. Selection of honors students should not be based on a fixed set of criteria. The selection process should be flexible to make room for the discovery of those potential honors students who otherwise may not have been considered.
8. The review and evaluation of honors programs, students and the selection process need to be an on-going event.

9. Honors programs and their effective potential in higher education as a whole needs to be evaluated. There can be many educational factors of an honors program which, in turn, could prove effective for all students.
10. Because of the wide range of characteristics an honors student possesses, a factor in those not considered honors students may be "motivation".
11. Education needs to tap into the creative interests of all students to promote a new level of motivation in students.
12. The "outcries" of students to have an education which not only teaches them a new skill(s) but also stresses relations with society and their own uniqueness are not just a passing phase. They are a real need to find some significance in this learning which soon must face the "real" world.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the conclusions gathered from this study:

1. Higher education should continually evaluate and review its purposes in educating students and through this evaluation develop methods to meet the needs of those who wish to "shape their world".

2. Education should never be limited to only those who can pay the financial costs, but should be open to students of varying backgrounds who bring higher education a uniqueness never to be found without them, whether as honors students or nonhonors students.
3. In evaluating the potential honors student, "discipline and the desire to investigate and learn" should count more towards their acceptance than I.Q. level or high school GPA.
4. Honors programs need to provide intellectually threatening seminars where students of high ability can be shaken and stirred, as they desire.
5. Honors programs need to provide a flexible atmosphere geared to meet the needs of the individual student.
6. The evaluation of instructors, by themselves, by their peers and by the students needs to be on-going, to provide feedback needed for continued effectiveness.
7. The evaluation criteria for selecting honors students should contain items measuring and gathering as much information as possible to promote a solid selection process.

8. Evaluation of all aspects of "honors" needs to be on-going.
9. Effective honors programs need to be considered for higher education as a whole. It makes no sense to provide improved education for honors students while the rest of the educational community follows traditions not considered worthy for honors students.
10. Evaluate ways to bring out student motivation which plays, what could be considered, the biggest role in a student's academic success.
11. Provide opportunities for each student to express their creative mind to promote a new level of motivation.
12. Consider new and old ways of making education a time of personal and social growth geared to help students face the "real" world, creatively in their field. Provide for experiences which bring together various disciplines to show their relation to each other.

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