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## Characteristics of the 21st-Century Honors College

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## CHAPTER TWO

# Characteristics of the 21st-Century Honors College

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As the Swarthmore College Honors Program, the first of its kind, has just celebrated the 100th anniversary of its 1922 founding, the national honors community has had occasion to pause and reflect on the growth and evolution of honors in this last century (Rinehart). One piece of this evolution is the growing distinction between the honors program and the honors college. Despite the label of “honors college” having been documented as far back as 1960 (Cohen), the trend of converting existing honors programs to honors colleges and drawing programmatic distinctions between the two began to truly take root approximately 30 years ago. We can find evidence of these discussions in *The National Honors Report* and at national conferences of the NCHC throughout the 1990s and early 2000s (Madden; Sederberg, Introduction).

In 2005, Peter C. Sederberg documented the trend of the growing number of honors colleges throughout the United States. Sederberg theorized that the trend or “phenomenon” of an increase in honors colleges could be attributed to “an interest in raising the public profile of honors education at a particular institution” (“Characteristics” 121). Furthermore, he offered an analysis of the contemporary characteristics based on a survey of those he and his team identified. Sederberg’s work made a significant and lasting contribution to honors literature because it not only documented the early evolution of honors colleges but further defined the characteristics that would come to be seen as making an honors college distinct from an honors program.

Sederberg’s work documented the interest that NCHC’s executive committee began to take in the “honors college phenomenon” as well, and through his publication, we first see the expectation that the name “honors college” should carry with it something more substantive than that of an honors program. He states: “If an institution is simply gilding the name, then ‘honors college’ becomes a devalued misnomer designed as a marketing strategy and intended to mislead potential applicants into believing that something new exists where, in fact, substance remains unchanged” (“Characteristics” 121). Cheryl Achterberg—another key voice in early conversations around definitional specificity—stated that “honors colleges should make a distinctive qualitative difference in the life of a university as well as a difference in the entry statistics for each freshman class” (94). Along with Achterberg’s 2004 essay, Sederberg’s work was significant because it not only began to draw distinctions between the nature of honors programs and colleges as “a particular subset of the larger species,” but further set an expectation that these distinctions should be present. It is that subspecies of honors education, the “honors college,” that this volume seeks to explore (“Characteristics” 122).

## THE ROLE OF THE NCHC BASIC CHARACTERISTICS

Fueled by the formation of the National Collegiate Honors Council in 1966, the last half of the twentieth century ushered in waves of new honors programs serving students at institutions around the country (Rinehart; Austin; Byrne). By the early 1990s, the honors

community found itself with a great deal of variety among the programs in both mission and structure. With this level of diversity from one program to the next, it became apparent to NCHC and the honors community that more descriptors of what constituted a “fully developed” honors program were needed. In 1993, using characteristics endorsed originally by the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student in 1961, the Executive Committee of the National Collegiate Honors Council successfully approved a document consisting of “Sixteen Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program,” revised in 2007 to include 17 characteristics (“Basic . . . Program”; Chaszar; Cohen; Cummings). Sederberg’s 2004 study focusing on existing characteristics of NCHC institutional members bearing the name “Honors College” subsequently prompted the NCHC’s creation of the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” (“Basic . . . College”).

Although labeled as “characteristics,” these documents played a role in shaping the nature of honors programs by creating language that guided the creation and further development of honors programs and colleges nationally. Despite their limitations, the Basic Characteristics were influential because no other formal guide to honors education existed. Although not necessarily the intention of the Executive Committee at the time, delineating the core differences between an honors program and an honors college gave honors administrators a roadmap to choose one of the two models. An even greater number of institutions looked at the characteristics as something that could challenge them to grow and/or evolve. While there is no evidence of whether honors colleges were significantly different when the label first began to appear, evidence from the 2016 Census of U.S. Honors Programs and Colleges suggests there is now a demonstrable difference nationally between the shape and structure of honors programs and honors colleges (Scott et al.).

## **RESEARCH ON THE SHAPE AND STRUCTURE OF HONORS NATIONALLY**

Over the last ten years, Richard I. Scott, Patricia J. Smith, and Andrew J. Cognard-Black, among others, have produced a series

of articles examining the extent to which honors education is being delivered at institutions of higher education, the nature and characteristics of these honors programs and colleges, and the differences across programs based on institutional characteristics (Scott; Scott and Smith; Smith and Scott, "Demography"; Scott et al.; Cognard-Black et al.; Cognard-Black and Savage). Scott examined infrastructural and programmatic differences between honors colleges and programs, as well as among programs, and between those at two-year and four-year institutions. Scott and Smith delved deeply into functions of institutional mission and control for both honors programs and colleges. Smith and Scott then mapped the location and regional affiliation of all honors programs and colleges in the United States ("Demography"). Each of these articles identified inter-institutional relationships and therefore provided an understanding of systemic variation in honors education as well as a more refined look at the nature of honors colleges compared to that of honors programs.

Through this collection of articles, clear patterns were identified among honors types in NCHC. The 2012–2013 NCHC membership survey demonstrated that the characteristics of honors programs and colleges varied widely by institutional type and by program type, but that within institutional and program type, there were more commonalities than differences (Scott). Additionally, for the first time, the honors college could be seen as distinct from its four-year and two-year honors program counterparts. The honors college model was found to have markedly more complex infrastructure and greater resources (Scott). Another evolutionary characteristic that resulted from further study of the honors college model was that many more honors colleges are located at public universities than private ones (Cognard-Black and Savage; Scott and Smith). "There are," according to Cognard-Black and Savage, "only four honors colleges at private institutions of 4,000+, and among the 92 schools over 10,000 in size there are no (zero) private schools with an honors college . . ." (101). This was a notable discovery about the nature of honors colleges because in the history of honors program evolution, institutional control (public vs. private) has not formerly separated

honors programs, with nearly equal percentages of public and private institutions having honors programs.

Beyond institutional control, Scott and Smith determined that the distribution of honors programs and colleges also varies by institutional type, with many more honors colleges in Doctoral Universities compared to Comprehensive/Master's Universities, Baccalaureate Colleges, or Associate's Colleges. The 2014 NCHC Admission, Retention, and Completion (ARC) Survey showed that honors colleges, on average, serve 2.5 times as many students as the typical honors program and report greater support structures such as honors tutors, honors ambassadors, honors study abroad offerings, honors housing, honors-specific advising, and priority course registration for honors students (Cognard-Black et al.). The 2016 Census of U.S. Honors Programs and Colleges revealed that four-year institutions with honors colleges enroll twice as many total undergraduate students as those institutions with honors programs. Furthermore, the number of honors students being served by these honors colleges is nearly three times as many as their honors program counterparts (Scott et al.). It was again affirmed that honors colleges exist primarily in public institutions (89%), whereas the honors program model is the dominant model for private institutions (53%). The results of the 2016 Census also included data about the title for the head of honors; these data showed that the dean position is the most common title for the chief honors academic officer (Scott et al.). The continued growth in the number of honors colleges—some new to honors education and some having converted from an honors program to an honors college in recent years—raises questions about the degree to which these earlier findings continue to accurately describe honors colleges nationally, and what other characteristics might be emerging.

## **2021 CENSUS OF U.S. HONORS COLLEGES**

The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges was administered to the primary contact person of all honors colleges. The foundation of the distribution list for the survey came from the National Collegiate Honors Council list of member institutions that had

previously indicated the presence of an honors college. That list was further built using a web-crawl of all institutions of higher education registered in the National Center for Education Statistics Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) database to correct contact information and identify additional honors colleges at institutions not in the NCHC membership database.

Questions included in the Census survey can be found in Appendix B. The survey was launched May 12, 2021. The Qualtrics survey platform was used to conduct the survey online, and email invitations were the primary medium for invitation. To minimize loss of respondents to spam filters and missed emails, a postcard informing respondents of the survey launch was sent to respondents to coincide with the launch date. (See Appendix C.) Three reminder email notices were sent on June 15th, July 15th, and August 9th. Between the penultimate and final reminders, approximately 126 respondents with incomplete surveys were contacted by phone to verify that the invitations had been received and to remind them to complete the survey. Most of those calls (84%) resulted in voicemail messages left according to a script that briefly described the survey, reminded respondents about the deadline, and invited respondents to contact one of the survey project leaders if they had questions or required a new survey link. Of the 126, 17 calls resulted in direct voice-to-voice contact. Five of those said they didn't remember receiving the email, prompting verification of email addresses, a few of which were updated and generated new email invitations. Thirteen of the 17 said they intended to complete the survey. The survey was officially closed on August 16th. Of the 248 eligible institutions at which honors colleges were identified, 166 completed the survey, for an overall response rate of almost 70%, a rate which is considered very good among survey researchers.

Detailed descriptive statistics for the survey are presented in Appendix A. The response rate varied across Carnegie classification of institutions with honors colleges at Associate's Degree and Baccalaureate Colleges (31% and 42%, respectively) pulling down the overall average response rate. Response at Research Universities was considerably higher, with what would be regarded as very high

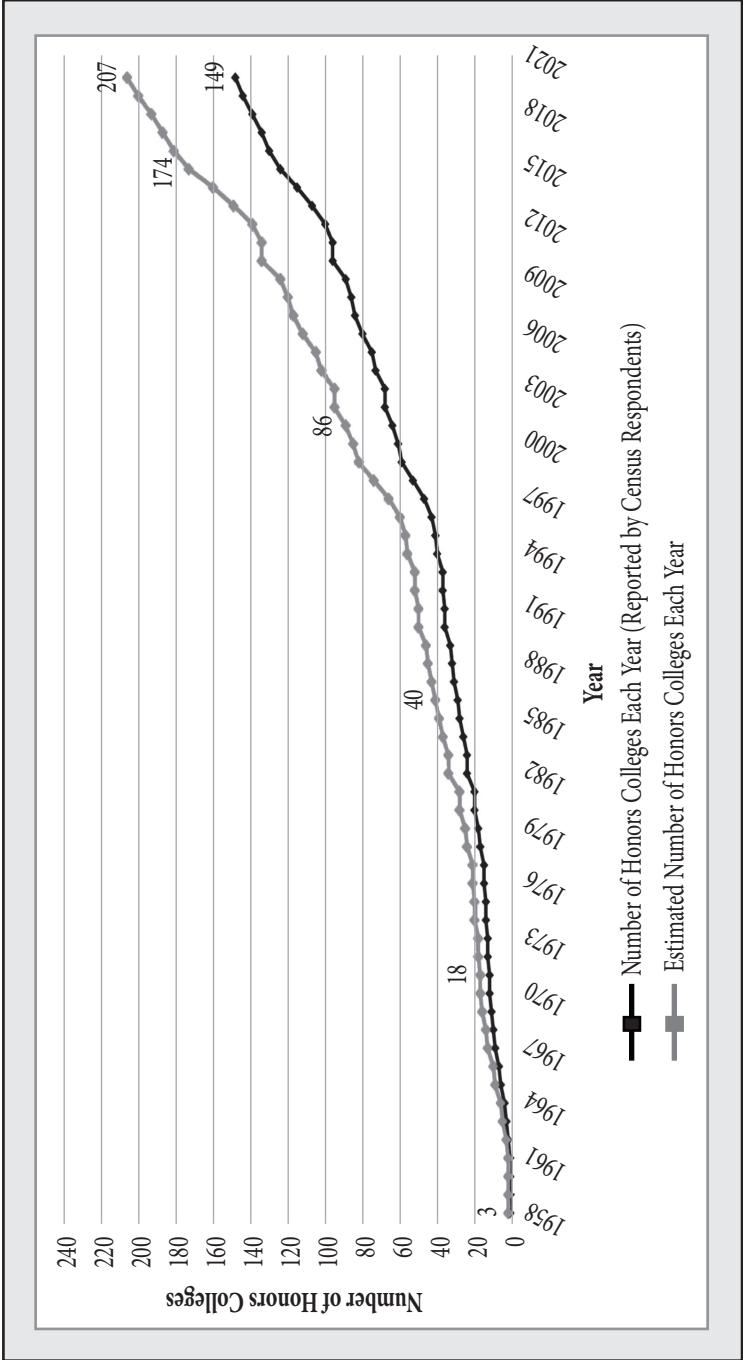
response rates of 80% for Research 1 and 75.3% for Research 2 and 3 universities (for simplicity, we use the more traditional R1, R2, and R3 designations as shorthand for the “very high research activity,” “high research activity,” and other “doctoral university” language adopted more recently). Response rates at Master’s Universities were slightly lower than the overall average, with 65%, but that level of response and respondent engagement for Master’s Universities is still considered quite high. As readers will note in the summary statistics that follow, honors college structure is comparatively rare at Baccalaureate and Associate’s Colleges. Lower response rates among Baccalaureate and Associate’s Colleges combined with the smaller number of those honors colleges mean that there are not many liberal arts colleges or two-year degree colleges in the Census survey data. What data are available suggest that honors colleges at Baccalaureate and Associate’s Colleges are very different from those at universities, but readers should interpret numbers for Baccalaureate and Associate’s Colleges with considerable caution. Sample sizes for Research 1 (R1), Research 2 and 3 (R2/3), and Master’s Universities are, however, sufficient for useful comparisons. While the summary statistics presented here are based on only those honors colleges responding to the survey, we believe the results to be a fair representation of honors colleges nationally when it comes to those at national and regional universities.

## **RECENT INCREASES IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF HONORS COLLEGES**

Existing honors literature has offered only a snapshot of the number of honors colleges in existence at a given time, and as a result we have not always had an accurate picture of the exponential growth of honors colleges. The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges allowed a closer look at the projected timeline by asking honors college respondents, “In what year was your honors college founded?” Figure 1 begins to paint a fuller picture of the pace of growth that honors colleges have experienced at Research and Master’s Universities.



**FIGURE 1. GROWTH IN THE FORMATION OF HONORS COLLEGES—ESTIMATED NUMBER OF HONORS COLLEGES AT RESEARCH AND MASTER’S UNIVERSITIES IN THE UNITED STATES BY YEAR**



*Source:* 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges (n = 149)

*Note:* Estimates were derived from a Census question asking respondents, “In what year was your honors college founded?” These numbers, however, are known to be an undercount because they are based on only those who responded to the survey. To arrive at a more accurate count of the actual number of honors colleges in existence in a given year, estimates were derived by multiplying the number for a given year by the ratio of known honors colleges in 2021 (207) to the number that responded in the Census in 2021 (n = 149), a factor of 1.389. This approach assumes the same degree of undercount across the time series from 1958 to 2021, but the actual number should not be less than reported in the survey, and the gray line is a reasonable estimate that should be closer to the real numbers than the counts derived from Census data alone.

The estimated growth documented in Figure 1 is consistent with the snapshots we have from existing honors literature. In 1994, Madden documented at least 24 identified honors colleges, whereas a decade later, Sederberg had identified 68 (“Characteristics” 121). By 2007, Scott and Frana found the NCHC list of institutional members calling themselves honors colleges had grown to 92, but it was unknown how many non-member honors colleges had formed by that date. NCHC’s survey of institutional members in 2012 identified 140 honors colleges (Scott), and by 2016, Scott and Smith documented 182 honors colleges, nearly double what had been identified eight years earlier. Furthermore, the 182 honors colleges identified in 2016 then accounted for more than 12% of all the honors programs or colleges nationally at that time. In each case, honors colleges have continued to grow in number but, based on the estimated growth, have likely been underrepresented in the surveys that have sought to describe their traits and characteristics. This is especially true for non-NCHC member honors colleges, which have been harder to identify because of the relative absence from national conversations about honors education.

Sederberg’s 2004 survey no doubt included many of the original honors colleges among its participants, but even from among that first core group, he pointed out that 60% had “been established since 1993 and 80 percent grew out of a preexisting honors program” (“Characteristics” 125). In 2021, we now see that 89.1% of honors colleges reported emerging from a previously existing honors program. In 2008, Cobane wrote: “By 2025, we can expect that most university honors experiences will be within honors colleges” (25). While more honors programs are adopting the honors college model with each passing year, honors colleges are not yet the predominant honors structure. Because honors colleges tend to serve a greater number of students than the traditional honors program, as the 2016 Census of U.S. Honors Programs and Colleges showed, there may not need to be a majority honors college structure for the majority of student honors experiences to take place within the honors college structure (Scott et al.). We could also modify Cobane’s prediction by saying that most university honors experiences will be within honors colleges at public universities rather than private

ones. Of the honors colleges at Research and Master’s Universities responding to the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges, only about one in eight are at private institutions (honors colleges at private R1 Universities are even rarer). That’s in a nation where, according to data from the U.S. Department of Education, over half of Research and Master’s Universities are private, so it is quite clear that honors education is primarily a phenomenon within public higher education.

Among the 163 respondents to the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges that reported total enrollment, they averaged 987.8 honors students each. The size, or mean enrollment, of the honors college varies by institutional type, with R1 Universities averaging 2,093.5 students, R2/3 Universities averaging 720.7, and Master’s Universities averaging 450.9. In regards to the total population of students being served within each institutional type, R1 Universities, with their historically larger campus enrollments, still serve the greatest percentage of honors students within the institution—10% compared to 6% and 7% at all other institutional types. These larger enrollments within R1 Universities are supported by their large incoming first-year class sizes, which averaged 571.2 across this institutional type, compared to other institutional types all averaging below 200 students.

### **INSTITUTIONAL SIZE AND STRUCTURE OF HONORS COLLEGES**

Sederberg was among the first to categorize the organizational structures that honors colleges were beginning to take. Sederberg identified two major structural types, the “centralized overlay structure” and the “freestanding college” in his 2004 survey (“Characteristics” Rpt. 28). The same language was used in the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges. While Sederberg did not define these categories, we understand the “centralized overlay structure” as referring to a central honors administration that coordinates honors curriculum and programming that is delivered through other entities of the institution. An example of this might include a dean with a central administrative staff overseeing a collection of honors programs or courses offered within other academic

colleges. In contrast, the free-standing structure allows for oversight of all aspects of its curriculum and program delivery under direct supervision. According to Sederberg, “freestanding” honors colleges were also more likely to “possess a significant faculty budget, and their own faculty will provide most of their courses” (“Characteristics” Rpt. 32).

Although that first survey included only 35 respondents (he reported a 54% response rate from among the 65 colleges he contacted), it is interesting to compare the findings of this survey done almost two decades ago to the organizational structure that honors colleges reported in 2021. In 2004, 68.6% of honors colleges reported a “centralized overlay structure” of university undergraduate programs compared to 58.2% of honors colleges today. The centralized overlay of university undergraduate programs remains the most common relationship for the honors college to take with the larger institution. The percent of honors colleges reporting a free-standing college structure, however, has grown dramatically, increasing threefold, from only 14.3% in 2004 to 45.6% in 2021 (Sederberg, “Characteristics” Rpt. 28). The growth in the number and percentage of free-standing colleges with independent curriculums represents the biggest change in this area, and will be discussed in more detail below. In 2004, 5.7% reported having a decentralized coordinating structure providing an honors core overseeing departmentalized honors (Sederberg, “Characteristics” Rpt. 28). The prevalence of this structure remains a rare form, with 8.9% reporting the same type of structure in 2021. While we do not have data on the 11.4% of honors colleges that indicated an organizational structure of “other” in 2004, a closer examination of the 2021 Census reveals numerous honors colleges now comprise a free-standing college with an independent curriculum as well as a centralized overlay structure. This overlap of institutional relationship may represent an intentional design, but it may also reflect temporary transitional arrangements as honors colleges emerge from the structures of their former honors program model.

The title and institutional location of honors college leaders is another area in which we can now compare the evolution of honors

over the last two decades, and the evidence shows that the most common arrangement is to have an honors head with the title of dean, who is working on a 12-month contract and who reports directly to the provost/vice-president for academic affairs. In 2004, Sederberg found that 77.1% of honors colleges had an administrative head with the title of dean. In 2021, this rate appears to be a little lower overall, with a rate of 67.1%, but the apparent difference is likely because of the presence in the 2021 Census of more Master's Universities, Associate's Colleges, and Baccalaureate Colleges, where it is less common for honors heads to have the title of dean. When looking at Research Universities, we found that the prevalence of honors deans is more in line with what Sederberg found; dean titles among honors heads are most common among R1 universities (86.1%) and R2/3 universities (67.2%). Placing deans in charge of honors colleges at Master's Universities is somewhat rarer (58.5%), but even so, the title of dean is still clearly the most common option for honors colleges at national and regional universities in the United States. The second most common titular option for honors heads is the title "director," and that option is fairly typical at Master's Universities, although placing directors as the chief academic leaders of honors colleges is less common, with only one in four having that title.

Consistent with the prevalence of honors deanships and the standard location of deans within university hierarchies, 73.5% of all honors college administrators report to the Provost/Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and this rate is again highest at the R1 (83.7%), R2/3 (72.7%), and Master's Universities (73.2%). By contrast, only 50% of honors heads at Baccalaureate colleges and 37.5% of those at Associate's Colleges report to the provost/VPAA. Most honors colleges report having both a faculty oversight committee (67.5%) and a student honors council (62.4%). Fewer than half report having an external advisory board (44.6%), but this type of board is much more common at R1 Universities, where 70% report such a governance structure.

The prevalence of 12-month contracts among honors heads appears to be high and essentially unchanged between Sederberg's

2004 survey—which showed 82.8% had 12-month contracts—and the 2021 Census. Among honors heads in 2021, 84.0% reported a 12-month contract, with very little variation among universities. A 12-month contractual arrangement would appear to be much rarer among honors college heads at Baccalaureate and Associate's Colleges, although, again, results for those schools should be interpreted with caution.

In terms of the likelihood of housing other kinds of campus programming, Associate's Colleges appear to be the most likely to report oversight of other high-impact practice programs on campus. While the number of Associate's Colleges reporting was less than a third of all eligible participants, which is a small group already, more than half of the respondents (57.1%) reported housing campus-wide undergraduate research and service learning opportunities within their honors college, and more than a quarter (28.6%) reported housing campus-wide teaching and learning initiatives. Other campus-wide programs housed within honors colleges include fellowship advising, which is most commonly cited, especially at R1 (64.3) and R2/3 (52.2%) universities.

Beyond institutional type, the honors college's relationship to the larger institution may also explain some of the variability in administrative title, reporting lines, contract structures, and an area yet to be discussed, tenure for faculty (Table 1). In every case except tenure within honors, the differences in these areas were found to be statistically significant. Title for the honors head varied significantly by free-standing structure, with 81% of free-standing honors colleges having an honors head with the title of dean versus only 62.5% of those schools without free-standing honors colleges. Similarly, 84.1% of free-standing colleges have heads that report to the provost, compared to 70.1% of those without free-standing colleges. Furthermore, 95.2% of free-standing honors college heads have a 12-month contract as compared to only 84.1% of without free-standing honors colleges. Further research is needed to examine the degree to which the relationship of the honors college to the larger institution may influence the arrangement of other structural features within honors.

The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges also included questions tapping into which campus stakeholder initiated organization of honors as a college, and the most common responses were either a president or other upper administration (35.4%) or both upper administration and honors personnel equally (25.6%). With administrative support, the number of honors colleges within the United States continues to grow, but the motivations for introducing new honors colleges or transforming honors programs into colleges have changed very little. Sederberg noted that the top four reasons reported for establishing an honors college were to “recruit stronger students” (100%), “improve overall campus academic quality” (91.4%), “improve the quality of honors educational opportunities” (88.6%), and raise “the profile of honors within the institution” (85.7%). The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges framed the question slightly differently, asking respondents to select their top three reasons for establishing an honors college. Recruiting top students (51.7%), raising visibility of honors on campus (53.7%), promoting innovative curriculum (43.6%), and creating more opportunities for students (42.3%) continued to be the most highly ranked choices from the available options. Recruiting top students appeared to be a somewhat more important motivation among R1 universities than other universities (67.5% vs. 50%), while raising the visibility of honors on campus appeared to be substantially more important among Master’s Universities (75% vs. 40–50%).

**TABLE 1. ORGANIZATIONAL FEATURES BY PRESENCE OF FREE-STANDING COLLEGE STRUCTURE WITH INDEPENDENT CURRICULUM**

	Free-Standing Structure (%) (n = 63)	Not Free- Standing (%) (n = 89)
Honors head has dean title	81.0%*	62.5%
Honors head reports to provost	84.1%*	70.1%
Honors head has 12-month contract	95.2%*	84.1%
Tenure is available for faculty in honors	15.3%	5.8%

\* p ≤ .05 (two-tailed test)

Source: 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges (n = 152)



Despite the small sample size and low participation rates among Associate's Colleges, their top four motivations vary slightly in that while the majority still reported an interest in raising visibility on campus (62.5%), promoting innovative curriculum (62.5%), and creating more opportunities for students (50%), interestingly only 12.5% of Associate's Colleges reported recruiting top students as a primary factor for choosing an honors college structure rather than an honors program structure. The next most common reason reported was to give honors more institutional autonomy (50%), which may lend further evidence for the notion that the motivations for Associate's Colleges to carry the honors college name are different from honors colleges at other types of institutions.

## **ADMISSIONS AND RECRUITMENT**

The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges allowed us to investigate the contemporary admissions and recruitment practices of honors colleges. Across all institutional types, it is typical for honors colleges to have their own dedicated applications (84.8%) and to have control over the decision of which students to admit (93.3%), especially at Master's Universities, where these characteristics appear to be nearly universal. While standardized tests were still being used as a factor for admission by 69.2% of all honors colleges, an emerging trend revealed in the new 2021 Census data is that, compared to the 65% of honors programs and colleges reporting having a "minimum ACT or SAT score for admission to honors" in the 2014–2015 ARC survey, fewer honors colleges (31.9%) now report having a minimum standardized test score (National Collegiate Honors Council, "Percent"). This shift may have some connection to the timing of the survey in 2021, which occurred amidst the COVID crisis, a time when limited standardized testing availability and other issues of access were being called into question (Moody). For those reporting the use of standardized tests to establish a minimum for honors eligibility, the average minimum score was 26 for ACT and 1,202.8 for SAT. Grade point average is also a factor for admission at nearly all (93.7%) honors colleges,

with 54.9% having a minimum weighted GPA requirement averaging 3.56.

Data from the 2021 Census provide some evidence that honors colleges are moving more to holistic admissions practices. In addition to GPA and standardized test scores, 77.4% of honors colleges require an essay, 69.7% consider a record of co-curricular activities, and 51.6% consider the rigor of previous curriculum as some of the factors that inform the decision to admit a student to the honors college. Letters of recommendation (48.4%), other non-academic attributes (47.1%), and short answer responses (44.5%) are also common factors for admission into U.S. honors colleges. An interview for admission is the least common factor (20.6%). Interviews may be more common at Associate's (66.7%) and Baccalaureate Colleges (50%) where the number of students being admitted into a first-year cohort is considerably smaller, but whether interviews are truly more common in such schools is unclear in light of the small numbers of schools responding within those segments of the sample. Only a very small number of honors colleges charge an application fee. This rate is 2.4% for R1 and 2.6% at Master's Universities, but no schools reported a specific honors application fee at the other types of institutions.

Very few institutions have a 100% admission rate into the honors college, but 5.7% of honors colleges do have open admission. Nearly one-quarter of all honors colleges (23.6%) have an acceptance rate for the first-year cohort of 50% or less. Honors colleges boast an impressive yield, however, with 60% of honors colleges reporting 50% or more of admitted students deciding to enroll in the honors college. Yield appears to be considerably less, however, at R1 Universities, where only about half as many honors colleges report comparable yield at the 50% rate or higher. High yield may be particularly true for Associate's Colleges and Baccalaureate Colleges, where most of the institutions responding reported a yield rate of higher than 50%, but the small numbers of respondents in these categories mean that this conclusion should be regarded as provisional. Higher yield at Baccalaureate Colleges may have something to do with scholarship practices at such colleges, given that

66.7% of these honors colleges reported awarding scholarships to 76% or more of their first-year cohort.

Offering honors scholarships appears to be fairly common at honors colleges at larger universities as well, sometimes based on merit alone (39.2% of colleges reporting), but more often based on a combination of merit and need (45.1%). Just over half of honors colleges report offering such honors scholarships to 0–25% of first-year honors admits, but only about one-third of honors colleges at Research and Master's Universities offer scholarships to 76% or more of their incoming first-year cohort. On first glance, the practice of offering honors scholarships to almost all incoming honors students (76–100%) appears to be about half as likely at universities as it is at Baccalaureate Colleges, but, again, the numbers for those smaller colleges should be interpreted with caution.

About one-quarter of honors colleges (25.8%) charged students a participation fee in 2021. Having a fee for participation in the honors college is most common at R1 (36.6%) and R2/3 (25.8%) universities. The average fee varies significantly by institutional type among those reporting such a fee, with the mean annualized fee of \$722 for R1 universities, and a median of \$500. Research 2 & 3 universities, however, have much lower honors college fees, on average (mean = \$185; median = \$150). When present, the fee varies considerably, from as little as \$8 at two different schools to as much as \$3,000 at one (the next highest were \$2,000, \$1,500, and \$1,150, but otherwise fees were less than \$1,000). The percentage of institutions reporting a program fee appears to be up slightly compared with the NCHC 2016 Census of U.S. Honors Programs and Colleges, which reported only 17% of honors colleges charging such a fee. The difference between the 2021 survey and the \$552 mean fee reported in 2016 may suggest a different sample composition weighted disproportionately to R2/3 and Master's Universities in 2016, but future research will be needed before any clear trend can be deduced. It is worth noting that an NCHC task force recently published a position paper focused on inclusive enrollment management practices, and that report specifically referred to exorbitant program and participation fees as “insidious,” suggesting that, even

if offering to waive such fees, an institution is sending “a message that honors is a community that is most welcoming to those with discretionary income, a place set off from the general university community” (National Collegiate Honors Council, *Honors Enrollment Management* 12).

## **CURRICULUM AND PROGRAMMING**

We have known that honors-specific courses and senior thesis/capstone projects have been common within honors colleges since Sederberg’s survey of honors colleges in 2003, but the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges took a closer look at curricular offerings. Offering separate honors courses where enrollment is limited only to honors students is essentially a universal feature of honors colleges at four-year degree institutions (98.7%), and honors classes and any other honors credits make up an average of one-fifth (20.2%) of all undergraduate credit requirements for honors students. What’s more, that fraction of credits varies very little across institution type. Curricular opportunities available to most honors college students include general education equivalents (90.5%), honors first-year seminars (80.4%), and senior thesis/capstone courses (81.0%). Honors courses do appear to be more heavily present within the lower-division and general education offerings than upper-division honors seminars, which are present in only 69% of honors colleges. Not surprisingly, honors contract options tied to non-honors courses are also quite common, available at over two-thirds of honors colleges reporting in the Census. Comparison of the number of such contracts reported with the numbers of honors students suggests that only a small minority of honors students, however, uses the honors contract option in any given semester.

Honors-specific study abroad courses also appear to be widely available at honors colleges, with 70.9% of honors colleges offering such options. Honors-specific internships and service learning classes are also available at a number of honors colleges although those curricular offerings are not as widespread (43.7% and 51.3%, respectively). Data from the NCHC 2014 Admissions, Retention,

and Completion Survey reported by Cognard-Black and Savage show that honors-specific study abroad, service learning, and internships are curricular options that distinguish honors colleges from honors programs, where such offerings are much less common (39%, 44%, 22%, respectively). Comparison of the 2021 Census figures with those presented for honors colleges by Cognard-Black and Savage also suggests there has been no significant change in availability of honors-specific internships, service learning courses, or study abroad offerings between 2014 and 2021.

The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges asked respondents about the pedagogical and curricular orientation of their honors colleges. Respondents could choose any that applied from a list of eight different orientations. The two most common pedagogical and curricular orientations across all institutional types were “interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary” (87.9%) and “seminar-style learning” (82.2%). “Service learning” and “leadership” (both 43.3%) are also fairly widespread orientations, as are “team teaching” (31.2%) and “global studies” (24.8%). Both “Great Books” and “tutorial model” orientations have some presence among honors colleges, but they are fairly uncommon orientations (10.8% and 7.0%, respectively).

Almost all honors colleges (93.6%) have an expected minimum GPA to remain in good standing in the honors college. The strong majority of honors colleges (95.9%), however, offer a probationary period if the GPA dips below the standard expectation. The average GPA expectation to remain in the honors college is 3.24 across all institutional types that reported a standard that does not vary across the college career, although a sizeable minority of 28.1% of honors colleges have GPA expectations that vary depending on the stage of the student’s career. This standard is essentially unchanged from Sederberg’s 2004 Survey of Honors Colleges, which reported that 72.7% of honors colleges required a 3.25 GPA to remain in honors. For those students who successfully maintain those standards and complete the honors curriculum, institutions have a variety of ways to recognize those accomplishments. Across all institutional types, the most common recognition by far is denoting honors completion on the student’s transcript: 90.5% of institutions report this

practice. Other less common methods of recognition include honors certificates (30.4%), honors degrees (27.8%), an honors minor (12%), or an honors major (7.6%).

## **FACILITIES AND RESOURCES**

Another area of growth since Sederberg's 2004 survey involves facilities and resources. Sederberg found that 45.7% of honors colleges had an honors student lounge or reading room, 40.0% offered an honors IT center, and 37.1% had special honors classrooms or seminar rooms. Honors academic spaces are even more prevalent for honors colleges today, with 58.6% reporting dedicated classrooms. Nearly all (96.8%) report some type of dedicated office space, and 47.5% even report having their own dedicated honors college building, a resource that is even more prevalent among R1 Universities (75.0%). One area that has not seen substantial growth is in residential housing. In 2004, 91.4% of surveyed honors colleges reported having some residential component. With the changing composition of honors colleges likely resulting from increasing numbers of honors programs transitioning to honors colleges and new colleges being created, this high rate of honors residential housing has held true for only the R1 Universities (90%) and Baccalaureate Colleges (100%), although the small number of participants in the Baccalaureate Colleges segment may be unrepresentative. Even so, dedicated housing appears to be a regular feature of honors colleges, and the strong majority of R2/3 Universities (80.3%) and Master's Universities (74.4%) do offer residential housing specific to honors college students.

In addition to space, dedicated staff and faculty are an especially valuable resource. The results of the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges show that only 26.6% of all institutional types have dedicated faculty lines, but among R1 Universities, half of honors colleges reported having dedicated personnel lines for faculty. Overall, 9.4% of honors colleges also now report having tenure available in honors, with similar percentages across all the institutional classifications. On first glance, then, it appears that availability of tenure within honors colleges is fairly rare.

As noted in an earlier section, however, significant differences in several honors college characteristics depend on whether the honors college is a free-standing honors college or not free-standing, and tenure is another one of those characteristics (see Table 1). Free-standing honors colleges are associated with greater likelihood of tenure availability for faculty in honors, with a rate of 15.3% as compared to only 5.8% of not free-standing honors colleges. Availability of tenure in honors also appears to be related to institution type. Where only about 15% of honors colleges with dedicated faculty lines at R1 Universities have the availability of tenure in honors for those faculty ( $(7.5 \div 50.0) \times 100 = 15$ ), about half of honors colleges with faculty lines at R2/3 Universities report pathways to tenure in honors ( $(10.6 \div 22.7) \times 100 = 46.7\%$ ), and four-fifths of honors colleges with faculty lines at Master's Universities have this available path to tenure for faculty in honors ( $(10.3 \div 12.8) \times 100 = 80.5\%$ ). In other words, it appears not so much that securing tenure availability for faculty in honors is rare at Master's Universities but that securing faculty lines in the first place is relatively rare at Master's Universities. For those few honors colleges at Master's Universities that have been able to secure faculty lines, most also seem to have been able to make those faculty lines tenure-track.

Dedicated support staff are also present at most honors colleges, with 89.2% reporting dedicated staff members who assist with a variety of tasks. Importantly, just over two-thirds of honors colleges report having a second-in-command such as an assistant or associate dean, and the presence of a second-in-command is especially prevalent at R1 Universities, where almost all honors colleges have one (92.3%). The most common tasks with which honors staff are involved include offering administrative support (95.5%), budget management (86.6%), recruitment of honors students (85.4%), dedicated honors advising (83.4%), review of admission applications (83.4%), and co-curricular programming (75.8%). Although not as prevalent, 47.8% of honors colleges also report having dedicated staff who spend at least some of their time on fundraising, and at R1 Universities having staff to help with fundraising is almost as common as any of the other tasks listed above (73.2%).

The fundraising efforts of these staff members plus other university officials have led to 60.8% of all honors colleges reporting a median endowment of \$1.9 million. These endowment funds typically supplement honors operating budgets. In 2021, Census respondents reported a median non-instructional budget of \$92,500; the average was substantially higher, at \$422,600, but financial measures are notoriously skewed by high values at select schools, and so the median is generally considered the preferable measure of what is typical. Not surprisingly, honors colleges at R1 Universities had substantially larger budgets and endowments than honors colleges in other categories of institution type (R1 median budget of \$700,000 and median endowment of \$5.3 million), and honors colleges at R2/3 Universities had significantly larger budgets and endowments than those at Master's Universities.

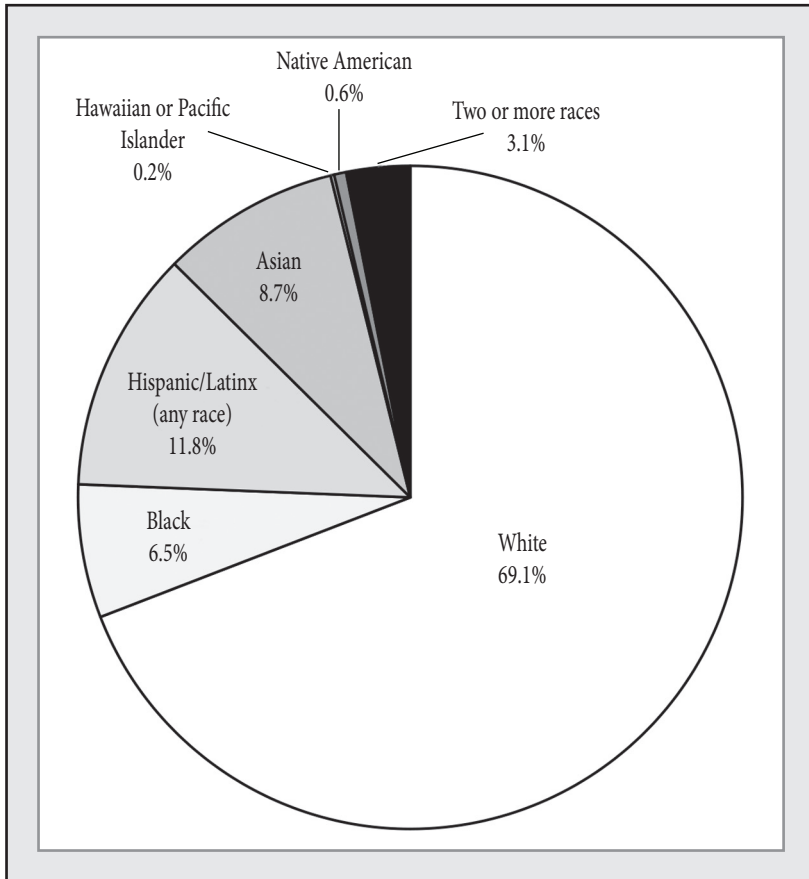
## DEMOGRAPHICS

The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges provides one of the first opportunities to look at the race and ethnicity of honors leaders nationally, including the heads and those who serve as second-in-command (i.e., associate/assistant deans). In general, honors leadership is not racially diverse. The second-in-command position appears to be slightly more racially diverse with only 82.7% non-Hispanic White, but 89.9% of honors deans or others who are heads of honors are non-Hispanic Whites. For honors college heads, especially, the racial-ethnic composition is far more non-Hispanic White than the U.S. population as a whole. Gender identity is more closely aligned with the student body than race and ethnicity, with 56.1% of the heads of honors being men. In the case of those who serve as second-in-command, though, only 34.7% are men. As more women are earning the opportunity to serve in this second-in-command capacity, the national honors community should explore ways to support these women so that they are provided the opportunity to move into positions as honors deans, where they are still slightly underrepresented, especially at Master's Universities where only 29.7% of honors heads were women in 2021.



The racial composition of honors college administrators does not at all match the racial composition of the student body of the honors colleges. As can be seen in Figure 2, compared to the 89.9% of White honors heads, 69.1% of honors college students at R1, R2/3, and Master’s Universities are non-Hispanic White. This

**FIGURE 2. AVERAGE RACIAL COMPOSITION OF STUDENTS AT HONORS COLLEGES, 2020–2021**



Source: 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges (n = 99).

Note: Only a small number of Baccalaureate and Associate’s honors colleges reported race-ethnicity data, so this graph reflects data for only those honors colleges at Research or Master’s universities. Because of the unique nature of Historically Black Colleges and Universities in terms of student body racial composition, two HBCUs reporting race data were also excluded. Among honors students at those two HBCUs, the average percent Black was 97.3.

69.1% is very close to the 67.0% non-Hispanic White honors students reported at the 52 schools responding with race-ethnicity data to the 2014–2015 NCHC Admissions, Retention, and Completion Survey (ARC). Black students make up a smaller percentage of honors students at honors colleges participating in the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges (6.5%) than among honors programs and colleges that participated in the ARC survey (11.2%). Hispanic students, however, made up a slightly larger proportion of the honors student body in the 2021 Census (11.8%) as compared to those represented in the ARC survey (9.0%). These differences are not statistically significant, so there is no clear indication of changes in honors student racial composition during the last seven years. More importantly, though, taken together these results add to growing evidence that honors students are not representative of the larger group of undergraduate students in higher education today when it comes to ethnic and racial diversity (Cognard-Black and Spisak).

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), in 2019, non-Hispanic White students made up 53.1% of U.S. resident undergraduate students enrolled in degree-granting postsecondary institutions. Since 2014, Hispanic students are the second largest population enrolled in postsecondary institutions, making up 21.7% in 2019. At the peak in 2010, Black students made up 15.1% of the undergraduate population, but in 2019 they made up just 13.2% of U.S. undergraduates (NCES). The honors college community does not appear to be representative of the national undergraduate student body, nor is it representative of the larger U.S. population. This area deserves more research as well as attention among those individuals responsible for providing honors education.

## **DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

Scott and Frana speculated that further growth in the number of honors colleges would continue to occur because “competition in recruiting is intense, and this pressure to attract students from a small pool will encourage more universities to launch honors colleges or convert existing programs into colleges” (31). These factors

continue to be a reported motivation for the honors programs moving to the honors college model, but it is unknown whether honors colleges will continue to see the rapid growth of the last few decades. With increasingly tight budgets because of economic challenges and the “demographic cliff” caused by declining rates of fertility, even more institutions may explore the honors college model as a way to compete in the larger marketplace, but we may also see a slowing in this trend as institutions redirect resources and focus on other priorities. Another unknown factor in the expansion of the honors college model is the degree to which honors colleges will have an impact on the national landscape of honors education and how administrative and curricular structures might evolve. In light of how we have seen the greatest growth in the honors college model at Research and Master’s Universities, it is unlikely that the honors college model will replace the honors program model at Baccalaureate Colleges or Associate’s Colleges. It remains to be seen whether we will see honors colleges fully integrate into all Research and Master’s Universities, as Cobane once predicted.

If, as we have suggested here, defining the “Basic Characteristics” of an honors college in 2004 contributed to further expansion and greater distinction between honors colleges and honors programs, then we must consider how the recent adoption of NCHC’s “Shared Principles and Practices of Honors Education” (a massive reworking of the “Basic Characteristics”) might impact the ongoing evolution of the organizational landscape of honors education. Will the previously articulated distinctions between honors programs and colleges start to diminish with the previous two “Basic Characteristics” documents now replaced by one? Will a shared set of principles lead honors programs to look like honors colleges without the changing of the name or the accompanying restructuring? Or, conversely, will labels change without a subsequent push for structural alterations? As mentioned earlier, Sederberg spoke against the last development when he said: “If an institution is simply gilding the name, then ‘honors college’ becomes a devalued misnomer designed as a marketing strategy and intended to mislead potential applicants into believing that something new exists where, in fact, substance remains unchanged” (“Characteristics,” Rpt. 25).

One thing is certain: if we are to understand fully the continued evolution of honors colleges, NCHC, as the leading professional association in the field, must commit resources to regular, longitudinal data collection so that we can continue to monitor and report trends in these areas. We cannot count on the U.S. Department of Education to do so; they have never collected such data about honors education and there is no indication they will do so anytime soon. Associate's Colleges have been overlooked in past studies of honors colleges, primarily because so few honors colleges exist; however, the essay by Hoffman et al. in this volume explores this phenomenon. Unfortunately, this problem is exacerbated when fewer honors heads at two-year institutions respond to surveys and other requests for information. We identified 29 such honors colleges for sampling in the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges, so this trend undoubtedly deserves further exploration. Honors colleges at two-year colleges may have lower response rates because they have fewer human and other resources available to respond to surveys. They are likely different in other meaningful ways, but more research is needed to better understand the administrative structures and motivations of honors colleges in these institutional settings.

Between 2004 and 2021, the honors college landscape has witnessed significant changes, not the least of which is an apparent shift away from having a minimum standardized test score for admissions decisions. Although testing companies are working to make standardized testing more accessible in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, it will be important for researchers to monitor the decisions honors colleges make with regard to the use of test scores in admission and whether more holistic admissions practices are introduced in their place, as so many have advocated (Cognard-Black and Spisak; National Collegiate Honors Council, *Honors Enrollment Management*; Smith and Zagurski). From admission practices and diversity, to facilities and resources, to diversity among honors professionals, new structures are needed to facilitate data collection and research at the national level in order to continue to monitor trends in the ongoing evolution of the honors college phenomenon.

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**APPENDIX A**  
**2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges**

Item	All Institutions		Research 1 Universities		Research 2 & 3 Universities		Master's Universities		Baccalaureate Colleges <sup>b</sup>		Associate's Colleges	
Institutions in Sample	248	55	89	63	12	29						
Total responding institutions	166	44	67	41	5	9						
Response Rate <sup>a</sup>	66.9	80.0	75.3	65.1	41.7	31.0						
<b>Institutional Size &amp; Structure of Honors College</b>												
Institutional control (% public)	84.0	95.5	76.9	90.0	20.0	88.9						
Is your honors college named? (% yes)	32.5	36.4	34.3	29.3	40.0	11.1						
Honors program prior to honors college designation? (% yes)	89.1	88.4	91.0	87.8	80.0	88.9						
Honors College Size (mean # of undergraduate students)	987.8	2,093.5	720.7	450.9	107.4	387.0						
Reported Honors Percentage (mean)	8.0	10.0	7.0	6.0	7.0	6.0						
Full-Time Students in Honors (mean)	897.8	1,966.6	690.5	413.4	107.4	277.6						
Honors College Incoming First-Year Class Size, Fall 2020 (mean)	273.0	571.2	199.3	128.5	32.3	110.4						
Honors College Incoming Transfer Students, Fall 2020 (mean)	17.1	32.3	16.5	5.9	1.0	4.6						
Honors College Internal Admissions, Fall 2020 (mean)	31.5	68.8	21.5	13.2	2.5	28.9						

Honors College's relationship to the larger institution (%) <sup>d</sup>									
<i>Free-standing college with independent curriculum</i>	45.6	54.8	43.9	45.0	33.3	14.3			
<i>Centralized overlay of university undergraduate programs</i>	58.2	42.9	62.1	62.5	66.7	85.7			
<i>Decentralized coordinating structure providing honors core overseeing departmental honors</i>	8.9	7.1	9.1	10.0	0.0	14.3			
Title of the person who heads your honors college (%) <sup>c</sup>									
<i>Dean</i>	67.1	86.1	67.2	58.5	25.0	44.4			
<i>Director</i>	23.8	11.6	20.9	39.0	50.0	22.2			
<i>Executive Director</i>	3.0	2.3	4.5	2.4	0.0	11.1			
<i>Coordinator</i>	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	25.0	0.0			
<i>Other</i>	5.5	0.0	7.5	0.0	0.0	22.2			
Title of person to whom the head of honors reports (%) <sup>c</sup>									
<i>Provost/Vice-President for Academic Affairs</i>	73.5	83.7	72.7	73.2	50.0	37.5			
<i>Assoc./Asst. Provost/VPAA</i>	16.0	7.0	21.2	14.6	25.0	25.0			
<i>Other</i>	10.5	9.3	6.1	12.2	25.0	37.5			
Annual contract appointment for the head of honors (%) <sup>c</sup>									
<i>12-month contract</i>	84.0	86.0	88.1	82.9	33.3	66.7			
<i>11-month contract</i>	2.5	2.3	1.5	2.4	33.3	0.0			
<i>10-month contract</i>	1.8	0.0	1.5	2.4	0.0	11.1			

Item	Research				
	All Institutions	Research 1 Universities	Research 2 & 3 Universities	Master's Universities	Baccalaureate Colleges <sup>b</sup> Associate's Colleges
<i>9-month contract</i>	4.9	0.0	6.0	7.3	11.1
<i>Other contract</i>	6.7	11.6	3.0	4.9	11.1
Presence of governance structures (%) <sup>d</sup>					
<i>Faculty oversight committee</i>	67.5	63.6	65.2	67.5	100.0
<i>External advisory board</i>	44.6	70.0	39.4	37.5	0.0
<i>Student honors council</i>	62.4	75.0	63.6	55.0	25.0
<i>Other</i>	17.2	15.0	21.2	12.5	0.0
Campus-wide programs housed within the honors college (%) <sup>d</sup>					
<i>Fellowship advising</i>	45.0	64.3	52.2	22.5	0.0
<i>Teaching and learning</i>	5.0	7.1	1.5	5.0	0.0
<i>Undergraduate research</i>	23.8	19.0	31.3	10.0	25.0
<i>Service learning</i>	9.4	7.1	7.5	5.0	25.0
<i>Other</i>	15.6	19.0	13.4	17.5	0.0
Among top three reasons for honors college instead of program (%) <sup>e</sup>					
<i>Recruit top students</i>	51.7	67.5	47.5	50.0	50.0
<i>Increase honors population</i>	10.7	7.5	13.1	8.3	0.0

<i>Raise visibility of honors on campus</i>	53.7	40.0	49.2	75.0	50.0	62.5
<i>Give honors more institutional autonomy</i>	36.9	35.0	29.5	52.8	0.0	50.0
<i>Increase honors budget</i>	8.7	5.0	11.5	11.1	0.0	0.0
<i>Open up fundraising opportunities</i>	20.8	30.0	21.3	13.9	0.0	12.5
<i>Promote innovative curriculum</i>	43.6	42.5	41.0	44.4	50.0	62.5
<i>Improve academic quality on campus</i>	28.2	27.5	31.1	22.2	50.0	25.0
<i>Create more opportunities for students</i>	42.3	42.5	49.2	22.2	100.0	50.0
<i>Other</i>	3.4	2.5	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
Initial stakeholder who initiated organization as a college (%) <sup>c</sup>						
<i>A president or other upper administration</i>	35.4	27.9	40.3	34.1	25.0	44.5
<i>Staff/Other personnel already working in honors program</i>	13.4	18.6	11.9	12.2	0.0	11.1
<i>Both upper administration and honors personnel equally</i>	25.6	25.6	29.9	22.0	0.0	22.2
<i>Other</i>	5.5	9.3	3.0	4.9	25.0	0.0
<i>I wasn't here then/I'm not sure</i>	20.1	18.6	14.9	26.8	50.0	22.2
<b>Admissions &amp; Recruitment</b>						
Does honors have its own dedicated application? (% yes)	84.8	79.1	85.1	90.2	75.0	88.9
Does honors control the decision to admit students? (% yes)	93.3	83.7	95.5	100.0	75.0	100.0
Is there a minimum test score (e.g., SAT) for eligibility? (% yes)	31.9	30.2	25.8	31.7	75.0	66.7

Item	All Institutions	Research			
		Research 1 Universities	Research 2 & 3 Universities	Master's Universities	Baccalaureate Colleges <sup>b</sup> Associate's Colleges
SAT for those reporting minimum score for eligibility (mean)	1,202.8	1,325.0	1,237.9	1,080.6	1,057.5
ACT for those reporting minimum score for eligibility (mean)	26.0	28.0	26.0	25.0	24.0
Are test scores used in the decision to admit? (% yes)	69.2	78.6	64.1	65.0	66.7
Is there a minimum HS GPA for eligibility? (% yes)	54.9	40.5	54.5	63.4	75.0
GPA (weighted) for those reporting min. for eligibility (mean)	3.56	3.64	3.52	3.59	3.46
Is GPA used in the decision to admit students? (% yes)	93.7	95.2	90.8	94.9	100.0
Factors that inform decision to admit (%) <sup>d</sup>					
<i>Essay</i>	77.4	81.0	71.4	89.2	50.0
<i>Short answer written response to specific question</i>	44.5	47.6	50.8	35.1	50.0
<i>Rigor of previous curriculum</i>	51.6	64.3	50.8	45.9	50.0
<i>Letters of recommendation</i>	48.4	57.1	47.6	32.4	75.0
<i>Record of co-curricular activities (e.g., volunteer work)</i>	69.7	81.0	68.3	67.6	75.0
<i>Other non-academic attributes (e.g., grit, compassion)</i>	47.1	52.4	49.2	43.2	25.0
<i>Interview</i>	20.6	9.5	22.2	16.2	50.0
<i>Other</i>	16.1	2.4	19.0	21.6	50.0
Are all students who apply to the honors college admitted? (% yes)	5.7	2.4	6.2	7.7	0.0

Acceptance rate among applicants for the first-year cohort (%) <sup>c</sup>									
1-25	11.8	21.6	12.3	3.2	0.0	0.0			
26-50	11.8	18.9	7.0	9.7	33.3	12.5			
51-75	27.2	35.1	29.8	16.1	33.3	12.5			
76-100	49.3	24.3	50.9	71.0	33.3	75.0			
What was the yield for the first-year cohort entering in 2020? (%) <sup>c</sup>									
1-25	14.8	36.1	11.9	0.0	0.0	0.0			
26-50	25.2	30.6	22.0	30.0	0.0	14.3			
51-75	31.9	30.6	33.9	30.0	66.7	14.3			
76-100	28.1	2.8	32.2	40.0	33.3	71.4			
What is the number of dedicated honors scholarships annually?									
Percent not reporting	14.5	15.9	10.4	14.6	40.0	22.2			
Percent reporting 0 (zero)	14.8	13.5	13.3	17.1	—	14.3			
Minimum (among those reporting non-zero)	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	—	3.0			
Maximum (among those reporting non-zero)	1,450.0	670.0	1,450.0	500.0	—	600.0			
Mean (among those reporting non-zero)	145.8	146.4	182.7	86.9	—	148.0			
Percentage in first-year cohort receiving honors scholarship (%) <sup>c</sup>									
0-25	51.7	58.3	50.0	55.6	33.3	16.7			

Item	All Institutions	Research			Associate's Colleges
		Research 1 Universities	Research 2 & 3 Universities	Master's Universities	
26-50	9.1	11.1	9.7	8.3	0.0
51-75	2.8	0.0	3.2	0.0	33.3
76-100	36.4	30.6	37.1	36.1	50.0
On what factors are honors college scholarships based? (%) <sup>c</sup>					
<i>Demonstrated need</i>	2.0	2.4	3.1	0.0	0.0
<i>Merit</i>	39.2	19.5	43.1	45.9	57.1
<i>Both merit and need</i>	45.1	63.4	41.5	37.8	28.6
<i>We do not offer such scholarships</i>	13.7	14.6	12.3	16.2	14.3
Is there a fee to apply to the honors college? (% yes)	1.3	2.4	0.0	2.6	0.0
Honors college application fee (mean among those reporting yes)	\$28	—	—	—	—
Is there a fee to participate in honors? (% yes)	25.8	36.6	25.8	17.9	22.2
Honors college fee (annualized)					
Mean (among those reporting yes)	\$385	\$722	\$185	\$120	—
Median (among those reporting yes)	\$175	\$500	\$150	\$103	—
Low value (among those reporting yes)	\$8	\$8	\$10	\$15	\$300
High value (among those reporting yes)	\$3,000	\$3,000	\$700	\$300	\$300

Honors College Curriculum & Programming									
Do you have separate honors courses? (% yes)	98.7	97.6	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	88.9
How many courses in Fall 2020 (mean among those reporting)	42.8	94.8	30.3	18.3	6.3	35.0	28.6	24.0	88.9
How many courses in Spring 2021 (mean among those reporting)	37.4	84.6	26.8	15.6	5.5	28.6	24.0	88.9	88.9
Percent of undergraduate credits in honors (mean)	20.2	21.3	18.1	22.5	14.3	24.0	24.0	88.9	88.9
Curricular opportunities available to honors college students (%) <sup>d</sup>									
<i>First-year seminars in honors</i>	80.4	90.0	78.8	82.1	50.0	55.6	55.6	88.9	88.9
<i>General education equivalents</i>	90.5	87.5	89.4	100.0	75.0	77.8	77.8	88.9	88.9
<i>Senior thesis/capstone courses</i>	81.0	82.5	90.9	74.4	50.0	44.4	44.4	88.9	88.9
<i>Independent study options in honors</i>	70.9	80.0	69.7	76.9	50.0	22.2	22.2	88.9	88.9
<i>Honors contract option tied to non-honors courses</i>	68.4	70.0	68.2	64.1	75.0	77.8	77.8	88.9	88.9
<i>Upper-division honors seminars</i>	69.0	85.0	65.2	76.9	50.0	0.0	0.0	88.9	88.9
<i>Study abroad honors courses</i>	70.9	80.0	80.3	56.4	50.0	33.3	33.3	88.9	88.9
<i>Departmental honors courses</i>	58.9	80.0	60.6	46.2	0.0	33.3	33.3	88.9	88.9
<i>Honors internships</i>	43.7	60.0	48.5	30.8	25.0	0.0	0.0	88.9	88.9
<i>Honors service learning courses</i>	51.3	60.0	51.5	38.5	50.0	66.7	66.7	88.9	88.9
<i>Other</i>	10.1	20.0	6.1	7.7	0.0	11.1	11.1	88.9	88.9
Pedagogical/curricular orientation that best describes HC (%) <sup>d</sup>									
<i>Interdisciplinary/cross-disciplinary</i>	87.9	100.0	89.4	84.6	50.0	55.6	55.6	88.9	88.9



Item	All Institutions	Research				
		Research I Universities	Research 2 & 3 Universities	Master's Universities	Baccalaureate Colleges <sup>b</sup>	Associate's Colleges
<i>Team teaching</i>	31.2	35.9	27.3	35.9	25.0	22.2
<i>Seminar-style learning</i>	82.2	82.1	80.3	89.7	100.0	55.6
<i>Tutorial model</i>	7.0	10.3	9.1	2.6	0.0	0.0
<i>Global studies</i>	24.8	33.3	25.8	17.9	25.0	11.1
<i>"Great books"</i>	10.8	15.4	12.1	7.7	0.0	0.0
<i>Service learning</i>	43.3	46.2	40.9	41.0	50.0	55.6
<i>Leadership</i>	43.3	43.6	47.0	35.9	75.0	33.3
<i>Other</i>	13.4	7.7	15.2	12.8	25.0	22.2
Are honors contracts available for non-honors courses? (% yes)	70.3	72.5	68.2	69.2	75.0	77.8
Number of honors contracts in a typical semester (mean)	79.6	114.3	74.9	70.7	1.7	23.2
Ways honors recognized upon completion/graduation (%) <sup>d</sup>						
<i>Certificate</i>	30.4	27.5	29.9	35.9	25.0	22.2
<i>Degree</i>	27.8	32.5	28.4	23.1	25.0	22.2
<i>Transcript designation</i>	90.5	82.5	94.0	94.9	75.0	77.8
<i>Major</i>	7.6	15.0	6.0	2.6	0.0	11.1
<i>Minor</i>	12.0	10.0	17.9	7.7	0.0	0.0

<i>Other</i>	27.2	25.0	25.4	30.8	75.0	11.1
Do honors students have priority registration? (% yes)	84.8	90.0	83.4	84.6	50.0	66.7
Is there a minimum GPA to remain in honors? (% yes)	93.6	95.0	92.4	94.7	100.0	88.9
If so, does it vary at different stages? (%) <sup>c</sup>						
<i>It's the same for all four years</i>	69.9	63.2	67.2	75.0	75.0	100.0
<i>It varies depending on how far students have progressed</i>	28.1	34.2	29.5	25.0	25.0	0.0
<i>Other</i>	2.1	2.6	3.3	0.0	0.0	0.0
If there is a set GPA standard for all four years, what is it? (mean)	3.24	3.27	3.25	3.20	3.17	3.26
Is there a probationary period if GPA dips below standard? (% yes)	95.9	92.1	96.7	97.2	100.0	100.0
<b>Facilities &amp; Resources</b>						
Does honors have its own dedicated office space? (% yes)	96.8	100.0	98.5	97.4	75.0	77.8
Does honors have its own dedicated classrooms? (% yes)	58.6	77.5	63.1	43.6	0.0	33.3
Does honors have its own dedicated building? (% yes)	47.5	75.0	40.9	46.2	0.0	0.0
Does honors have its own dedicated residential housing? (% yes)	77.2	90.0	80.3	74.4	100.0	0.0
Percentage of students in honors housing, where available? (%) <sup>c</sup>						
1-25	31.0	35.3	32.7	24.1	25.0	—
26-50	44.8	47.1	44.9	48.3	0.0	—

Item	All Institutions	Research				
		Research 1 Universities	Research 2 & 3 Universities	Master's Universities	Baccalaureate Colleges <sup>b</sup>	Associate's Colleges
51-75	15.5	11.8	14.3	17.2	50.0	—
76-100	8.6	5.9	8.2	10.3	25.0	—
Does honors have its own dedicated faculty lines? (% yes)	26.6	50.0	22.7	12.8	0.0	22.2
Number of FTE faculty lines in honors, where available? (mean)	8.4	11.0	6.9	5.4	—	0.8
Can faculty receive tenure in honors? (%) <sup>c</sup>						
Yes, faculty can receive tenure in honors	9.4	7.5	10.6	10.3	20.0	0.0
No, not in honors	84.9	92.5	84.8	79.5	80.0	77.8
No, our institution does not have a tenure system	5.7	0.0	4.5	10.3	0.0	22.2
Does honors have its own dedicated staff lines? (% yes)	89.2	100.0	95.5	87.2	0.0	44.4
Number of FTE staff lines in honors, where available? (mean)	7.5	16.6	4.2	2.8	—	3.9
What activities are dedicated honors staff involved with? (%) <sup>d</sup>						
Dedicated honors advising	83.4	100.0	84.8	71.1	33.3	75.0
Administrative support	95.5	100.0	98.5	94.7	66.7	75.0
Fundraising	47.8	73.2	48.5	28.9	33.3	12.5
Co-curricular programming	75.8	85.4	77.3	68.4	66.7	62.5
Budget management	86.6	95.1	84.8	81.6	66.7	100.0

<i>Recruitment of honors students</i>	85.4	90.2	81.8	86.8	66.7	100.0
<i>Review of applications for admission into honors</i>	83.4	92.7	80.3	78.9	66.7	100.0
<i>Teaching honors classes</i>	53.5	68.3	50.0	42.1	66.7	62.5
<i>Other</i>	14.6	17.1	16.7	13.2	0.0	0.0
Annual honors operating budget (1,000s), excluding personnel						
Mean	\$422.6	\$1,169.8	\$188.7	\$78.4	\$146.0	\$1,012.1
Median	\$92.5	\$700.0	\$90.0	\$45.0	\$37.0	\$25.0
Approx. current value of honors college endowment (millions)						
Mean	\$4.826	\$10.199	\$3.971	\$1.462	—	\$0.068
Median	\$1.900	\$5.250	\$1.883	\$0.700	—	\$0.068
Percent reporting any honors college endowment	60.8	59.1	68.7	65.9	0.0	22.2
HC a member or participant in honors organizations . . . (%) <sup>d</sup>						
National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC)	95.3	92.7	98.4	97.2	33.3	100.0
Honors Education at Research Universities (HERU)	22.7	63.4	12.7	0.0	0.0	0.0
C. on Hon. Ed., Assoc. of Pub. Land-grant Univ. (CoHE-APLU)	26.7	58.5	25.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Nat'l Assoc. of African American Honors Programs (NAAAHP)	6.0	4.9	7.9	2.8	33.3	0.0
A regional or state honors council	74.7	56.1	76.2	86.1	100.0	100.0

Item	All Institutions		Research 1 Universities		Research 2 & 3 Universities		Master's Universities		Baccalaureate Colleges <sup>b</sup>		Associate's Colleges	
<b>Honors Leadership Demographics</b>												
Race-ethnicity of the head of honors (%) <sup>c</sup>												
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	89.9	82.9	88.9	100.0	75.0	88.9	100.0	75.0	88.9	88.9	88.9	88.9
<i>Black, non-Hispanic</i>	3.4	0.0	6.3	0.0	25.0	6.3	0.0	25.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Asian, non-Hispanic</i>	2.0	5.7	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Hispanic/Latinx of any race</i>	2.7	8.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	11.1	0.0
<i>American Indian, non-Hispanic</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Some other race, non-Hispanic</i>	0.7	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Two or more races</i>	1.4	2.9	1.6	0.0	0.0	1.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gender identity of the head of honors (%) <sup>c</sup>												
<i>Men</i>	56.1	52.8	54.0	70.3	25.0	54.0	70.3	25.0	37.5	37.5	37.5	37.5
<i>Women</i>	43.9	47.2	46.0	29.7	75.0	46.0	29.7	75.0	62.5	62.5	62.5	62.5
<i>Transgender, non-binary, gender nonconforming, or fluid</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Does honors have an asst./assoc. dean or other 2nd? (% yes)	68.0	92.3	61.9	63.2	75.0	61.9	63.2	75.0	22.2	22.2	22.2	22.2

Race-ethnicity of the asst./assoc./2nd-in-command of honors (%) <sup>c</sup>						
<i>White, non-Hispanic</i>	82.7	81.3	81.6	82.6	100.0	100.0
<i>Black, non-Hispanic</i>	6.1	6.3	7.9	4.3	0.0	0.0
<i>Asian, non-Hispanic</i>	3.1	6.3	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.0
<i>Hispanic/Latinx of any race</i>	5.1	3.1	7.9	4.3	0.0	0.0
<i>American Indian, non-Hispanic</i>	1.0	3.1	2.6	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Some other race, non-Hispanic</i>	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
<i>Two or more races</i>	2.0	0.0	0.0	4.3	0.0	0.0
Gender identity of the asst./assoc./2nd-in-command of honors (%) <sup>c</sup>						
<i>Men</i>	34.7	27.3	44.7	26.1	100.0	0.0
<i>Women</i>	64.3	69.7	55.3	73.9	0.0	100.0
<i>Transgender, non-binary, gender nonconforming, or fluid</i>	1.0	3.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0

Sources: The 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges.

Notes: Em dashes (—) indicate instances where too few respondents or too few data existed to reasonably calculate summary statistics. Some numbers may not sum to 100 due to rounding error.

- a. The overall response rate when considering Research and Master's/Comprehensive Universities only is 73.4%.
- b. Four out of the five schools in this category are categorized as Baccalaureate: Diverse Fields, and only one is classified as Baccalaureate: Arts & Sciences. There are so few cases of honors colleges in this and the Associate's Colleges categories that percentages should be interpreted with caution.
- c. Response options were mutually exclusive and should sum to 100%, with some exception for rounding error.
- d. Respondents were instructed to select all options that apply, so percentages do not sum to 100.
- e. Respondents were instructed to select their top three choices, so percentages will sum to 300 percent, with some exception for rounding error.

**APPENDIX B**  
**Description of Survey Questions Included in the 2021 Census of U.S. Honors Colleges**

Item/Question	Description/Response Options
<i>Institutional Size, Classification, &amp; Structure of Honors College</i>	
Institutional control	(1) Public; (2) Private, non-profit; (3) Private, for-profit
Institutional Carnegie Classification	(1) R1—Research/Doctoral University; (2) R2—Research/Doctoral University; (3) R3 Doctoral/Professional University; (4) Master’s University—Larger; (5) Master’s University—Medium; (6) Baccalaureate College—Arts & Sciences; (7) Baccalaureate College—Diverse Fields; (8) Associate’s College
Institution Size—Full-time equivalent undergraduate students	(1) 1–1,000; (2) 1,001–2,500; (3) 2,501–5,000; (4) 5,001–10,000; (5) 10,001–15,000 . . . (11) 40,001 or more
Is your honors college named?	Yes/No
Did your Honors College emerge or transition from an honors program that existed prior to honors college designation?	Yes/No
In what year was your honors college founded?	Year
Honors College Size—How many students were in your honors college in fall 2020? (Please indicate student headcount regardless of full/part-time status.)	Number of students

<p>Honors Percentage—Of the undergraduate students at your school, approximately what percent are honors students?</p>	<p>Percent</p>
<p>Full-Time Students in Honors—Of the honors students in fall 2020, how many were enrolled as full-time students at your institution?</p>	<p>Number of students</p>
<p>Honors College Incoming First-Year Class Size, Fall 2020—Report the number of degree-seeking students entering your institution as honors students.</p>	<p>Number of students</p>
<p>Honors College Incoming Transfer Students, Fall 2020—Report the number of degree-seeking students transferring into your institution as honors students. (If students do not enter honors as incoming transfer students, please report 0 (zero) for this item.)</p>	<p>Number of students</p>
<p>Honors College Internal Admissions, Fall 2020—Report the number of degree-seeking students admitted into honors who started previously at your school as part of the general student body. (If students do not enter honors through this pathway, please report 0 (zero) for this item.)</p>	<p>Number of students</p>
<p>What situation best describes the honors college's organizational relationship to the larger institution? (Select all that apply.)</p>	<p>(1) Free-standing college with independent curriculum; (2) Centralized overlay structure of university undergraduate programs; (3) Decentralized coordinating structure providing an honors core overseeing departmental honors; (4) Other (please explain)</p>
<p>What is the title of the person who heads your honors college?</p>	<p>(1) Dean; (2) Director; (3) Executive director; (4) Coordinator; (5) Other (specify)</p>



Item/Question	Description/Response Options
To whom does the head of honors report directly?	(1) Provost/vice-president for academic affairs; (2) Assoc./Asst. Provost/VPAA; (3) Other (please specify)
What is the annual contract appointment for the head of honors?	(1) 12-month contract; (2) 11-month contract; (3) 10-month contract; (4) 9-month contract; (5) Other contract (please specify)
Which of the following governance characteristics, if any, does the honors college have? (Select all that apply.)	(1) Faculty oversight committee; (2) External advisory board; (3) Student honors council; (4) Other (please specify)
Which, if any, of the following campus-wide programs are housed within the honors college? (Select all that apply.)	(1) Fellowship advising; (2) Teaching and learning; (3) Undergraduate research; (4) Service learning; (5) Other (please specify any others campus-wide programs housed in honors)
From the list below of possible reasons for having an honors college as opposed to an honors program, please select up to three that reflect your personal ranking of the most important reasons.	(1) Recruit top students; (2) Increase honors population; (3) Raise visibility of honors on campus; (4) Give honors more institutional autonomy; (5) Increase honors budget; (6) Open up fundraising opportunities; (7) Promote innovative curriculum; (8) Improve academic quality on campus; (9) Create more opportunities for students; (10) Other
From which campus stakeholder did the initial drive come for the organization of honors as a college?	(1) I wasn't here then/I'm not sure; (2) A president or other upper administration; (3) Staff or other personnel already working within an honors program; (4) Both upper administration and honors personnel equally; (5) Other (please specify)
<b>Admissions &amp; Recruitment</b>	
Does the honors college have its own dedicated application for entry?	Yes/No

Does the honors college control the decision to admit students to the honors college?	Yes/No
Is there a minimum test score (i.e., ACT/SAT) to determine eligibility to apply to the honors college?	Yes/No
If you answered yes, please indicate the minimum composite score for any test that is used to determine honors eligibility.	Separate responses for composite SAT and ACT scores
Are test scores (i.e., ACT/SAT) used in the decision to admit students to the honors college?	Yes/No
Is there a minimum high school GPA to determine eligibility to apply to the honors college?	Yes/No
If you answered yes, what is the high school GPA used to determine honors eligibility? (Please report for weighted GPA.)	Weighted high school grade point average
Is GPA used in the decision to admit students to the honors college?	Yes/No
What other, if any, factors specifically inform the decision to admit students to the honors college? (Select all that apply.)	(1) Essay; (2) Short answer written responses to specific questions; (3) Rigor of previous curriculum; (4) Letters of recommendation; (5) Record of co-curricular activities (e.g. volunteer work, service, leadership, athletics, etc.); (6) Other non-academic attributes (e.g., grit, resilience, compassion, etc.); (7) Interview; (8) Other (please specify)
Are all students who apply to the honors college admitted?	Yes/No

Item/Question	Description/Response Options
What was the acceptance rate of completed applications for the first-year student cohort entering honors in fall 2020?	(1) 1–25%; (2) 26–50%; (3) 51–75%; (4) 76–100%
What was the yield rate for students admitted for the first-year student cohort entering honors in fall 2020?	(1) 1–25%; (2) 26–50%; (3) 51–75%; (4) 76–100%
What is the total number of dedicated honors scholarships awarded on an annual basis?	Number of annual honors scholarships
What percentage of students in the first-year entering honors cohort receive some form of dedicated honors scholarship support for the most recent year when data are available?	(1) 0–25%; (2) 26–50%; (3) 51–75%; (4) 76–100%
If the honors college awards dedicated scholarships, what are those awards based on?	(1) We do not offer such scholarships; (2) They are based on demonstrated need; (3) They are based on merit; (4) They are based on both merit and need
Is there a fee to apply to the honors college?	Yes/No
If so, please specify in whole U.S. dollars.	Honors application fee, in dollars
Is there a separate fee that honors students pay to participate in honors in addition to regular tuition and fees charged to enroll at your institution? (Please do not include fees for optional events or experiences in which only some honors students participate.)	Yes/No
If so, please specify how much that fee is on an annual basis.	Honors fee, in dollars

<i>Curriculum &amp; Programming</i>	
Do you have separate honors courses or honors sections where enrollment is limited only to students in your honors college?	Yes/No
If yes, how many such courses did you offer for the fall and spring terms during the 2020–2021 academic year?	Separate responses for the numbers of honors courses or honors sections in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021
Approximately what percentage of undergraduate credits are made up of honors courses or other credit bearing honors requirements? (If you have more than one honors program or other pathway to honors within the honors college, report the percentage for the most commonly chosen pathway.)	Percentage of credits
What type of honors curricular opportunities are available to honors college students? (Select all that apply.)	(1) First-year seminars in honors; (2) General education equivalents; (3) Senior thesis/capstone courses; (4) Independent study options in honors; (5) Honors contract option tied to non-honors courses; (6) Upper-division honors seminars; (7) Study abroad honors courses; (8) Departmental honors courses; (9) Honors internships; (10) Honors service learning courses; (11) Other (please specify)
Please indicate the pedagogical/curricular orientation that best describes the overall honors college learning experience. (Select all that apply.)	(1) Interdisciplinary/Cross-disciplinary; (2) Team teaching; (3) Seminar-style learning; (4) Tutorial model; (5) Global studies; (6) “Great books”; (7) Service learning; (8) Leadership; (9) Other (please specify)
Are honors contracts available for honors college students to meet honors requirements in non-honors courses?	Yes/No

Item/Question	Description/Response Options
If so, about how many honors contracts do students in your honors college undertake in a typical semester? (Please indicate your best estimate of a single number rather than a range.)	Number of honors contracts in a typical semester
How does your honors college recognize completion of honors upon graduation? (Select all that apply.)	(1) Certificate; (2) Degree; (3) Transcript designation; (4) Major; (5) Minor; (6) Other (please specify)
Do honors students have early or priority registration for classes at your institution?	Yes/No
Is there a minimum GPA that students must maintain to remain in honors (i.e., to avoid dismissal from the honors college)?	Yes/No
If so, is it a set standard across all four years, or does it vary at different stages of progress?	(1) It's the same for all four years; (2) It varies depending on how far students have progressed; (3) Other (please specify)
If there is a set standard for all four years, what is the minimum GPA students must maintain to remain in honors?	Grade point average
If the GPA standard for remaining in honors varies depending on progress, please provide a brief explanation of how the criteria for remaining varies.	Responses varied
Do you have a probationary period to allow students to recover if their GPA drops below the honors college standard to remain?	Yes/No
<b>Facilities &amp; Resources</b>	
Does the honors college have its own dedicated office space on campus?	Yes/No

Does the honors college have its own dedicated classrooms?	Yes/No
Does the honors college have its own dedicated building?	Yes/No
Does the honors college have its own dedicated residential housing specifically for honors students?	Yes/No
If yes, approximately what percentage of honors students typically reside in dedicated honors housing?	(1) 1–25%; (2) 26–50%; (3) 51–75%; (4) 76–100%
Does the honors college have its own dedicated faculty lines?	Yes/No
If yes, what is the number of full-time equivalent faculty lines dedicated to the honors college?	Number of FTE faculty lines
Can faculty currently receive tenure in honors at your institution?	(1) Yes, faculty can receive tenure in honors; (2) No, not in honors; (3) No, our institution does not have a tenure system
Does the honors college have its own dedicated staff lines?	Yes/No
If yes, what is the number of full-time equivalent staff lines dedicated to the honors college?	Number of FTE staff lines
What activities are dedicated honors college staff involved with? (Select all that apply.)	(1) Dedicated honors advising; (2) Administrative support; (3) Fundraising; (4) Co-curricular programming; (5) Budget management; (6) Recruitment of honors students; (7) Review of applications for admission into honors; (8) Teaching honors classes; (9) Other (please specify)
Not including personnel costs, what is the annual operating budget of the honors college?	Operating budget, in dollars

Item/Question	Description/Response Options
Approximately what is the current total value of all honors college endowment funds?	Current value (summer 2021) of honors college endowment, in dollars
Is your institution a member of or regular participant in any of the following honors or other organizations? (Select all that apply.)	<p>(1) National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC); (2) Honors Education at Research Universities (HERU); (3) Council on Honors Education, Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (CoHE-APLU); (4) National Association of African American Honors Programs (NAAAHP); (5) A regional or state honors council</p>
<b>Honors Demographics</b>	
Honors Student Enrollment by Race-Ethnic Category—Of the undergraduate honors students in fall 2020, please indicate the number of students in each of the following categories. Report Hispanic/Latino students of any race as Hispanic/Latino. Include international students only in the category “nonresident aliens.” (These demographic categories correspond with standard definitions typically used to report student data to the U.S. Department of Education and the Common Data Set.)	Percentages for each institution were calculated based on student numbers provided in nine categories of race-ethnicity: (1) Nonresident aliens (i.e., international students); (2) Hispanic/Latino; (3) Black or African American, non-Hispanic; (4) White, non-Hispanic; (5) American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic; (6) Asian, non-Hispanic; (7) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic; (8) Two or more races, non-Hispanic; (9) Race and/or ethnicity unknown
For the initial first-year class of degree-seeking honors students entering in fall 2020 (reported earlier), please indicate the number who received a Federal Pell Grant. If you don't know the number but know the percentage, please include that instead.	Separate responses for percentages or numbers of first-year honors students receiving Pell Grants were collected, and percentages were calculated for those institutions reporting headcounts instead of percentages



For the initial first-year class of degree-seeking honors students entering in fall 2020, please indicate the number who were first-generation students. If you don't know the number but know the percentage, please include that instead. (Please use the definition of first-generation prevailing at your institution.)	Separate responses for percentages or numbers of first-generation first-year honors students were collected, and percentages were calculated for those institutions reporting headcounts instead of percentages
What is the race of the current head of honors? (Select all that apply.)	(1) Black or African American; (2) White; (3) Asian; (4) American Indian or Alaska Native; (5) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; (6) Some other race
Does the current head of honors identify as Hispanic?	Yes/No
What is the gender identity of the current head of honors?	(1) Woman; (2) Transgender; (3) Man; (4) Non-binary, gender non-conforming, or gender fluid identity; (5) Some other gender identity (specify); (6) Prefer not to respond
Does your honors college have an assistant/associate dean or other person who serves as second-in-command?	Yes/No
What is the race of the current assistant/associate dean, director, or other second-in-command for the honors college? (Select all that apply.)	(1) Black or African American; (2) White; (3) Asian; (4) American Indian or Alaska Native; (5) Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander; (6) Some other race
Does the asst./assoc. dean or other second-in-command for the honors college identify as Hispanic?	Yes/No



Item/Question	Description/Response Options
<p>What is the gender identity of the current assistant/associate dean, director, or other second-in-command for the honors college?</p>	<p>(1) Woman; (2) Transgender; (3) Man; (4) Non-binary, gender non-conforming, or gender fluid identity; (5) Some other gender identity (specify); (6) Prefer not to respond</p>

*Note:* Items come from the 2021 *Census of U.S. Honors Colleges* unless otherwise indicated. Data about Institutional Carnegie Classification come from the U.S. Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

APPENDIX C  
**Postcard Announcement of Census of U.S. Honors Colleges**

<p>Dear Dr. Smith,</p> <p>Greetings! My name is Richard Badenhausen and I'm dean of Honors at Westminister College in Utah. I'm also a proud member of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), where I've served the past four years on the Executive Committee.</p> <p>I wanted to drop a note made of old-fashioned ink and paper to let you know that I'm working on a survey project with the NCHC Research Committee, and we're writing to ask your help. You should have received an email invitation and unique link to the 2021 Census of US Honors Colleges on <b>Wednesday, May 12</b>.</p> <p>If you didn't receive that email, please check your junk folder and/or feel free to reach out to me at <a href="mailto:rjb@westministercollege.edu">rjb@westministercollege.edu</a> and we'll try another way to get that link into your hands. And if you've already completed the survey, thank you for your help!</p> <p>Sincerely,</p> <p><i>Richard Badenhausen</i>          Richard Badenhausen          Dean of the Honors College, Westminister College  <a href="mailto:rjb@westministercollege.edu">rjb@westministercollege.edu</a></p>	<div data-bbox="327 286 419 381" style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px;"> <p>PRESORTED              FIRST CLASS              U.S. POSTAGE  <b>PAID</b>              SLC, UT              PERMIT # 953</p> </div> <div data-bbox="327 564 539 772" style="text-align: center;">  <p><b>WESTMINSTER              COLLEGE</b></p> <p>1840 South 1300 East              Salt Lake City, UT 84105  <a href="http://westministercollege.edu">westministercollege.edu</a></p> </div> <div data-bbox="746 355 878 789" style="text-align: right;">  <p>WC-.....SINGLP              PATRICIA SMITH              201 DONAGHEY AVE P 5024              CONWAY, AR 72035-5001</p> <p>177              T1 P1</p> </div>
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