

# HOUSING HONORS

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and **Rachael Poe**

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## INTRODUCTION

### **What We Talk About When We Talk About Housing Honors**

Linda Frost

University of Tennessee at Chattanooga

Facilities can aspire to certain qualities as an expression of a civilization. Some of these qualities are readily apparent. Some are not.

—Max DePree

When I went to college in the early 1980s at Bowling Green State University in Ohio, I entered as a freshman in the honors program. I have very specific memories of those first classes I took as an honors student—a section of honors sociology in which I wrote a case study of my German immigrant grandfather; an honors seminar in 1930s *avant garde* theatre in which the students wrote and performed plays based on the dreams they recorded nightly in their dream journals; an honors marine biology lab that ended at the professor's house with a dinner where the group sampled the sea life the class had been studying; a section of honors composition taught by the legendary “Dr. Bob” Bashore, a former director of that program and the man most responsible for my eventual choice of nineteenth-century American literature as my academic specialty. Many of these classes took place in an open lounge area in the basement of some otherwise nondescript building, the name of which I can no longer recall. What I do remember is how different that setting was from the traditional layout of my other classes. Rather than occupying the rows of metal-footed tablet desks that populated my other university classrooms, the honors students usually sat on crescent-shaped couches or other furniture reminiscent of a 1970s-era church youth-group room.

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I have specific memories of the people I met through honors—Joelle and Dave and Brett and Cindy—many of whom were in classes with me but all of whom, more importantly, lived in the same “study dorm” I did. While not strictly an honors residence, Prout Hall was indeed reserved for a particular population of the campus, one that required some kind of academic pedigree or membership in an academically enhancing program for entrance. All the National Student Exchange Students, for instance, lived in Prout Hall, including a gang from Maine who fascinated us with their taste in sweaters and constant use of the word “wicked.” When I looked up Prout Hall on the BGSU website, I found out that I was actually part of the first living-learning community established on that campus in 1981. (Sadly for alumna me, the building was demolished two decades later to make room for a new student center.) Located in the very center of campus, Prout boasted what was reputedly then the best cafeteria on campus, as well as the first co-ed residential facility. The main lobby proudly displayed an outdated and much-abused portrait of Alice Prout herself, a BGSU First Lady from days of yore. When the residents threw *Love Boat* and Halloween parties in Prout, they always dressed Alice in construction paper costumes scandalously scotch-taped to her oil portrait.

In my memory, then, honors is something that has always been clearly housed. Whether it was in that strange, very un-classroom-like classroom where students sat on pillows on the floor and talked about the politics of immigration, or in the fireplace room and hallways of Prout where my friends and I talked about poetry and whether or not we should register for the draft, honors for me has always lived decidedly *somewhere*.

But what that “somewhere” means is a harder question to answer. It quickly emerged as a key question for me when I departed the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) to become an honors director myself in 2008 at Eastern Kentucky University (EKU). I left behind a tiny but sweet office in a renovated and historically significant church where I co-taught interdisciplinary courses about time and space in what had once been the sanctuary (see Rush-ton, p. 141). My office at EKU, though, was in the bottom corner

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of an annex to a building that had once housed students; the whole space felt like an afterthought. Worst of all, the honors offices were tucked into a basement corner, far away from the rushing feet of passing honors students. Unlike the church offices in the middle of the constant foot traffic on the campus of UAB, the ECU honors offices were off the beaten path of the honors students as they trod between the honors residence hall and the rest of campus. The ECU honors students had to make a special effort and detour from their normal route to see me.

When conversations began regarding where honors might be better located on ECU's campus, I found myself at a bit of a loss. While I knew that the current facilities were not working, I could not instantly turn to other honors programs and colleges to determine the various options worth considering. I needed examples or references that covered a wide range of architectural territory. I had my prior institution, and I certainly attended every session I could at NCHC conferences about housing possibilities, but it seemed to me important to find a way to catalog the kinds of spaces honors occupies nationally and to bring that information to other frustrated honors directors, sitting in their dysfunctional campus spaces, wishing they had something exemplary to show their provosts and presidents—the “what else?” that could be their program's future home.

Honors administrators spend much of their time explaining and describing what honors is and does. When they talk about what honors looks like nationally, they should have answers to the following important questions: How pervasive is the model of separate honors facilities? How pervasive are the legendary closets that honors programs have so often mythically occupied? Where does honors really live?

*Housing Honors* attempts to answer those questions by showing the shapes honors takes in terms of the buildings and porches and study rooms and residential learning communities that contain and shelter it. It is also a book about how those spaces in turn shape the honors experience itself, whether it is the intimacy of a musty old living room or the grandeur of a LEED-certified, gray-water-

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catching honors center. This volume offers four different ways of looking at housing honors. The first section, “Housing Honors Today,” offers a nationwide view of the current honors spatial situation via the results of a survey of over 400 institutions.

The second section, “Profiles of Spaces and Places in Honors,” includes individual essays that provide much greater detail regarding the acquisition, construction and/or renovation, development, and even loss of various honors abodes. Melissa Woglom and Meredith Lind explain how the University of Massachusetts Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community was initially conceptualized and then actualized. Larry Andrews makes the powerful case in his description of the evolution of the Kent State University Honors Complex that it requires careful coordination of the many offices with whom honors must work to make architectural magic happen. Mark Jacobs outlines the way in which the separate honors campus of Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University, came into being as a clear extension of that university’s mission. And Patricia MacCorquodale wraps up the conversation about new construction by detailing the philosophy behind the green creation of the University of Arizona’s *Árbol de la Vida*.

The rest of this section focuses on how the acquisition, nature, and loss of different kinds of honors spaces have affected honors populations at various institutions. Karen Lyons discusses the distinct advantages of including classrooms, as well as the office of the National Collegiate Honors Council, in an honors residence hall at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Robert Spurrier and Jessica Roark, Vicki Ohl, and Rusty Rushton offer rich descriptions of their historically significant and variously renovated honors houses and buildings. Spurrier has long urged honors administrators to always have a wish list on hand, and these authors have benefitted from being prepared. They aspired to have—and received—historically significant homes for their programs and colleges. Mariah Birgen and Joy Ochs conclude this section of the monograph with tales of woe, of losing honors spaces. Their stories are critical because they emphasize how the pursuit of space can and will transform students, regardless of what that pursuit yields.

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The third section, “A Forum on Honors Housing,” follows the Forum tradition of the *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council* by presenting short pieces that offer a wide range of commentary about residential spaces for honors students. Essays in this section consider what is gained and what is lost when honors students are clustered in living-learning communities. Angela D. Mead, Samantha Rieger, and Leslie Sargent Jones share the results of a qualitative study they completed when surveying the honors students at Appalachian State University regarding changes to their honors residential situation. Richard Badenhausen challenges the assumption that honors students should live together in an honors community. Barry Falk; Tamara Valentine; Jamaica Afiya Pouncy; and Ashley Sweeney, Hannah Covington, and John Korstad delineate the various ways in which they have made and seen honors residential communities function well while Laura Feitzinger Brown echoes Badenhausen’s resistance to the honors living-learning model. John R. Purdie’s essay and that by Melissa L. Johnson, Elizabeth McNeill, Cory Lee, and Kathy Keeter consider the sometimes clashing cultures of honors and housing offices and the difficulties that such differences can spark. And wrapping up this section are three essays—by Gloria Cox, Keith and Christine Garbutt, and Paul Strom—about the challenges and benefits of faculty living in residence with honors students.

“The Future of Housing Honors,” the concluding section of this monograph, features the voices of students. The first essay in this section recounts a project undertaken by a group of architectural students at the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences in which the students had just 24 hours to imagine the renovation of a downtown Rotterdam facility into a unique honors residence. After a frantic day of planning, drawing, building, and critiquing under the sustained guidance of architect Remko Remijnse, these students designed an urban honors residence hall. Images from those students’ final projects follow that piece.

The final essay in the collection was written by Tatiana Cody, an honors student and biology major at Eastern Kentucky University, and Rachael Poe, a Brock Scholar and English major at the

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University of Tennessee at Chattanooga. Cody was the honors student worker when I was Director of the ECU Honors Program. She challenged me, as she was wont to do, regarding the issue of student perspective in the monograph: “Where is it in this book?” she asked me one day when we were discussing the project. Cody’s question led to a survey, which was distributed through NCHC’s national listserv to current honors students. Almost 300 students responded. This survey documents the predictions of current honors students regarding where honors will—and should—live in the future. Thanks to Cody, who prompted that conversation, and Poe, who gave it a final form in this article, the student view on the future of honors spaces concludes this volume. That is, I think, exactly as it should be.

Many people are to be thanked for their work on this monograph. All of the contributors were enormously patient and suffered the editors’ seemingly endless requests for more revision and more information with good humor and impressive kindness. My co-editor and writer, Lisa W. Kay, was my guide as we undertook our large survey and was crucial in developing our contribution to *Housing Honors*. She is also, to borrow those Maine students’ word, a wicked copy editor. Rachael Poe spent hours during her junior and senior years not only helping me acclimate to UTC culture and life, but also proofreading, offering suggestions, and corresponding with authors. Russell Helms generated probably a dozen different cover designs before this one was selected; he is always my go-to about looking good in print, and I am never not grateful to him. Mitch Pruitt and Cliff Jefferson of Wake Up Graphics are also dedicated to making NCHC’s publications look lovely, and their contributions are greatly appreciated. Reviewers of the first draft of this manuscript provided excellent advice, and all of the members of the NCHC Publications Board remained enthusiastic about the project despite how many times updates about the monograph appeared on their meeting agendas. Ada Long—*long may she edit*—came through, as she always does, with steady, loving, and editorially definitive support. And Jeff Portnoy works harder than just about anyone I know, spending hours and hours on all of these manuscripts published by

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NCHC. He is kind, smart, thorough, and deeply funny. Thank you, Jeff, for your relentless pen and your saving wit.

Where people live and work is never incidental to how they live and work; the two are always connected. What that means for educators and students working in honors is something this volume seeks to understand. While I hope this collection is as interesting as it is informative to its readers, I am most hopeful that it will be of practical use to those people seeking to improve, expand, or simply find a place for their honors programs and colleges to live.





# HOUSING HONORS

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PART I:  
HOUSING HONORS TODAY



CHAPTER 1

Where Honors Lives:  
Results from a Survey of the Structures  
and Spaces of U.S. Honors Programs  
and Colleges

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The ninth item on the National Collegiate Honors Council's (2014b) list of "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program" reads:

The program is located in suitable, preferably prominent, quarters on campus that provide both access for the students and a focal point for honors activity. Those accommodations include space for honors administrative, faculty, and

support staff functions as appropriate. They may include space for an honors lounge, library, reading rooms, and computer facilities. If the honors program has a significant residential component, the honors housing and residential life functions are designed to meet the academic and social needs of honors students. (item 9)

The list of “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” repeats the ninth characteristic but adds the following sentence: “Where the home university has a significant residential component, the honors college offers substantial honors residential opportunities” (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2014a, item 10). Having space for honors on university and college campuses, ranging from separate honors campuses and academic buildings and residential facilities to study rooms, offices, and lounges, is a key component of the honors experiences offered to students. The members of NCHC have agreed that the excellence of honors programs does not simply lie in how closely courses align to mission statements or how much control administrators have over admissions policies or even how very fine the faculty are who teach in honors: *where* honors instructors, staff, and administrators work and *where* honors students live and work on campus are critical to overall success.

## **WHAT WE ALREADY KNOW**

The existing literature on higher education, campus configuration, and facility design is as rich as the area of research on student residential life. It includes philosophical studies for the existence of various kinds of spaces, arguments for redesigning current spaces, or approaches to rethinking different planning practices, as well as descriptions and full-scale research studies on housing practices such as living-learning communities. While not meant to be a comprehensive list, below are some of the most intriguing voices in these conversations and an entrée into the multi-layered conversation about campus planning and designing physical structures.

Research on facility design and academic physical structures is still not a standard area of intellectual inquiry, but work on how space and place affect student learning and student success overall has picked up steam with the increasing pressures to attract, retain, and graduate students from U.S. universities. Much of the conversation regarding buildings and use of space on campus has focused on the often controversial construction of expensive amenities like new student recreation centers and state-of-the-art residence halls. Charles Carney Strange and James H. Banning (2001) in *Educating by Design: Creating Campus Learning Environments that Work* provide first theoretical and then practical examples of the ways in which campus environments and their uses attract students and parents, do or do not satisfy them as customers seeking services, provide the ability to create communities among the campus population, and work toward either constructing or reconfiguring existing spaces to achieve specific learning outcomes. In other words, Strange and Banning take many of the key questions currently of interest to educators and educational officials and apply them to the living and lived environments of the actual campus: How do they best serve students? How do they create community on campus so that students feel comfortable and stay? How can honors educators help students learn the things they need to learn and teach them the way they need to be taught? How do honors programs and colleges best help them to move beyond the campus and into the work force? Strange and Banning contend:

As educators acquire a more sophisticated understanding of human environments, they will be better positioned to eliminate those features of institutions that are needlessly stressful or inhibiting, and ultimately to create those features that will challenge students toward active learning, growth, and development. Whether we want them to or not, or whether we understand them or not, educational environments do exert an impact on students. Our preference is to approach the design of these environments with eyes wide open and intentions clearly informed. (p. 4)

*Educating by Design* is a valuable resource for anyone interested in and compelled to consider how to utilize and envision campus space to achieve the central goals of higher education today.

In 2010, the Learning Spaces Collaboratory (LSC) emerged from two decades of work generated by Project Kaleidoscope, a STEM initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. LSC maintains an interdisciplinary, collaborative body of researchers and designers who, via their robust web presence, cultivate evidence-based research related to learning spaces. The LSC translates the results of “contemporary research and practice in the field into roadmaps for shaping and assessing built environments for learning in the undergraduate setting” (Learning Spaces Collaboratory, n.d.a, About Us section, para. 1). The LSC hosts a website <<http://www.pkallsc.org>> and numerous webinars to educate educators about how to use learning spaces to facilitate instruction appropriate to a twenty-first-century institution of higher education. Rich with examples of various revised, renewed, or newly constructed learning spaces, the LSC claims as its primary goal:

To inform the work of campus planning teams with responsibility for shaping, maintaining and renewing undergraduate learning environments—whether the focus be remodeling a single classroom; recycling an outdated library; renovating for interdisciplinary STEM learning and research; redesigning the landscape/greening the campus; imagining, designing, constructing, and maintaining a major new facility; developing/implementing a multi-year agenda for shaping formal and informal learning spaces campus-wide. (Learning Spaces Collaboratory, n.d.b, Vision, Goals, & Strategy section, para. 4)

The LSC offers a constantly updated conversation from a multitude of stakeholders and active participants about the best possible use of space on a college campus, space designed specifically to facilitate the widest bandwidth of learning possible. Of course, as Richard Vaz (2013), Dean of the Interdisciplinary and Global Studies Division at Worcester Polytechnic, notes in his response to a blog

by LSC Principal Jeanne L. Narum (2013) on “Environments for Twentieth-Century Learning”: “Through 40 years of project-based learning, [our campus] has found that our students achieve and learn more when they leave our campus to tackle real-world problems, whether on the other side of the planet or simply across town” (Web log comment). It is perhaps ironic, but nevertheless powerful that forward-thinking campus designers may seek to eschew the campus environment entirely, exchanging it for the educational value of the “outside world.”

As bloggers, architects, and university facilities planners struggle with the realities and possibilities of the university’s built environments, administrators and staffers from the offices of Student Development, Student Life, and Housing work to meet similar learning outcomes via the communities of students who work and/or live on campus. The research on these communities is prodigious; much of it focuses on living-learning community initiatives in which students share residential, academic, and recreational space and time. According to Charles C. Schroeder and Phyllis Mable (1994), co-editors of *Realizing the Educational Potential of Residence Halls*, the increase in college enrollments in the 1960s and 1970s by members of a wider swath of the general population and the attendant increase in residential facilities to house these diverse populations led to the development of “programmatically initiatives [that] reflected renewed efforts to focus on the education of the whole student, highlight connections between academic affairs and student affairs, and incorporate human/student development into the work of both faculty and student affairs staff” (p. 9). Thus, living-learning communities were first born at institutions like the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Michigan State University, and Stanford University. According to Schroeder and Mable, since residence halls are now considered fair game for the inclusion of programs and curricula that facilitate deeper, better learning on the part of the students who live in them, “residence hall staff must broaden their emphasis from managing and administering facilities to a central focus on creating environments that support and foster student learning. This is the educational challenge facing college residence halls”

(p. 13). Despite a number of studies either relevant to or specifically regarding residential programs and living-learning communities, campus offices of residential life and housing continue to experiment with, assess, and revise the living-learning community model at institutions of all sizes across the U.S. (Astin, 1977; Chickering, 1969; Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pasque & Murphy, 2005; Pike, 1999; Stassen, 2003; Tinto, 2003; Wawrzynski & Jessup-Anger, 2010; Zhao & Kuh 2004). These residential programs, linked to or designed around a particular academic or student interest area, remain a key high-impact practice for institutions seeking to increase their retention and overall student success rate on their campuses. According to Gary R. Pike (1999), “students in residential learning communities had significantly higher levels of involvement, interaction, integration, and gains in learning and intellectual development than did students in traditional residence halls” (p. 269). While the relevant factors that are key to specific successes vary from study to study, the idea of using residential facilities in conjunction with academics to build community among students is now a foundational assumption for housing on many, if not most university campuses.

While small, a pool of research specifically on honors housing and its relationship to a variety of concerns in honors education does exist. In fact, the question of the spaces honors inhabits appears as some component of most handbooks published by the National Collegiate Honors Council having to do with comprehensive honors education. Samuel Schuman’s (2006) *Beginning in Honors: A Handbook* dedicates a section entirely to the question of “Facilities,” introducing it in this way:

At some major universities honors colleges are literally colleges in the physical sense: they have their own offices, classroom space, and residential, study, and extracurricular spaces designated wholly for their use. Small honors programs, in contrast, are much more likely to make do with a file cabinet and a closet. (p. 47)



As far as Schuman is concerned, the most important space to which a new director or dean should attend is the classroom: “perhaps more than any other honors facility, an honors classroom should be first class” (p. 48). Scott Carnicom, K. Watson Harris, Barbara Draude, Scott McDaniel, and Philip M. Mathis (2007) detail the process for designing and assessing such a classroom—the Advanced Classroom Technology Laboratory or “ACT Lab”—on the Middle Tennessee State University (MTSU) campus, as part of their Paul W. Martin Sr. Honors Building. As Carnicom et al. note, “In the spirit of innovation, the institution decided in 2005 to construct and test a new experimental learning space in the Honors building” (p. 121). That space indeed opens up the possibilities for technology use in an “adaptable, enriched, reliable learning environment,” offering the campus community an intuitive but technologically empowered space in which faculty can experiment and students can be trained (p. 121). MTSU’s ACT Lab includes a “Room Wizard” that schedules and tracks the room’s use, thus making possible careful assessment of its employment by a broad range of users. But despite the emphasis in honors on curriculum and Schuman’s call that the honors classroom should be first and foremost in the design of any honors-specific building, there is strikingly little other research on honors classroom innovations such as Carnicom and his fellow researchers describe.

In his handbook, Schuman (2006) also sums up popular sentiment regarding honors residential space: “Honors residence halls arouse strong feelings, both pro and con” (p. 49). He notes and argues that the question of whether or not to institute such a facility must be approached campus by campus:

An honors dorm may be just the thing at one school and a catastrophic mistake at another institution that seems quite similar. Honors residences are perhaps the ultimate illustration of the importance of the principle of designing an honors program customized to the specific needs of particular institutions. (p. 49)

The question of whether or not to pursue such a model on one's campus is indeed the subject of two essays, one by Richard Badenhauen and one by Laura Feitzinger Brown, found later in this volume.

In another NCHC handbook, *Fundrai\$ing for Honor\$*, Larry R. Andrews (2009) addresses the area of facilities in his discussion about "Developing Transformational Projects," the section of his text that focuses on the largest and most ambitious fundraising efforts. Andrews starts the conversation with a serious caveat as to the willingness of donors to contribute to facility enhancement or development in the first place. "Less attractive than scholarships to many major donors, but still often successful, are improvements to honors spaces" (p. 114). Andrews explains:

we are thinking about something transformative, not just knocking out a wall, refurbishing a student lounge, or adding an adjacent room to the honors facility. Multi-million-dollar donors are needed for major expansions such as adding a new wing, completely gutting and renovating another existing building, or constructing an entirely new building to house honors. (p. 114)

Andrews' wise and helpful text cautions how one should go about such a project: collecting as much background information as possible regarding other honors facilities, results from student surveys and focus groups, ideas from architects and university facilities planners. Andrews notes that "such a project could be correlated to a move from program to college status" (p. 114) and that the cost of new construction in such a case could be folded into a much larger "ask," resulting in the endowment of the entire college (p. 123). In this situation, Andrews observes, the honors administrator will always work in tandem with the university or college's development office and may even be replaced as the asker by "the university's president [who] may be assigned as point person for the contact, making the case instead of the director, probably in more than one visit" (p. 115).

While Andrews contends that the shift from honors program to honors college may indeed be the moment for a move to a new or improved facility, Peter C. Sederberg's (2008) "Characteristics of the Contemporary Honors College: A Descriptive Analysis of a Survey of NCHC Member Colleges" in *The Honors College Phenomenon*, which he edited, offers the first slice of empirical data that suggests the role of facilities in the configuration of what is now the familiar entity of the honors college. As chair of the NCHC Ad Hoc Task Force on Honors Colleges and an early dean of the University of South Carolina Honors College, Sederberg and his team sent surveys to 68 self-identified honors colleges and compiled the results of the 38 that responded, a compilation that was revised and republished as the second chapter of Sederberg's monograph. Sederberg notes:

Although only a minority (16) possess their own building and the others (19) reside in a suite of offices in a larger building, not too much can be drawn from these data. For example, being confined to a dilapidated house on the fringes of campus is not self-evidently better than a renovated suite in a centrally located building. (p. 34)

Happily, Sederberg adds, "none of our respondents indicated that they were located in [a] 'cave next to the boiler room'" (p. 34). Sederberg points out that fewer than 50% of the respondents could boast for their college an honors student lounge/reading room (45.7%), an honors IT center (40.0%), or even honors class or seminar rooms (37.1%) (p. 34). Honors residential spaces, on the other hand, were "widespread" with over 90% of the colleges reporting that they offered some kind of residential honors component and over 70% indicating that their college offered residential opportunities throughout the four expected years of undergraduate study (p. 34). Sederberg concludes this part of his discussion about the effects of becoming an honors college by noting:

our respondents indicate that the transformation from program to college generally contributed to improved facilities.

Of the 31 answering our summary question, 24 (77.4%) indicated a “great” improvement while 5 (16.1%) agreed that some improvement occurred. Only two reported “little or no” improvement. (p. 34)

While not developed specifically to verify Sederberg’s findings, the study below does provide findings that offer an interesting coda to this observation in Sederberg’s study.

More specific research and commentary on the question of honors residential spaces and the programming that occurs there exists, but is scant. Nancy L. Reichert’s (2007) “The Honors Community: Furthering Program Goals by Securing Honors Housing” appeared in *Honors in Practice* and essentially offers a case study of the author’s strategy for re-securing honors housing on her campus at Southern Polytechnic State University. She notes that her goal was to “bring honors housing back to campus after a private housing operation was given control over all campus housing,” a situation not uncommon on state campuses today where demands for improved living spaces on campuses seeking to maintain their competitive edge in a shrinking market of traditional-age students have surpassed state budgets for new buildings (p. 111). Reichert’s objective in her piece is to offer by way of her own example a strategy for other directors also seeking to make the case that providing housing is critical to the success of their honors program. As part of the argument she made for her administration, Reichert surveyed the NCHC membership via the NCHC listserv. Of the 43 responses she received, 74% of those institutions offered honors housing (p. 115). Of that group, 97% felt that honors housing was “important to very important for building community in honors programs,” 66% “found honors housing to be important to very important for recruitment,” and 55% “agreed that honors housing was important to very important to student success in college” (p. 115). Reichert writes: “The data I collected from the survey proved to be invaluable” (p. 115), and although her own battle to re-secure honors housing on her campus was far from won at the end of the piece, she came away from her own struggle more fully aware that “several institutions have worked quite hard to document the benefits

of honors housing for honors students” and that “this information needs to be better documented for the larger honors community” (p. 119).

In his “Residential Housing Population Revitalization: Honors Students,” David Taylor (2007) uses the process of “benefit segmentation” to parse the “perceived benefits or characteristics” of a new residence hall complex as determined via an historical study of the housing habits of honors students on that campus before and after the new complex opened (p. 96). Taylor writes:

Statistically, the recent addition of the honors residence hall complex positively affected the number of high-ability students living on campus. Many of these high-ability students are now living in a homogenous environment that provides the opportunity to increase social integration. Social integration in turn increases institutional commitment, which has been shown to be linked to persistence. . . . (p. 96)

As Taylor’s study shows, even when the university’s overall on-campus population declined, the number of honors students living on campus increased by 15%, an event he attributes to the opening of the new honors residential complex (p. 95). Taylor concludes:

As this study indicates, there is empirical support for the concept that a new facility encourages students to live on campus and can create a more vibrant academic community populated by honors students. For those administrators interested in ways to expand and promote their honors program, facility improvements can accomplish programmatic revitalization. (pp. 96–97)

Taylor’s study is clearly geared toward honors administrators hungry for data that can support their honors work. Greig M. Stewart (1980) and Anne N. Rinn (2004), though, have both produced studies that seem more intellectually disinterested and therefore differently interesting.

Stewart's 1980 study, "How Honors Students' Academic Achievement Relates to Housing," looks at residents of an honors housing complex that was formally established in 1977 at the University of Maryland, College Park. Stewart contends that while earlier studies verify that students living in residence halls tend to be more likely to earn a bachelor's degree and a higher GPA than those not living in on-campus housing, studies focusing on high-achieving students or honors students have not been as clear. Looking at 74 full-time general honors students in 1977 and 1978, Stewart concludes that the residence of the specific honors units was not a "significant factor" in relation to the students' GPA (p. 28).

Rinn, Associate Professor of Educational Psychology at the University of North Texas and an honors student herself during her undergraduate years, has researched the successes of various academic initiatives in relation to gifted and talented students in both secondary and post-secondary education. While noting the plentiful evidence supporting the idea that the residential environment of students plays a significant role in their academic achievement at that institution, Rinn (2004) indicates that, as is the case in general when considering gifted college students, little research exists on honors students' overall academic success vis-à-vis their housing situation. Rinn takes into account a wide range of educational studies and raises important theoretical points including whether the combination of increased "environmental press" thought to especially affect honors students and the potentially isolating environment of an honors-designated residence hall may lead to a better or worse campus experience. In the end, Rinn raises more questions than she answers:

While living in an honors residence hall can influence the academic achievement of gifted college students, the social effects are arguably controversial. Honors students living in honors residence halls are able to form a common group identity, but they may also engage in self-segregation, the formation of narrow peer groups and reference groups, and they may experience isolation from the rest of the campus.

It is uncertain whether the potential benefits of living in an honors residence hall outweigh the potential costs. (p. 76)

While Rinn's study potentially problematizes assumptions about the benefits of honors housing that the national honors community has codified in the NCHC list of the "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program," she herself calls for more research to flesh out the questions she poses: "Empirical findings could provide more solid evidence regarding the academic and social effects of living in an honors residence hall and could assist researchers, honors college administrators, and others in the improvement of collegiate honors education" (p. 76).

All of these studies indicate an important conversation that shows that members of the honors community clearly care about both where honors programs and colleges reside and what that space may or may not contribute to the educational communities that they are trying to create. Nevertheless, this conversation has lacked until now a thorough picture or survey of where honors lives on a national scale.

## **THE SURVEY**

In the spring of 2012, Director of the Eastern Kentucky University (EKU) Honors Program Linda Frost, Associate Director of EKU Honors and Associate Professor of Statistics Lisa W. Kay, and EKU honors student research assistant Aaron Ash conducted a survey of all NCHC-member programs and colleges and an additional group of non-NCHC-member institutions. (See the Appendix.) This survey was designed as a census, collecting general information regarding the facilities that exist at these honors programs and colleges. Out of the 1,012 institutions contacted, 421 responded, giving a 42% response rate. Because the survey gathered incomplete census data and did not take a random sample, inferential procedures are inappropriate here; there will be no discussion of confidence intervals or hypothesis tests and therefore no discussion of confidence levels, margins of error, or significance levels. One of the limitations of this study that hinders the use of inference is that

the sample may not be representative of all honors programs and colleges because nonrespondents may differ from respondents with respect to the variables of interest. While not conclusive, the data set still offers interesting insights into the national picture of where honors lives.

The respondents provided general demographic information—the name of their institution, their honors college or program, the title of the person in charge of that program or college, and the number of students (in terms of intervals, beginning with 0 and ending with more than 1000) enrolled there. The survey then asked specific questions about the kinds of space utilized by and relegated to honors on their individual campuses. Has honors been given any space on campus, and if so, what kind of space? The categories included the following: an honors center that includes administrative offices and classrooms in one complex; an historic building designated for honors use; a newly constructed building designated specifically for honors use; a renovated building; a section in a larger building that honors shared with other units; something completely different. The survey asked about the number of offices and classrooms designated for honors use on the respondent's campus. It also asked about whether institutions had multi-use programming space, how many people it could hold, and the types of events held there. Other questions concerned who had administrative control over this space and whether or not students had keyed or 24-hour access to it.

Questions about residential space mirrored the ones asked about honors administrative and academic space, such as if respondents had residential space designated for honors students on their campuses, and, if so, what type. The options here included an honors-only residence hall, an honors wing or wings in a shared residence hall, scattered rooms throughout a single building, no residential space designated for honors, or something else entirely. If the respondents indicated that their campus had honors residential space, then they could select the description that would best describe what they had: on-campus apartments, suites, double-corridor style dormitories with double or single rooms, or something



else. If the respondents noted that they had honors-designated space, as over 50% of the respondents did, the survey also asked if they had any faculty-living-in-residence with their honors students; follow-up questions gathered additional details: how many family members historically had been in those residences, who selected them and how long they were contracted to stay, and whether or not those programs permitted family pets of the cat and dog variety.

Although fairly comprehensive in its questions, the survey unfortunately did not define terms for the respondents. For example, what is a suite to one director may well be an apartment to another. The lack of common terminology potentially problematizes some of the results although we did follow up to clarify particularly confusing responses. While the survey asked if the respondents' programs or colleges had an honors center with administrative offices, classrooms, and programming space, it did not ask specifically if honors occupied a stand-alone, honors-only building. The survey could also have been more explicit about asking if respondents identified as either an honors college or an honors program or as something—an honors academy, an honors school—in between. Similarly the survey needed to ask more explicitly if respondents came from a two- or four-year institution.

Because of the focus on the structures themselves, the survey did not inquire about specific programming in the spaces other than that intimated by the presence of faculty-living-in-residence. It would have been interesting, though, given the concerns covered in other areas of this monograph, to know more about respondents' programming in their respective residential spaces, especially their living-learning communities. For that matter, it would have been interesting to discover if programs and colleges with discrete honors buildings had assessment plans with learning outcomes designed specifically for those facilities, whether they were residential or not.

Finally, the survey avoided asking respondents about their opinions regarding the spaces and structures they occupy on their individual campuses. And although the value of these opinions would be questionable since most administrators would want more

or better space on their campus for their honors community, it would have been interesting to know how many respondents actually felt that their housing needs or office needs were adequately being met. While the intention of this survey was not to determine the satisfaction of honors staff with their rooms and views, it would have been of interest at the end of the day to have that information and compare it to the rest of the data collected.

## **THE SURVEY RESULTS**

Of the 421 total respondents, 93 self-identified as “honors colleges,” 318 as “honors programs,” and 10 as “other” (honors academies, honors communities, or schools of honors). Given the current interest in honors colleges and honors programs in the U.S. and the perceived or actual advantages or disadvantages of being one or the other, we decided to analyze the data to see how respondents from these different honors entities compared. Because of their relatively small number, the data collected from those entities named something other than a “program” or a “college” were not separately summarized, although that information is included in summaries of the entire group.

Of the 421 respondents, 340 or 81% of them said that their institutions specifically dedicated space to honors. This news is good because it indicates that a sizeable group of honors programs and colleges indeed have space allocated for their use.

Overall, 97% of the respondents from honors colleges stated that they had dedicated space for honors on their campuses while only 76% of the responding honors programs said the same. When dedicated honors space status was examined for responding programs and colleges at the reported sizes of student population—0–200, 201–400, 401–600, 601–800, 801–1000, or over 1000—two things became apparent. Of the honors colleges serving more than 200 students, all of them—100% or 76 out of 76—indicated that they have dedicated space for honors. This situation was not true, however, of the colleges with fewer than 200 students. Moreover, of the programs with more than 200 students, only 86% (102 out of 119)

reported having dedicated space for honors. At least in this example, being a college clearly has its advantages.

The following are the kinds of honors facilities specifically identified in the survey: an honors center that includes administrative offices and classrooms in one complex, an historic building dedicated for honors use, a building newly constructed for honors, a building renovated for honors, and an honors section in a shared university building. Respondents could and did check as many of these as were relevant on their campuses, so the numbers here must be understood in that context. The results, as summarized in Table 1, indicate that having dedicated honors space in a newly constructed building is not common. Over half of those respondents who said they had space dedicated to honors academic or administrative use on campus indicated that they had an honors section in a shared building. Many of those who selected “Other” indicated that they had offices, classrooms, or lounges dedicated to honors; some respondents said they had a single room or even a shared room for honors use. These answers clearly indicate that a room or office suite for honors is much more of a reality on most campuses than is an entire honors building.

Honors college respondents were more likely than program respondents to have honors centers, historic buildings, newly constructed buildings, and renovated buildings. Table 2 summarizes the responses from the honors college and program respondents. The honors colleges represented in the survey were more likely than the honors programs to have what appears to be their own building. Of the 21 colleges that indicated that they had space in an historic building, only 4 of them selected the shared building option, while 9 of 25 programs with space in an historic building indicated their space was shared. (Of course, having an historic building may or may not be a positive thing. As one respondent quipped, “By ‘historic’ I mean old and crappy.”) All 13 of the colleges with space in a newly constructed building appeared to have their own building, but 2 of the 8 programs that had space in a new building were in a shared space. Colleges and programs fared similarly with regard to sharing renovated buildings: while 18 of the 24 colleges with

**TABLE 1: TYPES OF SPACES AND STRUCTURES DEDICATED TO HONORS ACADEMIC AND/OR ADMINISTRATIVE USE**

Type of Space/Structure	No. Institutions (% of Institutions, $n = 421$ ) (% of Institutions with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_s = 340$ )
Honors center	88 (20.90%) (25.88%)
Historic building	46 (10.93%) (13.53%)
Newly constructed building	21 (4.99%) (6.18%)
Renovated building	55 (13.06%) (16.18%)
Honors section in a shared building	184 (43.71%) (54.12%)
Other	87 (20.67%) (25.59%)

*Note.* Some of those who responded yes to the initial space question may have understood the question to include honors residential space (an area covered later in the survey). Some respondents appeared to use “Other” simply to clarify.

space in a renovated building had a building to themselves, 22 of the 28 programs indicated the same. As Table 2 reveals, honors programs are just a bit more likely than honors colleges to house at least part of their program membership and staff in a shared section of a building—approximately 44% of the programs indicated that this situation characterized the space dedicated to honors on their campus while 41% of colleges noted they were housed in such a space.

The survey asked if respondents had classrooms dedicated to honors use on their campus and, if so, how many. If the institutions reporting that they did not have space dedicated to honors academic or administrative use do not have any honors classrooms, then over half of the 421 respondents have no classrooms dedicated for honors use, and only roughly 39% of the respondents had 1 to 3 classrooms dedicated to honors. Furthermore, nearly 41% of the 340 respondents who said they had dedicated honors spaces indicated that they had no classrooms dedicated for honors use. Table

**TABLE 2: TYPES OF SPACES AND STRUCTURES DEDICATED TO HONORS ACADEMIC AND/OR ADMINISTRATIVE USE BY COLLEGE/PROGRAM**

Type of Space/ Structure	No. Colleges (% of Colleges, $n_c = 93$ ) (% of Colleges with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_{cs} = 90$ )	No. Programs (% of Programs, $n_p = 318$ ) (% of Programs with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_{ps} = 241$ )
Honors center	38 (40.86%) (42.22%)*	49 (15.41%) (20.33%)
Historic building	21 (22.58%) (23.33%)	25 (7.86%) (10.37%)
Newly constructed building	13 (13.98%) (14.44%)	8 (2.52%) (3.32%)
Renovated building	24 (25.81%) (26.67%)	28 (8.81%) (11.62%)
Honors section in a shared building	38 (40.86%) (42.22%)	140 (44.03%) (58.09%)
Other	18 (19.35%) (20.00%)	67 (21.07%) (27.80%)

\*There were 38 college respondents who reported having an honors center. Thus,  $38/93 \times 100\% \approx 40.86\%$  of all responding colleges reported having an honors center, and  $38/90 \times 100\% \approx 42.22\%$  of responding colleges with dedicated honors space reported having an honors center. Other percentages in Table 2 and other tables were computed similarly.

3 summarizes responses to the survey question regarding classrooms. Very few—a total of only 39 respondents—had more than 3 classrooms set aside specifically for use by honors.

If it can be assumed that the respondents who indicated they did not have space dedicated to honors academic or administrative use had no honors classrooms, roughly 25% of honors colleges had 0 classrooms dedicated for honors use while over 60% of honors program respondents had no classrooms dedicated to honors. Table 4 summarizes the data for number of classrooms by college/program

**TABLE 3: NUMBER OF CLASSROOMS DEDICATED TO HONORS USE**

No. Classrooms	No. Institutions (% of Institutions, $n = 421$ )	No. Institutions among Those with Dedicated Honors Space (% of Institutions with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_s = 340$ )
0	219 (52.02%)	138 (40.59%)
1–3	163 (38.72%)	163 (47.94%)
4–6	28 (6.65%)	28 (8.24%)
7–9	3 (0.71%)	3 (0.88%)
10 or more	8 (1.90%)	8 (2.35%)

status. As Table 4 illustrates, the honors college respondents again painted a more rosy resource picture for their campuses than the honors program respondents. Nearly half of the programs that said they had space on campus dedicated to honors did not have any honors classrooms.

Table 5 provides a summary of the distinguishing features of the classrooms for the 202 respondents who indicated they had at least one designated honors classroom. Clearly movable tables and chairs are fairly standard in these honors classrooms. Projectors are very common, and even Smart Boards are available in many classrooms.

The survey also gathered information about honors-dedicated office space. The operative assumption is that respondents who said they did not have space dedicated for honors academic or administrative uses did not have any honors offices. Only about 23% of the respondents had no offices dedicated to honors, while nearly half of the respondents had 1–3 honors offices. The data on honors offices appear in Table 6. Respondents who noted they had some space dedicated to honors use were much more likely to have offices allocated for their use than they were classrooms: of the 340 institutions that claimed to have dedicated honors space, almost 96%

**TABLE 4: NUMBER OF CLASSROOMS DEDICATED TO HONORS USE BY COLLEGE/PROGRAM**

No. Classrooms	No. Colleges (% of Colleges, $n_c = 93$ )	No. Colleges among Those with Dedicated Honors Space (% of Colleges with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_{cs} = 90$ )	No. Programs (% of Programs, $n_p = 318$ )	No. Programs among Those with Dedicated Honors Space (% of Programs with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_{ps} = 241$ )
0	23 (24.73%)	20 (22.22%)	193 (60.69%)	116 (48.13%)
1-3	45 (48.39%)	45 (50.00%)	114 (35.85%)	114 (47.30%)
4-6	16 (17.20%)	16 (17.78%)	9 (2.83%)	9 (3.73%)
7-9	3 (3.23%)	3 (3.33%)	0 (0.00%)	0 (0.00%)
10 or more	6 (6.45%)	6 (6.67%)	2 (0.63%)	2 (0.83%)

**TABLE 5: DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF HONORS CLASSROOMS**

Feature	No. Institutions (% of Institutions with at Least One Honors Classroom, $n_{cl} = 202$ )
Smart Boards	63 (31.19%)
Projectors	150 (74.26%)
Computer stations	91 (45.05%)
Movable desks	81 (40.10%)
Movable chairs	182 (90.10%)
Movable tables	162 (80.20%)

**TABLE 6: NUMBER OF OFFICES DEDICATED TO HONORS USE**

No. Offices	No. Institutions (% of Institutions, $n = 421$ )	No. Institutions among Those with Dedicated Honors Space (% of Institutions with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_s = 340$ )
0	96 (22.80%)	15 (4.41%)
1–3	202 (47.98%)	202 (59.41%)
4–6	50 (11.88%)	50 (14.71%)
7–9	32 (7.60%)	32 (9.41%)
10 or more	41 (9.74%)	41 (12.06%)

*Note.* One program indicated in a note under a question regarding residential space that it had an office, so its record was updated to reflect that information.

had at least one office while approximately 59% had at least one classroom.

Table 7 illustrates the tendency of responding colleges to have more resources than responding programs. Very few colleges had no office space; in fact, all of the colleges that reported having



**TABLE 7: NUMBER OF OFFICES DEDICATED TO HONORS USE BY COLLEGE/PROGRAM**

No. Offices	No. Colleges (% of Colleges, $n_c = 93$ )	No. Colleges among Those with Dedicated Honors Space (% of Colleges with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_{cs} = 90$ )	No. Programs (% of Programs, $n_p = 318$ )	No. Programs among Those with Dedicated Honors Space (% of Programs with Dedicated Honors Space, $n_{ps} = 241$ )
0	3 (3.23%)	0 (0.00%)	92 (28.93%)	15 (6.22%)
1-3	28 (30.11%)	28 (31.11%)	167 (52.52%)	167 (69.29%)
4-6	19 (20.43%)	19 (21.11%)	30 (9.43%)	30 (12.45%)
7-9	16 (17.20%)	16 (17.78%)	16 (5.03%)	16 (6.64%)
10 or more	27 (29.03%)	27 (30.00%)	13 (4.09%)	13 (5.39%)

dedicated honors space said they had at least one office. On the other hand, approximately 29% of programs indicated that they had no offices for honors, and roughly 6% of programs with dedicated honors space on campus had no office space. At the other end of the spectrum, nearly a third of colleges said they had at least 10 offices, but only a small proportion of programs could make such a claim.

When respondents were asked if they had programming space set aside for honors use, a space seating anywhere from 1 to more than 400 people where honors meetings, orientations, and social events took place, only 58% or 243 of the 420 respondents who answered the question said they had such space; 75 (81%) of the 93 honors colleges indicated they had programming space, while 161 (51%) of the 317 programs that answered the question said they had programming space.

Of the 242 respondents who answered the question regarding the capacity of their programming space (one of the 243 institutions that claimed to have programming space did not answer the question about capacity), the vast majority of them indicated the space would hold either 0 to 100 people or 101 to 200 people. Only 16 (7%) said their space would hold over 200 people (with only 1 out of the 16 saying that the space would hold over 400 individuals). Table 8 summarizes responses to this question for all respondents, as well as colleges and programs. While approximately 89% of the honors programs reporting programming space capacity indicated their space would hold no more than 100 individuals, clearly honors colleges were more likely than programs to have a programming space that holds more than 200 people.

Respondents also provided information regarding the kinds of activities for which they use their programming space; they could select any and all options that were relevant. The most commonly stated use of programming space among the 242 respondents who responded to the question was social or cultural events at approximately 82%. Table 9 summarizes the data related to the uses of these spaces. While under 40% of responding institutions said they use their programming space for non-honors events or activities,

**TABLE 8: HONORS PROGRAMMING SPACE CAPACITY**

Programming Space Capacity	No. Institutions (% of Institutions Reporting Programming Space Capacity, $n = 242$ )	No. Colleges (% of Colleges Reporting Programming Space Capacity, $n_c = 75$ )	No. Programs (% of Programs Reporting Programming Space Capacity, $n_p = 160$ )
0-100	197 (81.40%)	49 (65.33%)	142 (88.75%)
101-200	26 (10.74%)	15 (20.00%)	10 (6.25%)
201-300	9 (3.72%)	5 (6.67%)	4 (2.50%)
301-400	6 (2.48%)	4 (5.33%)	2 (1.25%)
More than 400	1 (0.41%)	0 (0.00%)	1 (0.63%)
I don't know	3 (1.24%)	2 (2.67%)	1 (0.63%)

**TABLE 9: FUNCTIONS OF HONORS PROGRAMMING SPACES**

Activity	No. Institutions (% of Institutions Providing Information about Functions of Programming Space, $n_{ps} = 242$ )
Administrative meetings	177 (73.14%)
Program-wide or college-wide meetings	130 (53.72%)
Orientations and/or advising sessions	172 (71.07%)
Social or cultural events	198 (81.82%)
Non-honors events or activities	95 (39.26%)
Other	54 (22.31%)

all of the other specific functions were selected by a majority of respondents. Under “Other,” quite a few respondents indicated that their space was used as a study lounge, and several said that classes sometimes met in the space.

The survey also asked whether any non-honors activities take place in their programming space and, if so, who approves the use of the space. Table 10 describes the responses to this question. (One of the 243 institutions that claimed to have programming space did not answer the question about approval of non-honors events occurring in the space.) The most frequently reported response of “honors program or college head” was given by roughly 45% of respondents; only 1 institution responded with “honors advisory board.”

Of the 242 respondents who answered the question regarding student access, 150 (62%) of them said that their students did not have keyed access to this central programming space outside of regular office hours. In fact, only 89 or 37% of the responding programs and colleges allowed their students such access. (Note that

**TABLE 10: APPROVAL OF NON-HONORS EVENTS OCCURRING IN HONORS PROGRAMMING SPACES**

Entity in Charge of Granting Approval	No. Institutions (% of Institutions Providing Information about Approval of Non-Honors Use of Programming Space, $n_{ps} = 242$ )
Honors program or college head	110 (45.45%)
Honors advisory board	1 (0.41%)
Non-honors supervisory entity in the academic building	25 (10.33%)
Non-honors events do not occur in the space	64 (26.45%)
Other	34 (14.05%)
I don't know	8 (3.31%)

3 respondents answered “I don’t know” to the question regarding whether students have keyed access, and 1 of those claiming programming space did not answer the question about student access.) Of the 89 respondents who said their students had keyed access to the programming space, 57 or 64% said that all of their students had such access, 22 (25%) said “only a select few” were given this privilege, and 10 of them (11%) said that only the students living in the adjoining residential space had keyed access.

The results of the question about the types of residential space dedicated to honors students on their campuses focus solely on the honors programs and colleges *not* located in community colleges, although at least one community college indeed offered residential space to honors students. Of the 355 respondents who answered the question about residential space and were not from a community college (one of the 356 non-community-college respondents

did not answer the question), 98 (28%) answered that they did not have residential space designated for honors on their campus, and 72% or 257 said their campuses offer honors-specific housing for their students. (Several comments, however, indicated that some of these housing options were only marginally specific to honors.) Table 11 summarizes the kinds of residential space listed by the non-community-college respondents.

These data show that while 91% of the reporting colleges—82 of 90—said they did have honors residential space, only 66% or 171 of the 260 honors program respondents had such space. This situation is hardly a clear win for honors, however, because the benefit of segregating honors students in residence halls remains a debatable point, one discussed in the existing literature and in some of the forum pieces included in this monograph.

Respondents checked all the types of residential models that were designated specifically for honors students on their campus. Table 12 summarizes these results. Of the 257 respondents who indicated that they had honors residential space, over half said they had corridor-style rooms (doubles), the most common of the types of residential models here.

Finally, the survey revealed that the presence of faculty-living-in-residence programs is understandably rare; the novelty of such programs makes them interesting. No respondents without discrete honors residential space responded “yes” to the presence of a faculty-living-in-residence program. Of the 257 who indicated that they had honors residential space, just 36 or 14% said they have had or currently have programs in which faculty live in residence with students. Of those 36 respondents, only 11 (31%) indicated that children had also lived in the space, with 10 (28%) of the 36 saying that pets had also been allowed in the residence. While no more than a single dog was reported as living in any single space at one time, apparently 3 cats lived with one faculty member in residence. Of the 36 respondents who provided information regarding the contract length of their faculty in residence, 11 answered “1 academic year,” 6 answered “2 academic years,” 4 answered “3 academic years,” 7 answered “Other,” and 8 answered “I don’t know.”

**TABLE 11: TYPES OF HONORS RESIDENTIAL SPACE**

Type of Residential Space	No. Institutions (% of Non-Community-College Institutions Responding to Residential Space Question, $n = 355$ )	No. Colleges (% of Non-Community-College Honors Colleges Responding to Residential Space Question, $n_c = 90$ )	No. Programs (% of Non-Community-College Honors Programs Responding to Residential Space Question, $n_p = 260$ )
Honors-only residence hall	73 (20.56%)	38 (42.22%)	34 (13.08%)
Honors wing in a shared residence	128 (36.06%)	29 (32.22%)	99 (38.08%)
Scattered rooms/a single building	17 (4.79%)	1 (1.11%)	15 (5.77%)
Other*	39 (10.99%)	14 (15.56%)	23 (8.85%)
No designated honors space	98 (27.61%)	8 (8.89%)	89 (34.23%)

\*Two of the programs that selected "Other" indicated in their comments that they did not have designated honors space, so they were counted in the "No designated honors space" category.

**TABLE 12: TYPES OF HONORS RESIDENTIAL MODELS**

Type of Residential Model	No. Institutions (% of Non-Community- College Institutions with Honors Residential Space, $n_r = 257$ )
Apartments	36 (14.01%)
Suites	105 (40.86%)
Corridor-style rooms (doubles)	146 (56.81%)
Corridor-style rooms (singles)	58 (22.57%)
Other	40 (15.56%)
I don't know	7 (2.72%)

## CONCLUSION

While much information can be gleaned from this rich data set, one finding is clear: honors college respondents tend to have more and better spaces than do honors program respondents. Whether becoming a college actually helps an honors unit acquire space on campus leads to the proverbial chicken-or-egg issue; it is entirely possible that the types of institutions that tend to have honors colleges may also tend to have more resources in the first place. Perhaps there is something about being designated a college that suggests an attendant separate physical entity. Regardless, at least within the group of honors entities that responded to this survey, a clear association exists between college/program status and the possession of dedicated honors space. At least in this regard, this study aligns with the research Sederberg conducted in 2004 regarding the tangible and perceived benefits of converting to or creating an honors college.

According to the recent “Definition of Honors Education,” NCHC (2013) now states that honors colleges, programs, or other-named entities provide “opportunities for measurably broader, deeper, and more complex learning-centered and learner-directed



experiences for its students than are available elsewhere in the institution” (para. 1). What honors administrators individually and organizationally care about first and foremost in honors is the educational experience they offer to students. Research shows that honors students retain and graduate at higher numbers than their non-honors counterparts at their institutions and that they go on to do great things once they graduate—gaining access to the best graduate and professional schools, landing spots at the best agencies and companies, and participating in significant service entities such as the local women’s shelter or the Peace Corps.

Although Schuman notes in *Beginning in Honors* that the honors classroom should be top-notch, he also indicates that “providing some sort of gathering place or lounge adjacent to an office space is a real boost for an honors program” (p. 47). Despite the priority of academics, honors administrators do not focus on the conventional learning space, the classroom, when they reflect on the kinds of space honors occupies on university and college campuses. Indeed, the data show that the kinds of spaces for which honors administrators are presumably most likely to fight and that they are most likely to finally obtain are those that contribute to the creation of community in an honors environment. While that community is often supported by the institution’s willingness to house honors students together where such a model makes sense, it is the honors leadership that first and foremost creates that community. Perhaps this situation explains why even though fewer than half of the respondents indicated they had classrooms designated for honors use, almost 60% said they had designated programming space. More striking of course is that of the 81% of respondents who said they had space designated specifically for honors use on the campus, 95.59% reported having at least one office for honors on their campus.

Of course, an office can be many things. As Schuman notes, an honors office is a place to store records and maintain lists of prospective students. It is a place where an honors administrative assistant can handle glitches with priority registration or honors class schedules. It is also, as one honors director explained, where

the annual honors student luau is held, where distraught honors students can process major life decisions with the director, where student achievements are celebrated, and where new recruits are greeted. The honors office is a place where the honors community can begin and is certainly the most omnipresent and universally held location for honors anywhere. And perhaps this insight is the most important, if unsurprising take-away from this research: to wit, honors spaces enable and shape honors communities.

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## APPENDIX

### The Survey

*Thank you for your participation in this survey regarding the allocation and use of space and structures for honors at your institution; the survey should take less than 10 minutes to complete. We greatly appreciate your participation in our study, the results of which will be compiled in a monograph proposed for publication by the National Collegiate Honors Council. If you are not a member of NCHC and would like the results of the survey sent to you, please contact <linda.frost@eku.edu>. All information you choose to share is completely confidential and will be viewed only in the aggregate. This study constitutes the first comprehensive account of the kinds of structures designated for honors use in the U.S. Again, thank you for your assistance in gathering this information.*

**What is the name of your institution?**

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**What is the name of your honors program/college?**

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**What is the title of your honors program/college head?**

- Dean
- Director
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Approximately how many students are enrolled in your honors program/college?**

- 0–50
- 51–100
- 101–200
- 201–300
- 301–400

- 401–500
- 501–600
- 601–800
- 801–1000
- More than 1000

**Do you have space on your campus dedicated to honors academic and/or administrative use?**

- Yes
- No

**What spaces and structures are dedicated to honors academic and/or administrative use on your campus?**

**(Check all that apply.)**

- Honors center that includes administrative offices and classrooms in one complex
- Historic building designated for honors use
- Building newly constructed for honors
- Building renovated for honors
- Honors section in a shared university building
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**How many offices for honors use do you have?**

- 0
- 1–3
- 4–6
- 7–9
- 10 or more

**How many classrooms do you have?**

- 0
- 1–3
- 4–6
- 7–9
- 10 or more

**What distinguishing features do these classrooms have?  
(Check all that apply.)**

- SMART Boards
- Projectors
- Computer stations
- Movable desks
- Movable chairs
- Movable tables
- I don't know
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Which best characterizes your honors residential space?**

- Honors-only residence hall
- Honors wing(s) in a shared residence hall
- Scattered rooms throughout a single building
- No designated honors living space
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Which of the following residential models are designated specifically for honors students on your campus?  
(Check all that apply.)**

- Apartments
- Suites
- Corridor-style rooms, doubles
- Corridor-style rooms, singles
- I don't know
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Has a faculty member ever lived in residence in your honors residential facility?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know



**Who lives or has lived in the faculty living space?  
(Check all that apply.)**

- Faculty member
- Faculty spouse/partner
- Children
- I don't know

**What is the greatest number of children who have lived in the faculty living space at one time?**

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- More than 4
- I don't know

**Are pets allowed in the faculty living space?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**What is the greatest number of pets who have been housed at one time in the faculty living space?**

Number

Dogs \_\_\_\_\_

Cats \_\_\_\_\_

Other \_\_\_\_\_

If other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**How long does the contract last for the faculty-in-residence?**

- 1 academic year
- 2 academic years
- 3 academic years

- I don't know
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Who selects the faculty member living in residence?**

\_\_\_\_\_

**Any comments about the faculty-in-residence program at your institution?**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Do you have dedicated honors programming space?**

- Yes
- No

**Approximately how many people can your facility's space hold?**

- 0–100
- 101–200
- 201–300
- 301–400
- More than 400
- I don't know

**For what functions do you use this space?**  
(Check all that apply.)

- Administrative meetings
- Program or college-wide meetings
- Orientations and/or advising sessions
- Social or cultural events (i.e., lecture series, game nights, etc.)
- Non-honors events or activities
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**If non-honors events occur in your honors-dedicated programming space, who approves and/or schedules these events?**

- Honors program or college head
- Honors advisory board
- Supervisory entity over the academic building NOT in honors
- Non-honors events do not occur in the honors-dedicated programming space
- I don't know
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Do your students have keyed access to your central programming space outside of regular office hours?**

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

**Which students in your program receive a key or code or fob to access this space?**

- All of them
- Only those living in the adjoining residential space
- Only a select few
- None of them
- I don't know

**If you answered, "only a select few," what determines that selection?**

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*Thank you very much for completing this survey!*

*Please click on the "Done" button below.*



# HOUSING HONORS

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## PART II: PROFILES OF SPACES AND PLACES IN HONORS



## CHAPTER 2

# The Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community at the University of Massachusetts Amherst

MELISSA WOGLOM AND MEREDITH LIND  
UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

**T**his article provides a project overview of the newly constructed Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, an historical context for the honors college at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, a description of the facility design, information on the collaborative planning process, and a brief discussion of initial impacts on the operations and services of the honors college.

### **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

In 2010 the University of Massachusetts committed to the construction of an honors residential complex. The \$186.6 million complex, which opened August 2013, comprises 515,637 gross square feet in seven buildings and aligns with the university's

broader vision to “establish UMass Amherst as the destination of choice for the next generation of the Commonwealth’s high school graduates” (Joint Task Force on Strategic Oversight, 2013). The university’s 2009 strategic plan called for gradually increasing the size of the undergraduate student body and construction of additional academic space and student facilities, including housing, to accommodate this growth (“Framework for Excellence,” 2009). With 1,500 beds, the Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community (CHCRC) is the most recent major project in the university’s planned expansion of student housing. The CHCRC, however, offers much more than a set of dorms. It is an integrated living and learning environment that fosters a spirit of community among students and faculty.

Eleven sites were initially considered for the new residential area before being narrowed to two. Of the two, one was located at the northeastern side of campus, beyond the Orchard Hill Residential Area; the second was in the heart of campus. Previously, campus master planning located student residential areas on the periphery. The decision to select the site in the center of campus also entailed locating the Commonwealth Honors College there and creating the CHCRC, which would incorporate classrooms, space for events, student services, faculty and administrative offices, and residence halls. CHCRC was planned, according to Juanita Holler, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities and Campus Services, to “provide a 24-hour active environment in the core” of campus (Holler). The decision on the location and the decision to make the complex an honors residential community were made together.

## **HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Commonwealth Honors College (CHC) opened in 1999, building on the successful 39-year-old campus-wide honors program founded in 1960 and the 105-year tradition of honors education at UMass Amherst. CHC was initially named Commonwealth College by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education, which designated it as the coordinating entity for honors education within the Massachusetts public system of higher education. The Board also provided



a grant for college startup in Fiscal Year 1999. In FY 2000 the Massachusetts legislature established a separate line item in the state budget to fund CHC, and in FY 2010 the CHC special state line item was combined with the university's overall budget (Commonwealth of Massachusetts, n.d.). In February 2009, the CHC Student Advisory Board had submitted a preliminary proposal to the Chancellor, stating the students' case for a residential honors college, and in fall 2010 the decision was made that the new residential area would be constructed as a residential honors college. As planning of the facility began, the university also committed to additional major investments in CHC, including hiring new tenure-track faculty as joint hires for the honors college and the academic departments. By the time CHCRC opened in fall 2013, 15 new honors faculty had been hired in 15 different departments. Although these initiatives occurred during a period of shrinking budgets, the university responded to state budget cutbacks by revitalizing its commitment to excellence in undergraduate education.

The CHC academic program nearly doubled honors curricular requirements from those of its predecessor honors program, increasing the general education portion of the honors curriculum and making completion of honors research and a thesis a requirement of CHC graduates. CHC accepts 600 incoming first-year students each fall. In addition, matriculated UMass Amherst students may apply based on their university academic record, off-campus transfer students may be invited to enter CHC, and students transferring in good standing from another Commonwealth Honors Program within the state public higher education system are eligible to enter CHC upon entrance to UMass Amherst. There are currently 3,000 students in CHC. Over the past five years, the number of CHC graduates has averaged 599 per year (Office of Institutional Research, n.d.).

## **FACILITY DESIGN**

The decision to combine the new residential area with further development of the honors college advanced several key goals of the university's strategic plan. The CHCRC design aligned with several

campus objectives: to construct new classrooms and increase classrooms in residence halls, to expand living-learning communities, and to strengthen academic-student affairs connections. The vision for CHCRC was based on a residential college model where student life and academic life coexist. Combining honors student housing with services and operations of the honors college was an intentional decision to create an academic environment in a residential area. The design incorporates both informal and formal gathering spaces that add many opportunities for academic and social interactions between students and faculty. The buildings, courtyards, and pathways are laid out to connect and open the honors community to the broader campus and encourage interaction between the students in the CHC residential community with those in other residential areas. For example, a major pedestrian promenade traverses CHCRC, connecting Southwest Residential Area, the campus' largest student housing area, with the heavily used recreation center. Additionally, the students in CHCRC eat many of their meals in another residential area where the nearest dining commons is located, and faculty and students from across the campus frequently gather at the CHCRC café.

The CHCRC facility was designed to house 1,500 honors students in six residence halls. These halls include approximately 600 spaces for first-year students in two traditional buildings that consist mainly of double rooms with a glass-walled study lounge on each floor. The remaining 900 spaces, in four buildings, house upper-level students in a mix of suites and apartments. Each of the buildings includes a large lobby for interaction and some programming. The buildings cluster around small-scale courtyards that add a sense of spaciousness and provide pleasant seating areas, including an outdoor amphitheater. In addition to four residence hall staff apartments, two faculty apartments located in the multi-year residence halls ensure a connection between faculty and students and add to the sense of academic community. To this end, the facility includes a classroom wing of nine small classrooms with full technological capabilities as well as a flexible exhibit/gallery space. There is a 24-hour café where students can meet friends and faculty

for lunch, dinner, or a late-night snack. This complex also features the CHC advising center, administrative offices, and faculty offices within the Residential Community; this arrangement increases both visibility of the honors dean, faculty, and staff as well as access to their offices (Design & Construction Management, n.d.).

The 290-seat event space may be divided into two rooms with a movable wall. One half of the hall can accommodate 120 people in auditorium-style seating, while the other half can be reset with tables and couches or opened to connect to the café area. Both sides are equipped with full A/V capability. This flexibility is conducive to a range of programming alternatives: informal gatherings, study groups, small-group advising, workshops, Pizza and Prof seminars where faculty discuss their research, Dialogue Series discussions on timely issues of national and international significance, visiting speakers, and meetings.

## **COLLABORATION WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF RESIDENTIAL LIFE**

Early in the project planning process, CHC and Residential Life formed a partnership. The Dean of Commonwealth Honors College and the Executive Director of Residential Life held initial meetings to discuss major aspects of the residential honors college and approved formation of a joint planning committee. The CHC-Res Life Joint Planning Committee created a planning agenda and timeline to develop a final proposal for presentation to the Dean and Vice Chancellors addressing the following matters:

- **Overall Program Plan:** Develop a shared vision, goals, and assessment plan as well as a clear understanding of how to involve others in planning for the Residential College, review guiding documents and related literature, and share information related to honors students (their demographics, how students join CHC, etc.).
- **Living-Learning Communities:** Determine the academic programs for the first-year student communities.

- **Room Selection and Eligibility:** Design the assignment process, eligibility criteria, and timeline for students to select their housing placement.
- **Staffing:** Decide student and professional staffing for the new space, the means by which communication will take place between Residential Life and CHC following occupancy, as well as the necessary training for both the CHC staff and the Residential Life staff.
- **Communication/Marketing:** Determine timeline for publications, tours, and a communication plan for stakeholders and the broader community, both on and off campus.
- **Budget Development:** Determine shared expenditures.
- **Program Planning and Student Leadership:** Plan orientation for new honors students, appropriate student government structure, and collaborative programming.
- **Facilities and Space Planning:** Develop action plan for facilities issues including regular maintenance, cleaning, furnishings, and setup of events space.
- **Administration:** Clarify operations of CHC offices and changes to be implemented as a result of the new space, as well as which Res Life offices will be located in the new space, how mail will be distributed, and what the move-in and safety plans for the students will be.
- **Technology:** Handle classroom and events space technology features as well as card-access to the residence hall spaces.

To provide additional input for the Joint Planning Committee and a greater range of honors perspectives, the directors of each of the units in Commonwealth Honors College and the CHC Associate Dean met weekly. This step became useful in both updating the staff on new CHCRC developments and bringing faculty and staff perspectives to the joint planning meetings.

While the CHC Student Advisory Board continued to provide input to the Dean on a biweekly basis, in order to involve students

more broadly, the Joint Planning Committee invited a group of students—three fourths of whom were honors students—from various units of Student Affairs and Academic Affairs to meet regularly with representatives of CHC and Residential Life. This focus group provided student perspectives from a broader range of constituencies. Students came from the following areas:

- Student Government Association,
- Residence Hall Association,
- Resident Assistants,
- Peer Mentors,
- University Tour Guides,
- Center for Multicultural Advancement and Student Success,
- CHC Student Advisory Board, and
- Student Staff from the CHC Student Programming unit.

In addition, incoming accepted students were surveyed in April to gather information on the kinds of events they would like to see in the fall.

## **IMPACTS ON OPERATIONS AND SERVICES**

The new facility affords many opportunities to enhance a sense of community among honors students and faculty across departments. Honors classes associated with Residential Academic Programs, many senior Honors Thesis Seminars, and most general education honors courses are held in the new classrooms located in Elm House. Since the classrooms have a maximum student capacity of 24, non-honors courses of 24 or fewer are also scheduled in available time slots.

The number and range of CHC events have been greatly enhanced and expanded by the opening of CHCRC. CHC has formed cooperative agreements with UMass Amherst academic departments and the Five College consortium (composed of Amherst College, Hampshire College, Mount Holyoke College,

Smith College, and UMass) to bring visiting speakers and scholars for both lecture events and small group meetings with students. The events space is also used for faculty meetings. CHC holds regular meetings with the 71 Honors Program Directors from academic departments on campus (some of whom simultaneously serve as Undergraduate Program Director or Department Chair), and monthly meetings with the 30-member CHC Council, a council of the Faculty Senate, and its subcommittees. CHC faculty who teach the honors seminar, “Ideas that Change the World,” meet several times each semester, and the new tenure-track honors faculty meet regularly as a pedagogical honors community across departments. The new CHCRC Faculty-in-Residence also host informal gatherings with honors faculty, as well as with students.

Now that the CHC advising center is located in the midst of a residential community, it has experienced an increase in student traffic; it now offers advising for small groups in the residence halls as well as workshops in the events hall. An art history professor and a group of her honors students curate the small gallery/exhibit space adjacent to the classroom wing. The students selected the theme of the inaugural exhibit to coincide with the university’s 150th anniversary. While studying museum and gallery exhibit methods, they combed the university archives to mount a photo exhibit of 150 years of student life at UMass Amherst.

## **CONCLUSION**

The process of planning for occupancy of CHCRC formed many new connections between CHC and Student Affairs and reinforced long-established connections between CHC and other academic colleges and departments on campus. The first semester in CHCRC was a trial period of ups and downs, adjusting to new demands and responsibilities, accommodating visits from print and broadcast media, and rejoicing in the enthusiasm of new and continuing students and their families. On August 25, 2013, two weeks after CHC faculty and staff moved into their new offices, Priscilla Clarkson, CHC dean since 2006, died following a long battle with breast cancer. Dean Clarkson, who had lobbied continually for new space

for the college and oversaw the planning process for CHCRC, continued to work and came into the office up until two weeks before the CHC move. A campus celebration of her life was held in the new CHC events space in early October 2013. The hall, filled to standing room, had 1,000 many-colored origami cranes, folded by CHC students the month before, hanging from the ceiling. A tradition of CHC since 2009 in observance of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, the cranes hang attached to strings in groups of eight, the bottom crane in each group colored pink—the color representative of breast cancer awareness. Dean Clarkson’s energy is reflected every day in the bustle of the café; students playing Frisbee on the lawn; and lively discussions in the classrooms, dorm rooms, and courtyards of CHCRC.

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## CHAPTER 3

# Do Your Homework First, and Then Go Play!

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In the fall of 2006, after five years of planning, the Kent State University Honors College inaugurated in the heart of the campus a new honors center: two residence halls framing an office, library, and classroom space came to life. The new center overlooked the Commons, an open green space home to student games and student protests. The hill above the Commons was the site of the National Guard shootings of May 4, 1970, and the relationship of this tragedy to honors at KSU became an important part of the thinking about this new location.

The Kent State University Honors College had occupied a consolidated center for 17 years. So how did this new center come to be? The purpose of this essay is to focus on the process that led to the creation of the center and the lessons that might be drawn from this process.

## BACKGROUND

Honors at KSU began in 1933 as a program, expanded to a broader curriculum in 1960, and became a college in 1965. Kent State participated in early activities and discussions of the Inter-university Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS) and the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC). Inspired by the ICSS's advice, embodied in desiderata that later evolved into the NCHC's "Basic Characteristics," the KSU Honors College sought honors space, establishing not only an academic office but also honors residence halls.

Housed at first in an academic building, the college office and student lounge moved in 1970 to a two-story wooden barracks building facing the Commons and adjacent to the sister building housing the ROTC. That building was burned down in the May 1970 protests. In the mid-1970s, the college moved to a nearby academic building shared with Pan-African Studies and part of the School of Art. This third-floor office complex was flanked by a small lounge and two classrooms. One of the latter served also for meetings of the Honors College Policy Council (HOCOPOCO), which consisted of 12 faculty and 12 students. The same decade saw the optional honors occupancy of two residence halls, one for men and one for women, in a group of three-hall complexes constructed in the 1960s at the east edge of campus. The halls had a spirited sense of community even as students complained—perhaps a bit proudly—of the long winter walk to classes across what they called the "frozen tundra." College staff found that honors students flourished under the opportunity to live, study, and play together and that good facilities generated a sense of pride and identity. These office and residence facilities served the college through the 1980s.

Having grown to over 750 students in the late 1980s, the honors college argued for the need to bring residence and office together in a consolidated center that could offer expanded spaces for a library/seminar room, lounge, conference room, computer lab, workroom, storage, a large reception area for three secretarial staff, and rooms for six advising and administrative staff and a graduate student. The project idea took the form of a proposal for a state

Program Excellence Grant. Receiving that grant for \$146,500 in 1988 persuaded the university to provide for the move to another three-hall residence complex on the edge of campus. The middle building anchored the center with one wing for upper-division students and the other for the new office and student-support spaces. The adjacent two halls were to be divided by gender. Although as a member of HOCOPOCO at the time I voted against the idea, these three modest, three-story halls, housing 279 students, were required to have at most a 70% honors occupancy. Staff and faculty feared the effects of an ivory-tower-like separation resulting from an all-honors environment isolated from the rest of campus. At the same time, in an agreement with Residence Services, non-honors students were required to have at least a 3.0 GPA so as not to dilute the character and identity of the halls too much.

### **The Honors Center, 1989–2006**

The location and facilities turned out to be felicitous for the honors college for a number of years. The support from the central administration acknowledged not only a well-deserved reputation for quality but also the importance of several non-honors services the honors college provided, such as overseeing the general education requirements and the high school early-admission program. The honors college felt fortunate to have a space commensurate with its size and mission. Several honors classes met in the library, with its long seminar table alongside shelves holding an extensive reference collection. At that time, a large television, VCR, and white board offered ample visual-aid support. A small desk with a computer enabled a student worker to help students in the computer lab and to supervise the library as study lounge—and the premises in general—in the evening. Students—primarily those living in the honors halls—appreciated the computer lab with eight stations and, for many years, free printer paper.

The reception area was warm and welcoming when students came for their semester advising appointments or had questions. Each of the two clusters of three staff offices apiece had doors facing one another for ready communication. The secluded conference

room, used also for thesis defenses, included storage cupboards and a white board for writing agendas and brainstorming ideas. The dean's office included a sofa and overlooked a flourishing garden with small trees and, across the perimeter driveway, a high-rise off-campus apartment building. A photocopier and filing cabinets for student and college records enjoyed ample space. Overflow historical records were stored in a small room in the residence wing until, some years later, a new storeroom was created off the conference room. A fairly large lounge overlooking a plaza offered a coffee machine and eight round tables with chairs, and it was used for some meetings, including the annual Neighborhood Breakfast, to which the honors college invited all who worked in the complex (faculty, staff, RAs, custodians). All three buildings were air-conditioned. Crowning this honors space was an isolated apartment on the second floor of the residence wing for guests in the university artist/lecture series coordinated by the honors college and for high-level university guests, such as new provosts and presidents during their housing transition. Four years into this new center, in 1993, I became dean.

This facility confessed to a few drawbacks. Secretaries had no windows, no view of the outside world. When students crowded in to sign up for advising appointments or hovered over the receptionist's desk with questions, she easily felt invaded. The furnishings of the lounge, especially its metal and plastic chairs and bare floor, seemed cold, not cozy, and few students used it for studying or hanging out. For several years the university's sign shop occupied the space on the other side of the library wall and provided a pounding and whining industrial accompaniment to class discussions. The staff clusters occupied opposite ends of the office space, creating a small communication barrier. Boxes of records stored in the residence hall were damaged by a water leak and were so tightly packed in that information retrieval was challenging. Students did not seem to use the library reference works, and increasingly during the 1990s they brought personal computers to campus and no longer used the lab. The halls were also inaccessible to wheelchairs; steps abounded, even to the plaza and garden framed by the three halls.

Most worrisome of all, eventually, was the distance from the academic center of campus and the loss of honors identity in the residence halls. By the late 1990s, the percentage of honors occupancy was plummeting. Although students originally enjoyed the relative seclusion of the center, more and more were complaining that the honors complex was too far from the hub of campus: the classroom buildings, student center, and library. The exodus of honors students was exacerbated by, in some years, the university's "dumping" of a number of late freshman applicants with poor ACT scores into the honors halls. The number of roommate problems and rules infractions rose. In the first years of the new century, honors occupancy had shrunk from the recommended 70% to 24%–27%!

### **The Turning Point: Eviction**

While flailing for a solution to the low honors occupancy rate as the millennium turned, the honors college discovered that the university's long-range plan called for the demolition of its buildings and all the other small-group residence halls on the perimeter of campus. Against that eventuality, the staff began to ask themselves how the honors college could sustain or improve, through a move to a new location, the current level of facility support that it had enjoyed. Discussions took shape at staff meetings and at monthly meetings of HOCOPOCO. Since no one from the university administration was forthcoming in 2001 about a mandate to move or a date of projected demolition, the honors staff decided to take the initiative and begin planning. Projects requiring state support for capital construction required a six-year lead time, so I immediately asked if a new center could be placed on the list. The provost's office decided that other priorities were more important but looked to private fundraising to support the honors center. While a new honors residence hall could be built with bonds, academic space within it would have to be leased. The preference was to pursue an independent academic center. An alumni survey helped to identify desirable amenities for a new center. A pattern of taking initiative proved to be one of the keys to our later success in creating a new honors center.

## **DOING OUR HOMEWORK**

By spring of 2002, the facilities planning office identified two sites that might be available for a future honors center. One would be the empty tract of land following the razing of a 500-bed residence hall (Terrace) on the front campus facing East Main Street, demolition scheduled for 2005 and rebuilding by 2007. The other would be a smaller space in the center of campus squeezed among several older residence halls (including Stopher and Johnson, slated to be rebuilt by 2005) and proximate to several academic buildings, the gym, the student center, and the library. By June the honors college had established a task force comprising staff members and representatives of HOCOPOCO, residence services, the provost's office, and alumni and held a retreat to discuss what was needed and wanted in a new center. To generate additional ideas in July, the task force toured two new residence halls on campus with the director of residence services. At this point Charles Harker, architecture professor and long-standing member of HOCOPOCO and honors liaison in the School (later College) of Architecture and Environmental Design, offered to assign the design of a new honors center as the semester-long project for his fall 2002 master's class. The task force readily agreed, and the chief campus architect, the associate vice-president for facilities planning, the vice-president for business and finance, and the director of residence services at meetings in July and August expressed a lively interest in the outcome of the class project.

### **The Architecture Class**

Prior to the first architecture class meeting that fall, the task force wrote a one-page outline of "Honors Values," with examples, to guide these master's students unfamiliar with honors culture. The task force also communicated to Professor Harker its space needs and some additional desiderata, such as a fluid gathering space for students, a "quirky" non-symmetrical plan, privacy for advising, and quality residence accommodations that would encourage students to remain there all four years. At the outset of their course,

the eight architecture students toured the existing honors center, where they participated in a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the facility as well as the “Honors Values” statement. The group also toured the Terrace site. A week later members of the task force and the architecture class went in a chartered campus bus on a one-day tour of two reasonably close honors centers: a fairly new one at the University of Toledo and one undergoing remodeling in the College of Literature, Sciences, and the Arts at the University of Michigan. After interviews with the honors staff about the facilities, the planning process, and their satisfaction, the architecture students and I took photos and jotted notes. In both cases the honors residence halls were separate from the office and classroom space, adjacent in the case of Toledo and at some distance, in an older hall, in Ann Arbor. On the way home the task force members discussed this experience with the architecture students and among themselves to sort out the pros and cons of each facility as well as what to emulate and what to studiously avoid.

The master’s students began designing possible centers for the two locations offered tentatively by the university. Five students chose the central location near Stopher Hall (a residence), and three chose the soon-to-be-defunct Terrace Hall. The criteria included a combined residence, classroom, and office complex in a single structure, with residential occupancy for at least 350 students. Offices had to serve a staff of 10; other features were seminar-style classrooms, a library, a multi-media computer lab, a lounge, a guest apartment, and ample workspace and storage. At the mid-semester point, the master’s students presented progress reports on their plans to honors staff, representatives of HOCOPOCO, and the campus architect and associate VP for facilities. They answered questions about their floor plans and received feedback on their ideas. The enthusiasm of the two administrators was gratifying.

The end-of-semester design presentations by the architecture students were enlightening, imaginative, and useful. The Terrace Hall site on Main Street possessed the advantage of high visibility to the public, but replacing the capacity of the existing 500-bed facility with just honors students would be difficult and would again put

the honors college in the position of sharing it with non-honors students, thus diluting its identity as an honors center. Further, a facility here would abut or subsume a current ROTC building, again something of a threat to the identity of the honors college.

The Stopher site, on the other hand, promised a quieter and more central location close to a number of important buildings at the heart of things and sitting on a new pedestrian esplanade. During the discussion, the designs for this site won over the campus architect and facilities planner, as well as the honors staff, particularly for the way these opened up a new direct walkway from the esplanade to the Commons. The upshot of the master's class experiment was a mutual decision to adopt the Stopher site and to begin serious planning with the architect's office in spring 2003.

I cannot overstate the importance of this architecture class project. The honors college is forever indebted to the efforts of the eight students and the professor who volunteered them. The project showed the campus architect, facilities VP, and ultimately the VP for Business and Finance that the honors college was serious about the prospect of a move and the creation of a new center and that it was taking steps quickly to move forward. The specific designs, though from master's students and not from the professional architects who would eventually design the center, helped these administrators visualize the future facility and prompted discussion of various pros and cons. Finally, their experience of the student designs led directly to the Stopher decision and quickly produced a new stage in the planning process.

## **The Steering Committee and Preliminary Rendering**

Meanwhile, early in that semester of the architecture class, a questionnaire designed by a student on HOCOPOCO about honors students' reasons for living or not living in the current residence halls confirmed that the distance and age of the existing honors halls put them off. Despite their overall honors satisfaction rate of 81%, respondents expressed a 62% dissatisfaction rate with the current honors housing.



Later in the semester, under direction from the architect's office, a steering committee was formed to proceed further with planning. The committee comprised the associate VP for facilities planning, the associate provost for budget, the director of residence services, the campus architect, his colleague architect now assigned to the project, another colleague in charge of specific physical space allocation, the associate director of development, and me. Clearly more administrators than anticipated were going to be crucial to achieve success. Each member of this committee had a specific and important role, and open discussions were critical to making decisions.

The steering committee first requested that the honors college respond in depth to a questionnaire used in all planning for new academic facilities. The working assumption in completing the form at that time was the large Terrace Hall site, which would require sharing the new facility not only with our existing partner, the McNair Scholars Program, but also with several new learning communities, such as the language floor and international house, compatible with the honors mission. Thus the honors staff held several discussions with the leaders of these groups. A required four-page document described the college in prose and statistics, culminating in a vision of the future. Several things became clear in the first two meetings of the steering committee. The cost of the new academic center would have to rest entirely on private funds, but the provost had approved the project for his short list of high-priority academic projects for fundraising. The development director urged a highly focused campaign that would include paying the salary of a dedicated fundraiser and offering naming opportunities. The development office would do a feasibility study to determine whether private fundraising could succeed. Uncertainties about filling a large Terrace Hall site largely or entirely with honors students helped seal the decision on the Stopher site. A student survey by email showed that the most important amenities desired in a new residence hall were comfortable study spaces and a computer lab. Finally, the architect's office was prepared to hire an outside consultant to do a rendering of an academic center adjacent to a rebuilt Stopher residence hall.

In January of 2003, three student focus groups discussed what students wanted in a new facility. An email survey that included alumni also showed a nearly unanimous preference for the Stopher site. After a thorough list of desired spaces was submitted in February, the space planner now asked for priorities in three levels: the absolutely necessary, additional strongly desired spaces, and desired spaces that, if necessary, could be eliminated. Naturally the wish was to achieve at least the same spaces the honors college already enjoyed, but in reality compromising on some items might be necessary. The honors college also provided steering committee members an expanded list of honors values, with examples from its activities.

Soon the architect's office had determined costs of various spaces in the proposed center, and a preliminary budget outlined the elements for two different facility sizes. Because the two nearby residence halls, Stopher and Johnson, were to be rebuilt, one of them destined for honors, this budget plan called for only an academic building. An external architect created a rendering of a floor plan and external view of a possible new center that could be used in fundraising. At the same time I worked with a writer in the development office to develop a case statement to present to potential donors.

At this point in the process, other offices of the university were becoming heavily invested in the project. The leadership and earnest goodwill of all of these non-honors staff members inspired the honors staff to proceed despite the daunting challenge of raising private funds. At the same time, the KSU Honors College took another initiative without being asked: extensive investigation of other honors facilities across the country.

## **Research into Other Honors Centers**

After the September visit to two other honors centers, I had begun to see the value of consulting other honors deans and directors and visiting as many facilities as feasible, given time and distance. Over the course of a year and a half, I visited a number of campuses, often in conjunction with vacation trips or NCHC

conferences and board meetings. I took photos, talked to honors staff, and wrote notes immediately afterwards. I then compiled two three-ring binders, one for honors and one for the architect's office, containing notes, photos, articles, and some floor plans representing 35 other honors facilities. (See Appendix.) I also incorporated information and advice from NCHC conference sessions on facilities, relevant articles in honors publications, and emails responding to my queries. I shared the notes with the task force as well. The notes provided descriptions but also highlighted elements to be emulated or avoided. For example, I admired the radial arrangement of staff offices at the University of Maryland because it encouraged ready sharing of ideas while still providing closed-door privacy for advising. The honors college had already enjoyed the benefits of such a design. For a while this arrangement became the desideratum in a new center as opposed to a lateral layout with offices off a corridor. Many honors centers offered student lounges with access to kitchen facilities, including coffee or vending machines. Such an informal student-focused space was an attractive feature. Honors centers in historical older buildings and those in new constructions both had their appeal. In several cases a highly visible and central location confirmed the value of residing at the heart of campus. The double-occupancy rooms at one program convinced the committee that they should be the dominant room choice for the residence halls. At another facility the huge back deck plus a brick courtyard led to requesting a usable outdoor gathering space. One interviewee recommended lateral instead of vertical filing cabinets.

On the negative side, some facilities placed student residence in a separate, sometimes distant location, whereas the honors staff sought to combine them in a single building or at least in abutting structures. One new honors center had created adjoining classrooms that opened up into a larger space by having folding partitions, but students and faculty complained that sound leaked through the partitions. The committee vowed not to have any such dividers but to have all solid-walled rooms. Another center comprised only offices and resided invisibly in a large building designed for another purpose, and its corridors and offices seemed cramped

and partly windowless. Still another one placed the receptionist inside a window, limiting visibility and suggesting a fortress rather than a welcoming area. This configuration confirmed the desire for simply a high counter before the secretaries' desks to provide some separation and a degree of privacy.

Particularly valuable advice came from one honors director in a newly achieved office and academic center in an ideally central location on campus. Echoed by an honors dean elsewhere, she warned about the need to stay on top of the entire process of planning, design, and construction, and she cautioned about picking battles thoughtfully if cuts or changes loomed. She noted a tradeoff in her case—the separation of student and staff spaces by floors, which spelled the loss of casual student drop-ins that her staff valued. Another tradeoff noted at another campus was a relocation closer to the honors residence hall at the expense of proximity to academic buildings. In various interviews with honors administrators, I learned much by asking those in older facilities what their priorities would be if they had the opportunity to create a new one and those in newer facilities what compromises they had made and what they regretted.

Again, I cannot overstate the importance of doing our homework. Not only did we learn a great deal, but we also impressed the architects and facilities planners with our initiative, our informed thought process about what we wanted, and the raw information about other honors centers of which these administrators would otherwise have remained ignorant. What other honors leaders deemed most valuable in a facility bolstered our own list of desired spaces. Such research is even easier now because so many honors programs post photos and descriptions of their spaces on their websites, but site visits and discussions with honors administrators are still critical.

## **Funding**

So much preparatory work—cost estimates, a rendering for a two-story academic center, and a case statement arguing the benefits of a new honors center—was done, yet the most daunting

challenge lay ahead: funding the project. The notion of selling bricks for \$100 or \$500, to be carved with donors' names, had been lurking for some time. Over the years the honors college had accumulated several thousand alumni, and the connection with them was strong through the alumni newsletter, update system, creation of an alumni council, and a stream of regular small donations to the honors college scholarship and discretionary funds. In terms of major donors, however, the feasibility study by the development office was not promising. One name clearly emerged, that of an alumni couple who had already endowed two scholarships. This couple had the capacity not only to fund the new building but also to endow the honors college itself.

Later in 2003, with the guidance of a major gifts officer, the honors staff decided to go for broke by expanding the draft case statement to personalize it for these prospective donors and to include the building for \$5 million in a larger package that requested \$20 million to endow and name the KSU Honors College—that being the development office's price tag then for naming rights to a college of our size. Other pieces of the package were funding for a scholarship program, faculty support, and the artist/lecture series. With some confidence and much trepidation, the major gifts officer and my wife and I traveled to meet the prospective donors. This meeting was extremely cordial—they were gracious hosts—but their straightforward answer was no. Their philanthropic interests lay elsewhere, much as they valued their association with honors. (Footnote: before long they did add to their existing two endowments.)

With no other prospects in view, the honors staff despaired of creating a new center with the required private funds. Rescue was at hand, however. The VP for business and finance and his associate for facilities planning, who had been impressed by the efforts and commitment of so many people who strongly supported the project, realized that the rebuilding of Stopher and Johnson residence halls would require some ground-floor construction between them for utilities and maintenance. They reasoned that with only an additional \$1.5 million they could expand that space into a new honors

center attached to the two halls and facing the Commons instead of the esplanade. This plan would be a far more cost-effective solution than a separate two-story building. With the provost's and president's blessings as well, and ultimately the approval of the Board of Trustees, the university would foot the bill for the new center. The problem was solved! And construction would be completed a year earlier than if the choice had been the Terrace site. This stunning support from the upper administration rewarded not only the current efforts but also the decades of proven excellence and the citation of the honors college as a "flagship program" of the university and "jewel nationally" in a 1994 accreditation report.

### **Planning and Constructing the Final Version**

What remained to be seen, however, was whether this space could accommodate the needed and desired facilities. At first the amount of classroom space seemed quite limited. The footprint of the cafeteria currently occupying the site, like that of the attached residence halls to be razed and rebuilt, was constrained by the site integrity of the May 4, 1970, shootings. Despite a lengthy protest ("tent city") in 1977, the university had already impinged on the historical site with a gym annex, and it was not prepared to do so again. The honors college shared this sensitivity to the historical integrity of the site through a long connection with that tragic event. One student in the honors college, Allison Krause, was one of the "four dead in Ohio." Shortly after the event a curriculum of experimental pass/fail courses on social issues was created under the aegis of honors, and the name of the college was actually changed, for the next decade and a half, to the "Honors and Experimental College." In the late 80s this program became the Experimental and Integrative Studies Program under the KSU Honors College. Having been on campus at the time of the shooting and having used books about it in my honors courses, I had recently inaugurated a new course on "May 4, 1970, and Its Aftermath," taught in this program each spring by various guest faculty. A new facility facing the Commons and the hilltop from which the National Guard fired its lethal rounds seemed appropriate for hosting this new course. In 1990 the

provost had also awarded the honors college four full-tuition “May 4” scholarships that were later expanded to full rides, becoming the largest and most prestigious scholarships awarded by the college. Thus the center’s design clearly respected the constraints placed on this historic location.

The university now asked the external architectural firm hired to design the new residence halls to add the new center with as many as possible of the desired spaces on the wish list. Preliminary designs provided only a single classroom, but a push for some additional space on the adjacent ground floor of four-story Johnson Hall netted space that the judicial affairs office had occupied. Once the honors college was granted this space, the architect revised the plan to provide a slightly ramping corridor up to the floor level of Johnson and added three interconnected seminar rooms along a corridor, which could be opened to a double- or triple-sized room. Despite the earlier pledge never to tolerate partitions, having these flexible spaces featuring high-end folding wall panels made far more sense than constructing the large lecture hall included in the earlier rendering, and sound did not leak much between rooms. Although the university required the honors college to share these classrooms when not filled with honors classes, it granted full control of the fourth and larger classroom in exchange. Each of these three seminar rooms was designed to accommodate a freshman seminar course with 15 to 17 students, but the room could comfortably seat a maximum of 20.

The final plan meant sacrificing several things. A guest apartment was off the table; in retrospect that now seems like a very low priority. My radial arrangement of staff offices gave way to a lateral lineup down a corridor in order to preserve the original footprint of the building that previously occupied the space. The conference room would be cramped. A computer lab was axed because of a growing number of nearby labs on campus and the trend toward personal ownership. The compromise alternative was retaining three computer work stations in the large library/study area. Toward the end of the planning process, the committee realized the impossibility of comfortably making the kitchen available to students. They

would have kitchen facilities in the attached residence halls, and having food and drink carried into the lobby and library on a regular basis was a concern. One problem was that allowing others to use the classrooms after 5:00 p.m. would require a student monitor on the premises because there was no way to secure the secretaries' work spaces given the multiple entrances and pass-through to the classrooms. Finally, in an ideal world the facility would have been as "green" as possible; although the university was pursuing green design gradually, the costs beyond basic energy conservation for this already designed complex would have been prohibitive. Earlier thoughts, such as music practice rooms, a design studio, a gazebo, a two-story atrium, were long gone.

On the other hand, the center featured a large lobby, with room for art exhibits; generous staff work space; a huge storage area; a fourth classroom serving also as a meeting room for several university committees coordinated by the honors college; a kitchen; and a library overlooking a terrace framed by the office wing and classroom wing. The interior wall of the library was entirely windows to maximize the natural light coming through the opposite plaza windows into the corridor and lobby and to give the secretaries more of an outside view. Continuing discussions of the draft floor plan with the steering committee and the architect led to design changes in the reception area because the lobby needed two main entrances, one from outside and one from Stopher Hall. The solution eventually came with a partially closed office for the administrative assistant and a curving counter fronting the desks of the two secretaries. Finally, as in the current center, the staff was happy not to be located directly under the trampling feet of resident students but under an open outdoor plaza.

Of the two four-story residence halls to be rebuilt, Stopher was at first designated as honors, but in 2005 the plan changed to Johnson, with its slightly greater capacity of 224 students and its better classroom location. Residence services also agreed to place any overflow honors students in Stopher. That spillover did not happen until several years after move-in because Stopher was at first reserved for another learning community. Several handicap-designed rooms



were available in each hall. Although the architect had already designed these two halls, further discussions with residence services led to the construction of a few single rooms on the top floor for juniors and seniors. A modest desire for these had shown up in the survey of students. The result was a set of more expensive “deluxe” singles, the size of doubles, thus preserving the economic efficiency of identical rooms with plumbing lining up. Each room in the two halls would have a private bath, a high priority for students; as a result both halls could be assigned to a gender room by room. Stophrer would also have two classrooms, where honors and other freshman orientation classes could be held. A bridge lounge would connect the two residence halls over a plaza that was situated over the academic center on the ground floor, which opened out on one side of the slope onto the Commons. The entire facility, residence halls and academic center, was wheelchair friendly and air-conditioned and offered wi-fi as well as hard-wired Internet access. In the academic center only the kitchen, storage, and work areas would be windowless. A cordial relationship with the director of residence services was critical because honors would not “own” the residence halls and would not govern their décor choices, rules, room assignments, or RA selection. By working together, the honors college could swiftly exert influence on values and amenities while recognizing that this self-supporting auxiliary operation needed to fill beds with non-honors students if the Johnson building could not be filled entirely with honors students.

Once the university approved the final design, the existing buildings were razed and the two-year construction process began. A camera mounted on the nearby architecture building captured the process for the university website. The honors staff and students strolled past the site frequently to watch it take shape. All seemed to be going according to plan. (Granted, I am oversimplifying the complex process of permissions, schematics, and subcontracting, which was not the direct responsibility of the honors college.) Once the center’s academic structure and internal walls were in place, the architect invited the honors staff to do a walk-through, wearing hard hats. While walking down the hallway between staff offices

and the workroom, the group suddenly found a cement-block wall where a back door into the workroom was supposed to be, for ready access by staff. The campus architect said, "Better to correct it now than later." The doorway was cut through the blocks.

Through the 2005–2006 academic year, special planning committee meetings with residence services staff helped to monitor the progress of room reservations and to plan programming. The committee created an Honors Community Council to plan honors student activities and a mentorship program in addition to the work of the hall council for all residents. Honors staff also dealt with décor, selecting paint colors, carpet, and furniture for classrooms, offices, library, and lobby, using a \$170,000 furniture allowance. Fortunately a coordinator working with the architect's office for this purpose helped to narrow the choices, and the group looked at recent furniture purchases for the university library and a classroom building. The classrooms would feature comfortable, cushioned, fold-up, and stackable chairs on casters and handsome tables whose tops folded down for easy moving and storage. One table in each classroom was adjustable vertically to accommodate wheelchairs. The electronic systems and placements for the classrooms were approved.

Each staff office contained an L-shaped desk, a lateral file cabinet, a bookcase, and chairs for advisors and students. After trying out several samples, the staff selected work chairs and conference-room chairs that were adjustable in two directions. The office furniture plans and accent colors were adjusted to suit individual preferences. Comfortable armchairs in the lobby included fold-down writing arms. Study tables and chairs, modeled on those of the main library, would populate the honors library in addition to the computer stations and several rows of tall bookshelves. The workroom and kitchen would have ample cabinet space and tables. The storage room would utilize the heavy-duty wooden shelves from the old honors center. Small, suspended lights over the reception counter would highlight that area and provide extra light to the secretaries. By summer of 2006, after all the floor plans and furniture layouts for all the spaces were examined and approved, the new

honors center was complete without further glitches, the furniture had arrived, and the honors college staff moved in and prepared for the opening ceremony that fall.

Again, staying constantly involved at every stage proved critical, from working through several problems with the architect and correcting the walled-in doorway to ensuring sufficient parking spaces outside Stopher for the honors college employees and selecting décor that would please and inspire the honors community. Key steps were securing a full set of architectural drawings as a guide and then maintaining a stream of email correspondence with architects, project coordinators, and furniture coordinators. During the final year images of the soon-to-be-completed center were used as a main attraction to recruit the incoming class of 2006 and to generate publicity for the campus newspaper. In April a “farewell celebration” to the existing honors center included remarks by the president, provost, and me; a “nostalgia” slide show; a scavenger hunt; and tours of the three buildings. In my remarks I expressed an appreciation for a sense of place and love for the old center:

This has been home to our office staff, a comfortable place where we have stood in doorways developing an exciting new idea, where we have argued with each other and complained that we should be running the whole university, where we have worked closely with our students and faculty, where we have entertained our children, where we have supported each other in times of sorrow and crisis. We will miss this place.

Celebratory events—even a valedictory one such as this—are important and require careful thought.

## **GOING OUT TO PLAY**

In the beginning of the fall semester of 2006, two years before the 75th anniversary of the honors program, the honors college literally did go out to play at the new center by welcoming students to a celebration on the patio with volleyball and basketball at the edge

of the Commons. (The former basketball court had been restored at the end of the office wing.) The new president and I even batted the volleyball back and forth for our respective teams. In early September the honors college held a formal grand opening ceremony with a ribbon-cutting and remarks by the new president, the provost, and the vice president for enrollment management and student affairs. The provost noted that “it is appropriate that the Honors College stand physically at the center of the University. . . . [It] is our standard of excellence and achievement. It inspires us to do better, and it calls on us to measure up.” All of the staunch allies—the architecture professor, the architects, the associate VP for facilities, and the VP for business and finance—took public bows for making the completion of the new center possible. Besides the printed program, the audience received souvenir bookmarks showing the new center with a timeline of our facilities history on the back. At homecoming alumni toured the center, and the advisory board and alumni chapter began holding meetings in the new home. Later in the year the honors college also hosted a reception and tour for members of the university’s board of trustees.

For the first time almost all of the 18 yearlong freshman seminars and several other honors classes could meet in the center, thus strengthening its academic identity. The students living in Johnson Hall had ready indoor access to classes, to their advisors, and to the honors library. Faculty and students alike reported satisfaction with the intimate classroom facilities and the spacious, welcoming lobby. The proximity of the building to that of the English Department meant that the instructors of the freshman seminars had only a short walk from their offices and their antiquated former seminar rooms to the new ones. The honors versions of the university’s freshman orientation course took place in the classrooms in Stopher Hall.

Johnson Hall was completely filled with 223 honors students, despite the higher room cost of a brand-new building, and all six RAs were honors students. Floor lounges and main lounges offered quiet study spaces, and the latter also hosted pianos and ping-pong, but the second-story bridge lounge between the buildings, with its

window seats, fireplace, large-screen television, and commanding view of the Commons, proved to be the most popular gathering space. Each hall provided not only a kitchen and laundry but also a card-swipe bicycle room accessed from outside, with a compressed-air tire pump on hand. Stopher also became the area office, a hub for four residence halls. Students enjoyed the coziness of carpeted rooms, the convenience of micro-fridges, and the flexibility of “loft-able” beds.

Soon after the move, however, a few small problems needed to be corrected. I noticed that the lateral filing cabinets in my office were a handsome wood matching the rest of the furniture, while the files in the other staff offices were gray metal, an objectionable symbol of differing status. And because the non-returnable metal files could be moved to the storeroom to provide easier access to alumni folders, new wood files for those five offices were immediately ordered from the honors college’s own budget. Staff members were happier with the attractive matching furniture and readier access to alumni folders. Students disliked the low-armed chairs in the library, so they were switched with the higher-armed student chairs in the staff offices. Unfortunately, the latter did not fit as well under the tables. Puzzlingly, the cabinets in the workroom came without doors, so they had to be ordered. The larger classroom did not have the white board planned for it, so a portable one had to suffice until a large one was installed on the wall.

Other minor glitches and emendations included ordering missing signage at the interior entrances from the residence halls, fixing non-working automatic toilet flushes, re-programming door locks, and correcting a water leak that damaged some ceiling tiles in the lobby. The handicap-access door-opening button inside the external entrance was operable only by card-swipe, proving a problem for our three wheelchair students. An annoying air vent over the receptionist had to be relocated, and uneven temperatures in the classrooms forced adjustments. A drainage problem on the basketball court needed attention. Finally, the secretaries soon found that the small suspended light fixtures over the reception counter were so bright that they were distracting and annoying; moreover,

they were not amenable to a dimmer switch. They never turned on those lights, thus losing the effect of small pools of light highlighting the counter, and only seven years later did a way to shade them emerge.

In the years since the new center opened, everyone's satisfaction has only increased. The lobby has accommodated a new annual BFA honors art show as well as a commissioned student painting, a whimsical sculpture by a faculty member, a hanging by an alumna, and several pieces by local artists. A growing collection of 24 painted wooden "art" chairs provides conversation pieces in the lobby, the library, and corridors. A small storage room provides space for boxes of books for the book sale students ran each semester for several years. In the library a large poster flip-rack preserves in photography the amusing and whimsical murals students had painted on the walls of the old honors center. The alumni publications shelf has expanded, and games and puzzles have been added to the mix. Bound senior theses going back to 1934 are now easily accessible on open shelves. The student corridor displays framed photographs of the annual Distinguished Honors Faculty Award recipients. The workroom space is luxurious, with ample room for the photocopier, storage cabinets, counters, and filing cabinets.

The residence hall occupancy has been especially gratifying, given the diminishing honors presence in the former center. Within two years, the demand for honors housing by a growing population, then around 1,300, meant using much of Stopher Hall, too, as an all-honors residence. The capacity of Johnson rose slightly as several triple rooms were created to meet the needs of a burgeoning university freshman class. For four years the honors occupancy of Johnson remained at 100%, but in the next three years that percentage gradually declined to about 82%. At the same time, the honors occupancy of the 200–223-bed Stopher slightly declined from about 97% to about 91%. The total number of honors students housed in the center jumped gratifyingly from 223 to 424 by the third year and then dropped from a high of 452 the next year to 376. The recent decline seems, from anecdotal evidence, to result from the continuing cost differential in these leaner times. The problem of

hugely declining honors occupancy at our former center had been solved—the percentages were still strong—but a further decline, especially in the originally all-honors Johnson, could be worrisome. The total number of honors students housed in the complex, however, far exceeds that in the old center, even in its initial heyday. The majority of the RAs continue to be honors students, and the resident directors continue to be supportive of honors activities.

Before long the shortage of staff space, however, became a problem. The number of staff offices was limited to the current staff at planning time and by the constraints on the footprint of the office wing. When a shared development officer was hired, creating new office space became a necessity. First she shared the graduate assistant's office, but after another year under the new dean, the conference room was converted to an office for her, and staff met in the library or the larger classroom. When the college hired an additional graduate assistant, she could share the other one's office, but when a newly hired advisor took over the GAs' office, a smaller, windowless storeroom, at some distance from the rest of the staff, was the only option for the GAs. Finally, four years into the new facility, the spacious workroom was cut in half to create a new office for two of the now three GAs. That office sports a full window wall onto the staff corridor, and in the other GA office, previously claustrophobic, a window was cut into its corridor wall. The loss of a dedicated conference and thesis defense room remains a sacrifice in return for added staff to deal with the now 1,500 honors students.

Opportunities for donors to name the center or its individual spaces are still available. The development office has divided the namable 8,560 square feet of space (excluding kitchen, storage, and corridors) into areas for individual naming, each with a price tag that is based on the cost of construction, but that may increase as the years pass.

Ironically, the former honors center was never demolished but has now been refurbished for other purposes. Although this original impetus to action faded over time, our ability to seize the moment during the impending threat of eviction gave us the momentum to carry through and create a far more satisfactory new home.

## **CONCLUSION**

The new honors living-learning center has become a valuable fixture in the center of campus, where it visibly represents academic excellence and the university's pride in this excellence. Visitors find it a handsome, welcoming, and surprisingly whimsical place. The result has been a revitalized honors community.

What was learned from the process of creating a new home can be reduced to two simple precepts. First, early initiative through widespread discussion and research not only provided a head start in the planning process but also helped gather support from the upper administration, ultimately in the form of covering the cost of construction. Second, the constant oversight and attention to detail during the design and construction phases, as well as in the first semester of occupancy, prevented mistakes by others and solved the many small problems that emerge in any complicated construction project. Because of the honors college's past reputation, analytical engagement, and never-failing goodwill, it won favor and support in its many happy collaborations. The new center represents a new era in the long history of the Kent State University Honors College.



## **APPENDIX**

### **Other Honors Centers Consulted**

Adelphi University

Arizona State University

Brigham Young University

Clarion University

Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne

Iowa State University

Jackson State University

Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus

Long Island University, C. W. Post Campus

Louisiana State University

New Mexico State University

Ohio State University

Oklahoma State University

Pennsylvania State University

Randolph-Macon College

Salisbury State College

Texas A&M University

Towson State University

University of Florida

University of Hawaii

University of Iowa

University of Maine

University of Maryland

ANDREWS

University of Massachusetts Amherst

University of Michigan

University of Mississippi

University of Nebraska-Lincoln

University of Nevada, Las Vegas

University of New Mexico

University of Pittsburgh

University of South Carolina

University of Toledo

University of Utah

Valparaiso University

Western Michigan University

## CHAPTER 4

# The Genesis of Barrett, the Honors College at Arizona State University

MARK JACOBS

ARIZONA STATE UNIVERSITY

The honors college at Arizona State University (ASU) had its roots in the distributed honors programs in departments and schools that began in 1958 as ASU became a university by a statewide popular vote. It started as an honors college when it was created in 1988 by order of the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR), the only honors college in the state established in this way. The founding dean of what was at first called the ASU University Honors College was Ted Humphrey, who had earlier directed the university honors program. Professor Humphrey had very specific ideas about what the nature of honors education and honors living communities should be, and—along with the design of a yearlong, first-year course teaching critical thinking and writing called “The Human Event”—Humphrey negotiated a living space for about 170 honors students in a separate building near the center of the ASU Tempe campus called McClintock Hall. The first honors students

moved into their 80 rooms in McClintock in 1988 at the same time the honors college was formed, so it was a residential college from its inception. The students shared the 33,000 square feet with three classrooms and six offices for honors college staff.

As the ASU University Honors College grew, plans were made to move to an entire city block south of the McClintock Hall site, a block that contained seven buildings with about 420 beds. This move occurred in 1992. The buildings had previously been entirely residential halls, but one was converted into offices for the honors college staff and faculty as well as three classrooms; modifications were made to another building to create five other classrooms dedicated to honors classes. In 1994, two entirely new residential halls housing 400 more students were added to this so-called "Center Complex," bringing the bed number to 820 and the square footage devoted to the ASU University Honors College to 197,000 square feet. When Craig and Barbara Barrett endowed the College with a \$10 million gift in 1999–2000, it became the "Craig and Barbara Barrett Honors College." Barrett Honors College at this time comprised the city block of Center Complex, housed 820 honors students, and served them with 8 classrooms and offices for 8 dedicated honors faculty and 18 staff and administrators. The entire complex was arranged around a small courtyard with palm trees.

In 2003, I was hired as the new dean of Barrett Honors College. The search firm found me at Swarthmore College in Pennsylvania where I had been for over two decades, serving as Professor and Chair of Biology and Associate Provost of the College. The then new President of ASU, Michael Crow, apparently instructed the search firm to look at administrators in such private liberal arts colleges as Swarthmore to see if there might be a person interested in coming to ASU and transforming the already well-developed honors college into something that had not existed before: an entity with the quality of a private residential college but interfacing seamlessly with the resources and excitement of one of the nation's largest research universities. That prospect was attractive, and when I visited and found the honors students at Barrett easily as good as Swarthmore students, I was happy to take the job.

In one of my first conversations with President Crow before I even moved out to Arizona, we discussed the possibility of building a new honors campus. We actually pondered whether it would be a good idea to build it at a site separate from the Tempe ASU campus, in a way following the model of the University of Maryland system with St. Mary's College at a different location than the College Park main campus. We decided that since, next to a special residential community, the most powerful selling point to a prospective honors student would be the availability of the curricular and research resources of the main university, we should plan to build the new campus on the Tempe campus of ASU.

I spent my first several years at ASU and Barrett working with an absolutely wonderful and dedicated staff and faculty to change Barrett "from the inside out." We needed to require honors advising and make it much more thorough, greatly increase the number and quality of honors courses and contracts that were offered each semester throughout the Tempe ASU campus, and expand the honors college on the other three ASU campuses in the Phoenix Valley. Student programming needed to have a much greater presence to even begin to approach the quality of a private residential college, and the honors faculty needed to be expanded to incorporate more academic areas, which would diversify the approaches taken in teaching The Human Event classes. We also needed to file with the Arizona Board of Regents to have a special honors fee that would generate the income to expand programs in these exciting ways.

What these first years of work produced was, in fact, a high quality honors college that was beginning to have many of the characteristics of a top private residential college. Still, nothing had yet been done to address the residence part of that name. Luckily, and with the total and undying support of ASU's president, provost, and chief financial officer, the way was cleared by 2005 to start imagining the place and scope of a new honors campus on the Tempe campus. The infrastructure of Barrett had changed; now it was time to change the physical structure.

A site on the southeast corner of the Tempe campus was selected as a good one, meeting the tests of size (9 acres with the ability to support residence halls with approximately 1,700 beds); location (still within the main rectangle of the Tempe campus, a short walk or bike ride from any part of that campus); and availability for construction (mostly a parking lot, but with a small university visitor information building that could be moved also on the site). Two obstacles to construction did exist, however: the site housed the ASU Police Headquarters as well as a private tavern that had been a student watering hole for years. The ASU Police were, I think, delighted to move from their old “Quonset hut” building to an entirely new building, but extensive negotiations were necessary before the private owner of the tavern finally agreed to sell.

An RFP was issued by ASU, and, in that wonderful pre-recession era of 2005–2006, 12 groups bid on the chance to construct the new Barrett Honors College and a set of apartments across the avenue that could also be revenue-producing. When I expressed surprise to the business manager of one of the bidding groups that so many bids had come in, he told me that Tempe was “the largest student housing market in the nation” at that time and thus an attractive place to build housing and be assured of high occupancy.

When a group was selected—one put together by American Campus Communities (ACC) from Austin, Texas—the real work began. A “Barrett Users Group,” or BUG, was formed with the folks from ACC, ASU Facilities, ASU Residential Life, ASU’s University Architect and Planning Office, and ASU’s Finance Office. The ACC people on the BUG included their finance specialists, their engineers, their residential life experts, and the architectural team that they selected with major input from ASU. The Barrett representatives on the committee consisted of several honors students, the Assistant Dean for Student Services, Barrett Honors faculty members, Barrett’s Business Manager, the Vice Dean, and me. This core Users Group—an amalgamation of people who grew extremely close over the next four years and ended up thoroughly enjoying each other and their joint mission—was the group that envisioned, planned, and built the new Barrett Honors campus at Tempe. The

committee planned and discussed for two years, roughly 2005 to 2007, before breaking ground at the site in the fall of 2007. It then took two more years to build the entire 9-acre campus, which opened in the fall of 2009.

The BUG members have already spoken about this collaboration at several national meetings, not only of the National Collegiate Honors Council, but also separate organizations to which the architects, the builders, and the residential life specialists respectively belonged. The purpose of these presentations was to communicate how wonderfully and cooperatively this whole process occurred. ACC was incredibly generous all along with their architects: a firm from Princeton, New Jersey, and a firm from Phoenix, Arizona, were paid by ACC and worked together on the project, but they also worked seamlessly, on a daily basis, with the ASU and Barrett members of BUG. This willingness to share, so to speak, meant that the Barrett staff had a chance to work with national-class architects to design and build the college campus of their dreams. I believe that as ACC got to know the people from ASU and Barrett better and better, they began to trust our judgment in a way that let us keep generating ideas that the architects and ACC willingly incorporated into the plans. The result: the privilege of building a \$140 million, just-for-honors campus without having to raise a dollar. The financial arrangement is this: the land is leased to ACC, they pay to build the college, and they collect and keep the rent for a set number of years. Functionally, it meant that a person like me was able to design and build a whole college in a way that I had thought about and dreamed of for years, but without having to do the 10 years of development work that would ordinarily be required to even have a chance of raising that kind of money. Of course, none of this would have happened had President Michael Crow not been willing to make such a financial deal in order to obtain an amazing new honors college campus.

In talking with the architects at the earliest stages, I had several strong beliefs and aims that arose from my own experience in higher education. When I was growing up, I spent time on Princeton University's campus. I saw the benefit of suite arrangements for

a group of students, particularly when they had a shared living area: it seemed to be an important factor in keeping older students happy and on campus at a time when the siren call to move to off-campus apartments was so powerful in part because the only on-campus option was a single-room space, shared with a roommate or not. Therefore I wanted from the start to offer four choices of rooms, with one of the choices being a four-person suite that included a living area and kitchenette along with a bathroom. Suites like this can woo the juniors and seniors—whose presence is so important to a four-year residential college—to remain on campus. Furthermore, I wanted to have no bathrooms down the hall as so many dorms in my era had, especially since that complicates mixed-gender hallways. Thus every room or suite at the new Barrett campus comes with a bathroom for its denizens.

Both as an undergraduate participating in the House system at Harvard and on sabbatical in Cambridge, UK, at Clare Hall, I witnessed firsthand the amazing power that a central dining hall can have to bring people together. At both places, at least three years of undergraduates and staff and faculty would dine together in unassigned seating at each meal to encourage random encounters with different interesting people. That Harvard and Yale with their houses and colleges adopted the college system from Oxford and Cambridge is not surprising. Because I wanted that dynamic interaction at Barrett, the campus featured a central dining complex with smaller rooms (like the small dining rooms at Harvard's houses) that could handle 12 to 25 people in an enclosed and quieter space for students to use when they wished to entertain someone for dinner such as a speaker who had just held forth in the late afternoon. Another desirable space was for a Refectory, a room seating 125–150 in which a meal could be served to a group that was assembled to hear a special dinner speaker. This Refectory was modeled directly on the dining hall of New College Oxford, which was built in the 1300s; I actually brought a picture of New College's Refectory back with me from a trip to England to show the architects for Barrett. To encourage the students to use the dining complex, no rooms at Barrett included full kitchens, and all of the



students were required to buy a meal plan at the dining center. I will point out that Harvard Houses and Cambridge Colleges each have in the range of 300 to 500 students, while Barrett at Tempe has 1,700 students in residence, and many more who are members of the honors college in Tempe but who live off campus. I would have been worried about whether a single dining complex could serve that much larger a group, but my experience at Swarthmore College—a college of around 1,400 students with only one dining hall complex—reassured me that it would work. The architect from Princeton even drove to Philadelphia to look at the dining hall at Swarthmore and agreed.

Another important design component was having the grassy courtyards and quiet, contemplative spaces that I had so loved as an undergraduate and that I had experienced also as a faculty member on sabbatical. Even though they had to place most of the 1,700 beds and bedrooms along the edges of the campus to accommodate so large a number of students on only 9 acres, the architects did their best to include as many courtyards of differing sizes and atmospheres as possible. They succeeded: the Barrett campus includes five courtyards, and the largest one matches the dimensions of the main quads at a Harvard House or a Cambridge College.

Having a sustainable living community was important to the honors students. To support that wish, the honors college took out a loan of \$1.25 million from ASU, which is being paid back over time, to add to the funds ACC was using to build the campus. With this loan two of the eight residential hall buildings on the new campus were equipped to recycle greywater, to monitor individual room and hall energy, and to support a green roof complete with organic garden and meeting spaces for the community. Called “SHAB” or Sustainability House at Barrett, this facility is the only undergraduate sustainable living community at the moment on any ASU campus.

The campus was designed so that whenever students exited the honors complex to venture forth onto the “Big ASU” campus, the Barrett students would walk directly past both the honors faculty offices and the advising and deans offices should they need the

services of any of those people. I had always found that the remote nature of both faculty offices and student services offices in the institutions I had attended discouraged undergraduates from contacting those people to seek their advice or assistance.

Other details reflected the preferences I developed throughout my academic journey: I had always loved the warm, sandstone-colored arched columns at Stanford where I did my PhD, so we asked the architects to incorporate columns around a courtyard at Barrett, christened the Academic Court, with bougainvillea vines planted alongside each one to grow up and over the bypassing students in arches. I always hated having to go down into dank basements of dorms in college to do my laundry: thus the laundry rooms are located on the top floors of the seven-story buildings, next to big lounges with great views of the Phoenix Valley. Students have a pleasant place to read and wait for laundry. ACC felt that having a fitness center in any building they were constructing was necessary in order to attract students; thus Barrett got one. ACC even included an art budget of \$50,000 to provide wall art in public spaces and student residential hall lounges. ACC agreed to the request to use that budget line to induce ASU and Barrett Fine Arts majors to provide art for all of those spaces. The result is that all of the art on the walls at the Barrett campus—photography, painting, and textiles—comes from the ASU student art community; each work is framed and labeled with a plaque stating the name of the artist. Finally, the food service provider for all of ASU is Aramark, and they were asked as a part of their bid to receive the contract for the whole university to serve the Barrett campus in a special way. As a result, the meal plan cost is slightly higher for Barrett students, but the dining hall offers fresh produce from within a 125-mile radius whenever possible, sushi, and lobster nights. Students have nine stations to choose from, including one with a pizza oven. In fact, the dining facilities just won the *Phoenix Times*' award for "Best Educational Food" in the Valley.

The final result is a 544,000 square-foot campus for honors students, with 26 faculty offices and a whole suite of offices for advisors, deans, student services, business, admissions, recruiting and

national scholarship advising, events, website design, data analysis, and IT. After 10 years of development and the realization of a vision, I feel that Barrett has produced what I hope will be a new way of doing college at large public universities in this country, a way that emulates the high quality of any private college or university, but that can also give bright students a best-of-both-worlds educational experience: the community and support of a top private residential college coupled with the vast resources of a major public university.



## CHAPTER 5

# Building Community in *Árbol de la Vida*

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UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

**B**uilding community has been part of the mission of the University of Arizona Honors College since its founding in 1962. In 2011, a new honors residence hall opened that epitomizes its community of scholars. This essay explores how an honors hall—through its design and programming—can build community, emphasize sustainability, facilitate learning, and encourage an outward focus. This housing experience reinforces the values and goals of honors education and contributes to a personalized, close-knit community in the context of a large, public university.

### **BEGINNINGS OF HONORS HOUSING**

The University of Arizona Honors College has an enduring partnership with the Office of Residence Life that has evolved over time. Yuma Hall was designated as honors housing in 1988. Built in 1937, this classic hall fit Residence Life's interest in living-learning

communities. This experience demonstrated to Residence Life that honors students were a unique population comprising an engaged and responsible community. Although the honors students experienced the familiar and inevitable roommate problems and transition to college issues, they had different kinds of problems: studying too much, anxiety about grades, and sleep deprivation from being over-committed. Because Residence Life experienced fewer problems with honors students than are typically found in non-honors housing, their interest in honors housing grew. The honors college's interest in providing more honors housing was growing as well because of the increase in the number of students. In the 22 years that have passed between the appearance of the first and now the latest hall, four different residence halls have been designated for honors housing. Yuma Hall has provided important continuity and price differentiation in honors housing. Without doubt, the latest hall is by far the most exciting and uniquely designed built environment on the University of Arizona campus.

Housing on campus is not guaranteed, and students are not required to live on campus. Tensions have emerged because of the size and scope of honors housing. Honors housing usually fills quite early in the housing cycle. Honors students who apply late may not have the choice to live in an honors hall; consequently, honors students live in every hall on campus. Some honors students prefer living in non-honors halls because of the location, price, or emphasis of a given hall (e.g., Engineering, Fine Arts, Management). Because honors halls have fewer behavioral problems, Residence Life has been interested in designating larger halls as honors. In contrast, the honors college always thought of community building in a smaller context—houses of 180–240 students—until a new larger hall, *Árbol de la Vida* (Tree of Life), was designated for honors.

Significant support to generate more attractive honors housing came from UA President Peter Likins, who in 1995 emphasized that recruitment of honors students was an institutional priority. This altered the campus culture and encouraged various units to partner more with honors. For example, the honors college

relationship with Residence Life strengthened significantly during this time period as evidenced by growth in the number of honors spaces and the first newly constructed hall designated for honors students, Posada San Pedro, in 2005. With the addition of Posada San Pedro as a third hall, honors housing could accommodate 618 students. Despite this expansion, the demand continued to exceed the spaces available, and honors housing filled early in the recruitment cycle.

## **DESIGNING AN HONORS COMMUNITY**

James Van Arsdel, Assistant Vice President of Residence Life and University Housing, had honors in mind early in the design of Árbol de la Vida. He envisioned a community where ideas and conversation flowed in and out of the spaces, a place where students would be known for their individuality yet strongly bonded to one another through similar interests. Ben de Rubertis, the architect for the hall, an associate of AR7 Architects, Denver, Colorado, was inspired by European plazas and courtyards and hoped to create a marketplace of ideas similar to the Greek *stoa*. In describing his goals, de Rubertis (2011) imagined the scene of a family bringing their son or daughter to college:

We know we can't replace what a college student is leaving: family life cannot be replaced by architecture. But we thought that the structure of a residence hall and the structure of a student's academic life could merge and, therefore, support the journey. Our overarching hope is that it provides a structure that comforts, stimulates, and challenges student residents and the campus as a whole.

Van Arsdel was able to create a vision and invest incredible attention in the details to make this vision a reality because of his extensive experience with Residence Life: he had been at the University of Arizona 25 years when ground was broken for Árbol de la Vida. He had built five residence halls, overseen the conversion and renovation of a Greek fraternity house into a hall, and led

several major building renewal projects. His thoughtfulness and deep understanding of all aspects of the design, construction, and functionality of residence halls made all the difference in the conceptualization and implementation of this honors hall.\*

Árbol de la Vida is composed of five buildings, structures that are connected through open spaces, with a large patio on the ground floor, and by bridges on the upper levels. Land is a limited resource on campus so the site utilizes a modern urban design that maximizes the height and footprint of the building. The hall houses 719 students in 231,882 square feet of living space. Although the complex is large, the floors are small neighborhoods, housing approximately 32 students in double rooms. The project provides a transition between the residential neighborhood across the street and campus; the buildings facing the street and residential homes are four stories tall, but five and six stories are used for the interior buildings, which are adjacent to a nine-story hall. The buildings are named for five characteristics of a strong and vibrant community: Alma (Soul), Bondad (Goodness), Cariño (Affection), Destino (Destiny), and Esperanza (Hope).

Throughout the hall, an interesting interplay of elements encourages both community and individuality. Van Arsdal wanted the corridors to have “brilliant corners” so the architects worked to bring in natural light. The hallways flare out, creating gathering places at each end with comfortable furniture that draws people into conversation. The doors are recessed from the halls to create a front porch effect; residents can talk to someone in front of their room—on their porch—and have privacy. The doors are offset so that residents cannot peer into their neighbors’ room when the doors open simultaneously.

Like a village, common spaces bring students together. The buildings are arranged around oblique courtyards with corridors that feel like small streets. Glass walls enable those strolling by to see who is there and what is going on. The public areas include two

\*The project cost approximately \$90,000,000, including the furnishings and art work. The university builds and operates its own residence halls and finances the projects with bonds.



laundries, two media lounges, a large recreation room and kitchen area, and five meeting rooms. Taking advantage of the warm Arizona climate, the open air, central courtyard features outdoor seating, a barbeque, and a large desert garden with trees and flowering shrubs. The main courtyard is framed by two great rooms, each with its own grand piano, where students gather to socialize or study. Two exercise rooms occupy the floor above the great rooms.

Many characteristic features of the Southwest landscape are incorporated into the design. A central concept for the building is a slot canyon, a natural phenomenon that is deep and narrow. As hikers wander through a slot canyon, they cannot see very far ahead and yet are awed by the forces that created the deep channels. Here the slot canyon functions as a metaphor for an honors education: exploratory and wandering, deep yet directed. The arrangement of the buildings mimics a canyon with relatively narrow spaces between tall structures. The building utilizes natural light with glass walls for public spaces including hallways, study rooms, and meeting rooms; all the residents' rooms have exterior windows. The main patio features lighting that mimics moonlight and bathes the landscaped canyon between the buildings in a blue glow.

The most prominent image of the slot canyon faces the intersecting streets and the Tucson community: a large copper-colored screen with small punches set at angles creates an image of a slot canyon. Residents in the enclosed study room can see out, but the screen limits visibility into the hall. Not only does this two-story screen create a remarkable view from the street, but it also provides a cushion of air that insulates the windows.

## **ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABILITY**

Sustainability is a passion of honors students. They have been leaders in getting the campus to go green: lobbying the administration to create a sustainability fund, working to bring solar panels to campus, creating a community garden, initiating a composting project in the Student Union, and organizing teams to recycle plastic water bottles after athletic events and homecoming. Their interest and leadership resulted in making sustainability a central

feature of *Árbol de la Vida*, the first LEED-certified platinum building on the UA campus.

The buildings are arranged to maximize shading and to create a well-sealed and insulated envelope. The south-facing windows have awnings that maximize the shade during the hottest seasons. The north-south orientation shades the open air corridors between the buildings. The decorative, metal window screens cool large windows and provide architectural design elements. The lighting design and HVAC systems were selected to reduce energy use. Each student room has a large window that provides a generous amount of daylight and opens to provide ventilation; the windows also have two sets of coverings, one for partial coverage and one that blocks out all light so that late-night studiers can sleep late in the morning. The rooms are smart rooms where the lights turn themselves off if they do not detect movement. Students who are immersed in study have to move their arms periodically to turn the lights back on. The temperature also adjusts if no movement is detected for a set number of minutes and adjusts even more after a longer interval. In other words, rooms are not heated or cooled when students venture home for the weekend. As I tell the students, the rooms are smart, but they are not smart enough to pick up their clothes.

Water is conserved because the bathrooms feature low-flow showerheads and dual-flush toilets. Solar panels on the roof provide a significant portion of the hot water; bathroom floors are made from a conglomerate material that includes recycled glass. Their extruded construction means that there are no seams or grout, which allows for easy maintenance and cleaning. The hall uses green housekeeping and has a light bulb and battery exchange program. The complex has a large recycling area, and sustainability education takes places throughout the year.

The building's nod to the Arizona environment extends to the landscaping plan, which replicates the desert environment by utilizing native plants and species that are suitable in this climate. Moreover, some of the plants are recycled because the succulents for the grounds are obtained through a plant rescue program. Drought-tolerant plants line the perimeter of the building. The slot

canyons between the buildings and in the patio feature riparian plants and trees. The landscaping incorporates passive water harvesting through site grading that slows runoff. Large basins in the courtyard capture runoff that will be used for deep-root watering. The rainwater from the roofs is channeled through runnels that wander down the corridors between buildings. The sound of the water rushing after a storm and blue lights in the runnels in the evening create a magical effect.

Living in this carefully crafted environment, students are reminded of sustainability on a daily basis. In the lobby, students can check the energy kiosk to see how much energy is used in Árbol Hall and compare that energy usage to other halls on campus, especially those with a green design. Students even have the ability to study energy usage in specific locations within the complex at different times of the day. The kiosk encourages students to think about and investigate consumption and conservation. Because students adapt so well to this green environment, they are often surprised, for example, when they return home for several days to an environment where lights remain on unless someone consciously turns them off. Thus students realize the importance of design, technology, and their own habits and practices in promoting a sustainable environment. Many students are active in various sustainability clubs on campus. One faculty fellow, John Pollard, who is assigned to Árbol, advises the SolarCats, a student club that brings environmentally conscious students together in an effort to harness solar energy as a power source for the university.

## **MAKING INTELLECTUAL LIFE CENTRAL**

As soon as Árbol de la Vida was designated as honors housing, Residence Life and the honors college began meeting monthly to make plans for the building, create a close-knit working group, and coordinate programming. This partnership enabled honors' interests to be central to the new hall. The intellectual and academic tone of the hall is evident from the point of entry, a glass wall called the "Poetree." Etched on the glass are trees that mirror the trees planted in front of the building. Upon closer inspection, spectators can see

that the etchings are actual lines of poetry, many about nature, the environment, and the Southwest. The honors faculty and administrators selected the passages.

Academics are a centerpiece of the residential experience and the architecture of the hall. The separate buildings are connected by bridges, and the largest and most prominent of these connects the eastern and western corridors at the third floor with a two-story study bridge with glass walls so that students are highly visible when they are studying there. The bridge has small tables that can be moved around as study groups form. On the upper levels of the study bridge, two Mediascapes allow students to work simultaneously on a computer with interconnected keyboards, to see each other's work, and to collaborate; several honors professors build Mediascape technology into their assignments. Each floor boasts two or three study rooms with white boards for collaboration; these areas also feature glass walls so that folks can be seen studying. One study room on each floor is designated as a quiet space. Students can reserve the meeting rooms on the first floor for study sessions, clubs, and programs. Students often reserve the media room so they can watch films related to specific classes.

The larger meeting rooms, which hold 15 to 20 people, are scheduled for honors seminars. For example, each freshman enrolls in a small, discussion-based seminar for 16 or fewer students. Faculty for the honors seminars are drawn from the ranks of Regents Professors, Distinguished University Professors, and other internationally known scholars. The classrooms can be configured in different ways because of the movable tables and chairs; each room has a white board and projectors. The honors college maintains a supply of connectors so that faculty and students can easily connect different computers when they are working in the classrooms.

Faculty love teaching in the hall and often stay after class to interact with students. Students, in turn, like walking by these rooms after class and witnessing their friends and professors still carrying on a lively discussion or debate.

The tradition at the University of Arizona is to minimize the number of offices in the residence halls and to limit the

administrative functions because the halls are seen as students' space. Árbol has seven offices: two for community directors, one to support residence, two for the honors recruitment and outreach team, one for the coordinator of the First-Year Program, and one for honors advising. The honors advisors talk with students about study abroad, course choices, engagement experiences, and their honors educational plan. The First-Year Program coordinator plans programs and events for freshmen, advises the Honors Mentor Association, and directs the First-Year Research Project program. Other staff members have rotating office hours in the hall. The counselor for Nationally Competitive Scholarships meets with students to urge them to think about applying for these prestigious awards. The program coordinator for Student Engagement interacts with students who are interested in internships, community service, leadership, research, and other opportunities available both in the honors college and across campus. The offices facilitate interaction because they are convenient and visible; moreover, students get to know staff easily in this environment.

The University of Arizona also places Faculty Fellows in the residence halls, the Greek houses, and the on-campus cultural centers and other locations where students gather. Faculty Fellows are professors who teach undergraduates and spend time interacting with students. They do not have offices in the hall but use the common spaces to meet with students. Because Árbol de la Vida is a large hall, it has two Faculty Fellows; John Pollard from Chemistry has been a constant presence, and Karen Zimmerman from Art, Melissa Fitch from Spanish and Portuguese, and Supapan Seraphin from Material Science and Engineering have also served in this capacity. Professor Pollard teaches the introductory chemistry sequence. He also provides advice to students who are selecting a major from the many options within the College of Science. An avid biker, Pollard often leads bike rides in the Tucson community. He observes that students in the hall have a greater awareness of social and environmental issues than students in other residences on campus. Professor Seraphin enjoys cooking Thai food, and students join her in preparing a meal that typically feeds around

150 students. She encourages students to study abroad and to find research opportunities on campus or during the summer months. She is adept at reminding ambitious and over-committed students about their long-term goals and at helping them pace themselves to avoid burnout. The Faculty Fellows add an academic dimension to the hall while providing enormous social support. Along with the residence life staff, they can reach out to students who are experiencing difficulties in school or in their personal lives in a meaningful and potent way because their relationship and involvement with the students transcend the classroom.

The residence life staff, including the community directors, are either honors students or former honors students. Both community directors were honors undergraduates, one at Arizona and the other at another university. All of the resident assistants in the honors halls are current honors students who are familiar with the honors college and its benefits and opportunities. These RAs receive a copy of the Common Reading text provided to all freshmen at orientation and create programs connected to the theme of the reading. Honors staff participate in RA training so that the RAs are clear about their role and understand the difference between academic and peer advising. Many of the RAs are tutors at the Think Tank, the UA tutoring and academic skills center on campus. These RAs post messages on Facebook to announce when and where they will be available for tutoring, general questions, and review sessions. Even in an honors hall, freshmen need encouragement to study and develop sound time-management skills. Early in the semester, the RAs tell their floor members when they will be in the study room and encourage residents to join them.

The hall has two apartments, one used for a community director and the other for visiting artists and scholars. The honors college coordinates the use of the apartment by alumni, scholars, and artists. This two-bedroom apartment is fully furnished, complete with copies of the Honors College Common Readings and University of Arizona Press selections about the Southwest. In addition to a public lecture or teaching, each guest interacts with students at an event in the hall, usually over a meal, and shares insights about his

or her career and life. Students have enjoyed a variety of visiting artists and scholars from physicians and professors to journalists and scientists. Alumni in particular love the opportunity to interact with students in the hall and often become role models and mentors.

## **A COMMUNITY OF SCHOLARS**

Specific design features in Árbol actually encourage conversation. The gathering places created at the ends of each floor by the flared hallways were intended by the architect to “extend the threshold of the individual rooms, and in doing so, we hope they extend the discussion, extend the debate, and extend the vigor of learning into the realm of the student’s home and community” (de Robertis, 2011). These gathering places not only invite people into them, they invite conversations. The design of the study rooms, exercise rooms, recreation room, and small meeting rooms draw residents into them and into conversation; a student walking by a study room can see who is working there and, therefore, be more inclined to stop to visit. Even the selection of art with an international or abstract theme was designed to encourage conversation and interpretation. Each study room, gathering place, great room, and common space has art; even the courtyard features mobile sculptures. Photographs from the honors college study abroad courses are featured throughout the hall.

These conversations prompted students to initiate two new organizations in the first year that the hall was open. A senior RA called together a group of residents interested in biomedical careers because he was concerned about the necessity and difficulty of being able to read and understand research articles. The Honors College Biomedical Journal Club was born. The students select journal articles to read and sometimes invite faculty to come to the hall to participate in the discussions. A second group of students was interested in the healing effects of music. They asked me to sponsor a club of musicians who would perform for patients in local hospitals. To date, they have performed at the University Hospital, Tucson Medical Center, and the VA hospital. Their second

goal, which they hope to accomplish this year, is to play music with patients who are musicians. They found a faculty member studying the effects of music on healing and hope to connect their activities to this research.

An important mission of the honors college is to help students develop a commitment to promote social responsibility throughout their lives. The college encourages a global perspective through courses built around international issues, the theme of the Common Reading Program, and study abroad. Honors college staff worked closely with Árbol Residence Life staff to ensure that programming reinforces the outward-looking vistas that are featured in the housing complex.

Before the hall had opened, a resident assistant approached me about sponsoring an alternative spring break. His perspective had been opened up by an internship in Peru, and he really wanted to organize an international, alternative break program. Spring break is too short for such an excursion, but he organized a trip to San Francisco where students worked at the AIDS Foundation, in a homeless shelter, and for a food bank. The students found that this was a significant learning experience where they witnessed firsthand the complexity of social issues and had the satisfaction of making a difference. The alternative spring break has become an ongoing program for students that helps to expand their horizons through community service.

The goal in Árbol de la Vida was to build community by creating small neighborhoods within a larger community; to encourage conversations and interactions that would flow across majors, floors and buildings, classrooms, and living spaces; and to weave together a diverse set of individuals. If what students and faculty report is true, this goal has been achieved.

## REFERENCE

de Robertis, Ben. (2011, September 24). What we hoped to achieve, and what seems important to us, at Likins Hall and Árbol de La Vida [architect's remarks at hall dedication].



## CHAPTER 6

# Living to Learn, Learning for Life: Housing Honors Classrooms and Offices in an Honors Residence Hall

KAREN LYONS

UNIVERSITY OF NEBRASKA-LINCOLN

I left the interview with high-hopes: being Assistant Director of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Honors Program sounded like an excellent fit for me. A full-time job, a real income, and no longer having to depend on year-to-year contracts as an adjunct were appealing. The opportunity to teach tied into my strengths, and since I had taught UNL honors classes previously, I knew the high quality of the students. I also knew the director and was excited about the prospect of working with him. As I wended my way, in heels and suit, through the extensive construction going on in the renovation of the honors offices, I had only two reservations: my office would be in the Neihardt Residence Center, and Neihardt had no classrooms, so I would have to walk across campus to teach. I mulled over those points with skepticism. Did I really want to

spend most of my days in a residence hall when I had been out of college for nearly 30 years? How uncomfortable would that location be after being in my own little office tucked away from the noise and commotion of the students changing classes? Would I feel terribly out of place among people less than half my age? What would be the students' expectations of me? Would I turn into a surrogate mom or, more likely, grandma? And would I like having to walk across campus to my classrooms when I was accustomed simply to going downstairs in the building, especially in January in the minus-twenty degree wind chills or the heat and humidity for which the Midwest is famous? What would I do if I forgot something or misjudged traffic and was late? When the offer came, however, I accepted it immediately despite those reservations; after all, I was clearly aware that no absolutely perfect job exists. The result: I have never regretted taking the position and my fears were in vain.

I quickly learned my first concern was completely unfounded: I was very happy with the location of my office, and after over 15 years as Assistant Director and then Associate Director of the UNL Honors Program, I cannot imagine ever wanting to retreat to an office tucked away in a corner, away from the hustle and bustle of students. Initially, however, I did have to walk across campus to teach, so I did my best to be stoic about it. Several years later, Neihardt was renovated again, this time to remodel several rooms into classrooms and study rooms. I now could teach in Neihardt and enjoy the comfort of having my office in close proximity to my classrooms and heading to my classes without dealing with the Nebraska heat or the Midwest winter weather. But I was to learn this situation held far more advantages than merely being out of the sometimes unpleasant climate. A living and learning environment, the presence of classrooms and offices in the residence facility, and the integration of faculty and students outside the classroom as well as in epitomize the college experience for faculty and administrators as well as for students.

## **NEIHARDT RESIDENCE CENTER**

Neihardt is unique on the UNL campus in many ways. The first residence hall built on the campus, it opened in 1932 for women only although it has long since been co-ed by floors. It boasts the only Georgian architecture among the UNL residence halls, with elegant chandeliers in the room that was the original dining hall but now serves as a large gathering place for students; a circular staircase; and a temperamental elevator made by the Otis Elevator Company, which was the first elevator company in the United States. The elevator features classic Bogart-style accordion doors and is, of course, named Otis. Since opening, Neihardt has undergone several metamorphoses: during World War II, it served a stint as an influenza hospital. It has since been the home of international students and the residence for Centennial College, a precursor to both the honors program and UNL's current learning communities. In the early 90s, just a few years after the inception of the UNL Honors Program in 1986, one floor of one of the four wings became optional honors housing, although the honors program administrative offices remained in the student union. From there, it was only a matter of time until the honors program, including the administrative offices, infiltrated the rest of the residential complex. Today Neihardt houses just under a quarter of the 2,000-plus honors program students, along with several classrooms, study rooms, the administrative and advising offices, the Director of Fellowship Advising, a computer lab, the honors thesis library, lovely spaces for students to gather, and the executive offices of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC).

## **THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL**

The NCHC offices are located on the first floor of one wing, next to the computer lab and across from a classroom and a meeting room with a small kitchenette. The working relationship between the UNL Honors Program and NCHC is invaluable to both operations. The university provides the space, which includes the large, multi-room main office with its own exit, three other offices, phone

service, mail delivery, and access to the UNL Digital Commons. In addition, the UNL Honors Program supplies the use of the meeting room and as much moral support as possible, particularly during the month leading up to the national conference. Honors students sometimes have the opportunity to work for NCHC, and they often take shortcuts through the office to their classes. The two enterprises cooperate in many ways, and NCHC staff members typically attend the lectures, events, and celebrations hosted by the honors program.

## **ACADEMICS**

While the residential component is extremely important, as is the presence of the advising and administrative offices and the NCHC offices, the academic component is the critical piece. The UNL Honors Program controls three classrooms; two are smart classrooms, and one has a dedicated smart cart. Two other seminar rooms are available for honors classes although the housing office oversees them. The two smart classrooms seat a maximum of 25 students; the smaller classroom can hold a maximum of 15 students and is available for group study sessions in the evenings. The other seminar classrooms seat 12 comfortably, but they can accommodate two or three more students when necessary. Of course, the study rooms are also available to all honors students, not just those who live in Neihardt, and students use them constantly although they are busiest during dead and finals weeks.

That students live and take classes in the same building is advantageous in a variety of ways. For starters, students in 8:30 a.m. classes are known to set their alarms for 8:25, slide into clothes and a pair of slippers, grab their texts and notebooks, and run downstairs to class. That behavior contributes to the casual atmosphere this arrangement promotes.

Of course, those faculty members who prefer a more formal atmosphere can teach in other facilities, usually in classrooms housed in their home departments, but most value it. The faculty who teach in Neihardt essentially come into the students' home, their space, instead of the students going across campus to the

faculty members' or departments' spaces. This shift in the paradigm means the faculty, not the students, are guests in the classroom, a situation that makes the students more responsible for their performance and thus means the classes are decidedly student-centered. Here, the barrier between the students and the faculty breaks down rapidly, and the students interact with one another in important and valuable ways earlier in the semester than they do in more formal settings.

Even in this relaxed setting, for the first few class meetings, the first-year students are stiff, tentative in responding to questions, and uncertain about what faculty will expect of them. Because many students have already met classmates in the building, they overcome that anxiety quickly in a Neihardt classroom and rapidly become productive, usually by the end of the third week, rather than the fifth or sixth week of their first semester in college. The comfortable setting enhances both the quantity and quality of what the students can absorb and the level to which they can perform.

The upper-division students, many of whom already know each other, are relaxed and open even as they look for challenges and academic excitement. Some of these students have lived in Neihardt previously and are excited to return to its casual environment even though they are quite happy in upper-division housing or apartments. When they arrive, they are enthusiastic and primed to work. With classes limited to 12 to 15 students and an atmosphere that obviously promotes intimacy, students typically feel free to share ideas sooner in the semester and in more depth than might otherwise occur.

Another advantage of having the classrooms in the building is the proximity of the computer lab: when assignments are due, students can print their work immediately prior to class. The disadvantage to that opportunity, however, is that it encourages procrastination, something that is an inevitable facet of being a student (or a faculty member).

Finally, and less tangible though no less important, the presence of the classrooms creates an academic aura: most residents and all students who use the computer lab, study rooms, or other

gathering spaces cannot walk through the building without passing at least one classroom. That constant reminder of the importance of academics within the living space sends a subtle, nuanced message that academics are central to this stage of their lives.

## **FACULTY OFFICES, ADVISING OFFICES, AND THESIS LIBRARY**

For faculty whose offices are in the building, the academic presence and convenience are invaluable. Coffee comes with the territory, fresh-brewed and not in a paper cup for \$3.75. If faculty forget to bring something to class, the item can easily be retrieved. The most valuable aspect of having both faculty offices and study spaces in the building, however, is the constant contact with the students. Students can come by the honors offices before or after class if they have a quick question, during office hours, or whenever the office doors are open. If residents are working on the assignment for the next class and have a concern, they can easily wander by the faculty member's office. In other words, students rely less on technology and more on personal contact. This atmosphere lends itself to constant learning opportunities, not just structured ones in the classrooms, but flexible, spontaneous opportunities to discuss material one on one with students. The faculty member can share the joy of pursuing complex intellectual questions and demonstrate the habit of exercising lifelong learning skills.

That the thesis library is housed beside the Associate Director's office provides another advantage. That location means students who are preparing to write the thesis often touch base with the Associate Director for thesis advice as they are perusing a few of the over 2,000 theses shelved there. In this case, students have immediate access to an advisor who can discuss the thesis process as well as possible thesis topics. Again, this situation usually means the student receives immediate assistance, often without the necessity of making an appointment. That the honors program has resisted digitizing theses means not only that the operation is maintaining the spirit of the over-80-year-old building, but that the students

interact with a person who can respond to them in important and valuable ways, rather than with a laptop, as they investigate thesis possibilities. Although the thesis library, at some point, will certainly move to a digital format, the honors program will also retain hard copies of theses precisely because of the importance of this interaction.

In addition, because the Academic Advisor is housed in the residence center, she can be in constant touch with other honors administrators and faculty as well as with the students. Students have easy and spontaneous access to that office, and they can drop by after class or, on some days, in the evenings when student peer advisors staff the office. Centralizing all honors administrative and academic functions means any questions of policy that arise can be solved quickly and easily, and everyone on campus concerned with honors, whether they are upper administrators, students, or faculty, knows exactly where to go for honors information and questions.

## **STUDENT AND FACULTY CONNECTIONS**

Often, as I walk back to my office after a class, I will find students reading or studying, which often leads to exploring potential topics for upcoming papers or determining what classes the students should consider taking in the following semester. These interchanges are always valuable. Students who no longer live in Neihardt often study in the parlors or study rooms. Reconnecting with them often means discussing graduate and professional school options, thesis issues, or questions about personal statements, all of which become important points of conversation. Often first-year students who have chosen to live in other residence halls study in Neihardt, in which case the regular interactions with them means they remain in closer contact with the honors program than they would if they simply came by the offices when they needed forms or advice.

The students who live off campus also find Neihardt a comfortable home when they are on campus. The commuter student lounge has lockers so they can leave some texts there while they carry others to class. The lounge is particularly attractive to commuting

first-year students who are acclimating themselves to campus life without being wholly a part of it. Alternatively, some students frequent the other parlors, which are also more open and closer to the ebb and flow of student life. But in the commuter student lounge, lunchtime can be quite busy on certain days, with six or eight students gathering with sandwiches and fruit to visit about classes or social events.

## **CONCLUSION**

The inclusion of faculty, advising, and administrative offices and, more important, classrooms in the residence hall promotes the idea of learning as a partnership in which faculty not only mentor and guide students through the material but demonstrate a love of and dedication to lifelong learning. Other classroom situations, as well as the student/thesis mentor relationship, can foster these ideas, but in the academic setting of Neihardt, this relationship develops with first-year students, not just with upper-division students, and that difference is often critical to a student's survival at a large research institution and in the honors program itself. Because the opportunity exists in Neihardt to routinely encounter faculty face-to-face and not just at planned times, students can enjoy the spontaneity of a quick conversation or a more prolonged one, rather than having to make an appointment or ask questions and receive answers via email at odd hours of the day and night. This casual atmosphere lets the students know that the honors faculty and staff are anxious to stay in touch and to help them.

Housing honors at UNL means not only providing the opportunity for students, faculty, and administrators to establish a strong honors living-learning community, but the opportunity to blend these benefits with the advantage of honors advising, classes, and learning. The discussions then spill over from the classrooms into the hallways, parlors, rooms, and offices in the building, and this atmosphere teaches students to embrace learning as a way of life and enables faculty to engage in and demonstrate the same. Thus Neihardt establishes an atmosphere that defies the view that the college experience is simply a stage through which students must



pass before entering graduate or professional schools or the workforce. Rather, housing honors at UNL means students live to learn and will do so for life.



## CHAPTER 7

# Where Honors Lives: Old Central at Oklahoma State University

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### **ALWAYS HAVE A WISH LIST!**

The story of where honors lives at Oklahoma State University is one of a series of twists and turns over the years and in many ways actually reenacts the proverbial rags to riches story.

Until 1988, honors space at Oklahoma State University (OSU) was limited to the office of the faculty member who had the title of Honors Director in the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) and received 0.25 FTE reassigned time for his honors duties. When one of the co-authors of this chapter was asked to become A&S Honors Director in 1988, he already had an administrative office on the A&S Dean's office floor and one of his requests was that a new Honors Program Office be situated on that floor as well. He also requested 0.75 FTE reassigned time along with a part-time student assistant to keep the office open during regular business hours

and make it accessible to current and prospective honors students. The answer to these requests—and to every other request he made before taking the job—was “yes,” and he thus learned an important lesson of honors administration: his list was too short. Over the years his constant advice to honors colleagues has been this refrain: “Always have a wish list!” The story of OSU’s current honors space, which consists of all of historic Old Central, is proof that this piece of advice sometimes pays big dividends.

The initial A&S Honors Program Office in 1988 was a converted second-floor science laboratory that had been refurbished as a conference room some years earlier. The honors staff laughingly referred to the chemical disposal sink with running water, which occupied what is now closet space in one corner of the room, as the “honors wet bar.” The rest of the room had a desk, telephone, and computer terminal (not yet an actual computer in those days) for the director at the window end of the office, while the student assistant occupied the end of the large oak conference table (a remnant from conference room days) at the end of the office near the entrance door from the hallway. However humble, the A&S Honors Program now had its own space for the first time, and it was space that gave the program substantially more visibility than it had enjoyed in previous years.

Because student participation grew over the next few years, the A&S Honors Program added a professional advising position and moved its office across the hall, which had a corner office for the director and an adjacent office for the honors advisor. While an improvement, this space occupied part of a larger suite shared with other offices housing a variety of members of the A&S Dean’s staff. Not until the university made the transition in 1989 from Arts & Sciences Honors to the OSU University Honors Program—a move made to create campus-wide honors opportunities for students in all six undergraduate colleges—did the next major phase of honors space development come. The A&S Honors Director added the title of University Honors Program Director, the position for the first time became a full-time position with a 12-month appointment, and the honors offices moved to the fifth floor of the Edmond Low

Library in the center of the OSU campus. In addition to an office for the director, a second office housed the coordinator (later to become the assistant director's position), and a third, the honors advisor. In addition the space contained a computer laboratory for students and a newly furnished student study lounge that was open from 8:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. As honors enrollment continued to increase, a second honors advisor's office was added, and then eventually a third. Although the space definitely was an improvement, the office configuration was still rather cramped for the five individuals who made up the OSU University Honors Program staff.

The addition of the computer lab and study lounge dramatically increased the student traffic in and around the honors program offices, but the honors space was located in an out-of-the-way corridor on the top floor of the library. This location was difficult for prospective students and their families to find—so naturally the wish list included more and better space.

## **MEANWHILE ELSEWHERE ON CAMPUS—A BUILDING WITH A STORY**

The iconic building at OSU is Old Central, the original College Building that was completed in 1894. After a period of disuse, the Oklahoma Historical Society (OHS) entered into a long-term lease with OSU to reopen the building for use as a museum of Oklahoma higher education. A curator on the OHS staff kept the building open for several hours a day, but the building's physical condition deteriorated until it had to be closed.

With a story nearly as long as that of the university itself, Old Central has served as stoic witness to periods of profound change and development on the Stillwater campus. Abraham Lincoln's signing of the Morrill Act in 1862 paved the way for the development of land-grant institutions of higher education, and although the town of Stillwater struggled for survival in 1890, the 480 residents recognized the unique opportunity for economic and educational progress associated with the location of a land-grant college in their small town. The first legislative assembly of the Oklahoma Territory

designated Payne County as the location for a new college, and as a result of the efforts by Stillwater leadership, a 200-acre plot owned by four homesteaders was transferred to the Oklahoma Agricultural and Mechanical College Board of Regents in 1891 for the establishment of a permanent structure dedicated to higher education.

Construction of Old Central or “the College Building” originally cost \$25,000, and it opened for student use in September of 1894. It housed the Oklahoma A&M College faculty and administration, library, chemistry laboratory, classrooms, a large assembly hall, and the night watchman’s room. The building’s existence, however, has been a precarious one: Old Central has endured at least three fires, a tornado, and repeated threats of demolition. Fortunately, Old Central has had its share of advocates, too; each time the building faced destruction in the name of campus progress, members of the Stillwater community, recognizing the building’s historic importance, came forward to fight for its survival.

Old Central’s sandstone and brick masonry, heating and cooling systems, and ventilation were thoroughly modern at the time the structure was completed in 1894, but its unstable foundation required the installation of stabilizing tie-rods as early as 1914. Unnoticed cracks in the walls caused its popularity among students and faculty to fall quickly, and the campus newspaper deemed Old Central unsafe a year later. The founding members of Stillwater and their families petitioned to save the building, declaring it a monument to the courage of the college’s founders and to the future of education. Old Central was condemned in 1921, but when Henry G. Bennett became president of the college in 1928, he formally declared his intent to preserve the campus icon. He initiated desperately needed refurbishment and restoration of Old Central, and this period of renewal re-energized the campus community.

After Bennett’s death in 1951, however, Old Central’s future again hung in the balance. Efforts by the next president to demolish it concerned a small group of alumni and faculty who once again advocated for protection of the campus treasure. Repairs began in 1962, but despite the updates, the office of President Robert B. Kamm retired Old Central from student and administrative use

in September of 1969. In 1970, OSU entered contract negotiations between the Old Central Committee, an ad hoc group of university personnel, and OHS for the preservation of Old Central and its repurposing as a museum of higher education. Following the necessary approvals, the Secretary of the Interior placed Old Central on the National Register of Historic Places on July 27, 1971, formalizing its designation as an irreplaceable symbol of higher education in Oklahoma and a property worth preserving. With additional financial resources now available, the next phase of Old Central's restoration lasted from 1971 until 1983.

OHS maintained an office in Old Central for approximately 30 years and played a key role in the rehabilitation project that began in October of 2007. Members of the OHS staff joined a team of representatives from the office of Long-Range Facilities Planning, the honors college, TAP Architecture, and CMS Willowbrook Construction to tackle issues ranging from stabilizing the foundation to designing and furnishing classrooms and offices. The status of Old Central as an historic building required that the original spaces be preserved to the maximum degree feasible, that the turn-of-the-century feel be maintained, and that all elements of structural restoration replicate the 1894 appearance of Old Central. The OHS worked closely with the architects on every painstaking detail down to the tiles on the roof, the Victorian green belfry, the textured windows, and the age and type of wood used for repairing the woodwork. The rehabilitation project also included extensive updates to comply with building codes for ventilation, fire system requirements, and ADA regulations, but the architectural planners took great care to incorporate the modern modifications while maintaining Old Central's original look. The use of glass to create virtually invisible walls now preserves the sense of the original space in the main hallway while newly created advising offices (located in the original library) and a glass-walled elevator allow visitors to see the original sandstone foundation and interior structure of the building.

The honors college staff also had the opportunity to work with the architectural firm on the plans and to tour Old Central at various

stages throughout the rehabilitation, even venturing to the top of the scaffolding to enjoy the signs of progress and the view. Because interest in the preservation effort significantly raised Old Central's profile on campus, students and university officials often joined the touring group. The mission to restore Old Central revitalized the campus and community's enthusiasm for the safeguarding of OSU's history, and after nearly two years the project reached completion in the summer of 2009.\*

## **HOW WE GOT FROM THERE TO HERE**

The objective of securing an honors college building was one of the two top wish list items, the other being a naming gift that would endow the college for the future. As this chapter is being written, the record remains one for two, but hope springs eternal because the wish list exists.

With the arrival of a new provost on campus in 2003, the honors college arranged for a tour of the abandoned Old Central with the object of putting honors on her radar screen in the event that funding for the building's rehabilitation, as the National Register of Historic Places terms it, would present itself. Absolutely nothing happened for several years. Apparently several of the college deans on campus had their eye on Old Central for no-doubt worthy projects related to their own academic units, but at the crucial meeting of the campus space allocation committee, the provost indicated that rather than allocating Old Central to one of the six undergraduate colleges, her preference would be to make it the home of the OSU Honors College because it served students from all undergraduate colleges and academic majors. Her suggestion met with immediate acceptance: the OSU Honors College would have its own building. Planning began in earnest in 2005, and four and a half years later, in the summer of 2009 just before the start of fall classes, the honors college moved into its new home. The renovation had taken two

\*For more about the history of Oklahoma State University and the building itself, readers may enjoy Fischer, Leroy H. (1988). *Historic Old Central*. Stillwater, OK; Board of Regents of Oklahoma State University.



years of construction and an expenditure of \$6.7 million dollars to overcome the challenges involved in bringing a nineteenth-century building up to twenty-first-century standards.

## **OLD CENTRAL IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY**

Old Central now houses offices for the honors college staff, two classrooms, a student lounge and computer lab, a conference room, the Assembly Hall, and historic recreations of the original president's office and the night watchman's room with furniture provided by OHS. The original 1894 bell hangs in the belfry, complete with its original clapper, and although according to tradition students once rang the bell for hours after football victories, hairline cracks now limit its ringing to special occasions such as honors college award ceremonies and visits by prospective students, families, and alumni.

The offices of the director and assistant director are located on the main floor of Old Central and open onto the central hallway. Both offices have 14-foot ceilings, heavy oak doors, and transoms over the doorways. The director's office is furnished largely with period furniture, including an antique eight-foot-nine-inch grandfather clock, with a mercury-filled compensating pendulum, that once belonged to Governor Henry Johnston. The assistant director's office has some period pieces of furniture along with more modern items. The showpiece is a handcrafted breakfront china cabinet (now used as a bookcase) that was created in the Oklahoma A&M cabinet shop and once resided in the university president's office across campus.

The three honors advisors' offices and a reception desk are located across the hall in a room that in 1894 housed the entire university library and the English faculty. As part of the rehabilitation process, the architects designed glass walls with acoustical barriers to separate the three advising offices; extremely tall bookcases built into those walls provide the ambiance of a library setting. With the exception of the bentwood chairs in these offices, which harken back many years, the new furniture is modern but with a traditional style.

Although the classroom across the main hall from the assistant director's office has a capacity of 24 students, enrollment for honors sections is typically restricted to a smaller number. The room is furnished with movable tables and chairs, and honors faculty members frequently rearrange the furniture to suit their own teaching styles. A signature feature of this room is the slate blackboard that runs around the entire room, making it a favorite for professors who teach honors calculus.

The basement classroom has an identical footprint to that of the main floor classroom, but it lacks the blackboards. Its most noticeable feature, black iron pipes, once carried water and gas into the room when it was used for teaching chemistry. Today these pipes, like the steam radiators still found around the building, are completely inoperative; they remain in place to keep the building true to its original style and character.

Although the entire building has wireless Internet, the students' study lounge, which is adjacent to the basement classroom, houses a dozen desktop computers, a laser printer, and even two IBM Selectric typewriters still used by students on the rare occasion of filling out an application form that cannot be completed on a computer. Providing a nice contrast to the more modern technology are the 1911 Singer sewing machine (still operative, but with the needle safely removed) and the 1912 Remington typewriter (also operative); these museum pieces are reminders that domestic sciences were once taught in that room.

Other rooms in the basement once housed additional offices and small classrooms as well as the original boiler room, but now all the modern heating, air conditioning, and ventilation equipment required by current building codes occupy that space. The room is exceptionally tight, with all this modern equipment taking on the feel of a World War II submarine because its heavy masonry walls are weight-bearing structures that could not be altered. One alumnus visiting the building pointed to what is now the mechanical equipment room and commented, "Mrs. Ospovat flunked me in English in that classroom." His eyes actually twinkled when he saw how the room had been academically demoted.

The staircase from the main floor to the top floor offers the opportunity to view the student night watchman's room on the stairway landing. Although today's students would no doubt be appalled at the conditions, in 1894 this room was the only on-campus housing to be had—and no doubt the student appreciated having both the job and the place to live.

At the top of the staircase a conference room (also equipped with movable tables and the historic bentwood chairs) provides space for staff meetings as well as a place to meet with small groups of prospective students and families. The room also contains a barrister's bookcase stocked with copies of Dr. Fischer's *Historic Old Central* for alumni and other interested visitors. Adjacent to the conference room is a staff room for computer equipment for the classrooms, storage space, a sink, refrigerator, and microwave oven. Because of the building's status as an historic museum, no food and drink are allowed in the public portions of the building, and students and faculty have been understanding about the need to preserve Old Central's pristine condition following the multi-million dollar project to rehabilitate it.

The crown jewel of Old Central is Assembly Hall on the top floor of the building. With its arched ceiling and decorative curved beam across the top, it was the grand location where the college's first six graduates walked in 1896. In addition to an historic podium, the Assembly Hall features an 1852 square grand piano donated by an OSU alum along with an upright piano and a pump organ. Unfortunately, none of these instruments are in tune any longer because no top-level piano tuner is willing to attempt the task due to the risk of damaging the antique instruments in the process. Because the current fire code allows a seating capacity of 123 persons, the Assembly Hall is used for combined class sessions when multi-section honors seminar classes gather for a special speaker or presentation and for the Honors College Hooding Ceremony in December. The space is also available for a wide variety of special events sponsored by other campus entities. Among the more notable Assembly Hall events in the last few years have been the installation for OSU's chapter of Phi Beta Kappa, a meeting of the Provost's External Advisory Council,

a gathering of the OSU Black Alumni Association, and several weddings. The Assembly Hall, unlike many venues on campus, does not have a facility rental fee; however, those hosting the event must hire an OSU police officer (who has full law-enforcement authority on campus and by reciprocal agreement with the municipal police department) to open the building, be present throughout, and close the building at the conclusion of the event. Those using the space must, of course, also return the furniture to its original space if any of it has been moved.

Old Central continues to feature prominently in campus culture as well. Rumors abound regarding sightings in Old Central of ghosts of former faculty members and students who are reluctant to leave their alma mater. In the fall of 2012, a reporter from the campus newspaper invited a paranormal investigation team to spend a night in the building, and the resulting story described unusual activity such as temperature fluctuations, variations in electromagnetic fields, and unexplained sounds. Likely more legend than reality, such ghost stories only contribute to the character and historic presence of Old Central. As the home of the OSU Honors College, Old Central serves as an effective venue for recruitment. Each morning prospective students and their families can tour the building and explore the very origins of Oklahoma State University.

This remarkable space, truly the best space on campus, came to the OSU Honors College because it had a wish list handy and never hesitated to ask for what would best serve its constituents. Although honors programs or honors colleges may not always get their wish, the story of Old Central demonstrates that sometimes the dreams on a wish list do come true.

## CHAPTER 8

# Life of the Mind/Life of the House: “This Place Matters”

VICKI OHL

HEIDELBERG UNIVERSITY

“This Place Matters,” the slogan of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, proclaims the importance of a physical property to the understanding of history, traditions, and values (“This place matters,” 2013). “This Place” may be a single room, a building, a neighborhood, or an entire city. The National Collegiate Honors Council has long recognized the power of place by dedicating an extended session at its annual meetings to the exploration of the host city, its popular City as Text™ explorations. Although a community is ultimately defined by its people, the location and architecture contribute to a setting and a history that can either enhance or inhibit the achievements and creativity of those living and working there. The Heidelberg University Honors Program enjoys the distinction of a dedicated house, a feature not shared by many institutions of this size. This distinction is important to the honors program and to its students because they appreciate the

building and understand it within the context of its function, its surroundings, and its place in history.

The Honors Center is an Italianate brick structure at 67 Greenfield Street in Tiffin, Ohio. In 2007, the outgoing chairman of the Heidelberg University Board of Trustees, Gary Bryenton ('61), and his wife Barbara ('59) recognized the significance of this space and of the Heidelberg University Honors Program, and signed on as its major benefactors. According to the *Heidelberg University 2014–15 Undergraduate Catalog*, the house was re-dedicated as the Bryenton Honors Center that June (*Heidelberg Catalog*, 2014–15, p. 8). It is similar to dozens of two-story brick homes throughout Seneca County, yet this building assumes a stature and an importance that other brick structures throughout the area do not have, in part because of its placement in the center of the campus of Heidelberg University. Furthering its provenance is its history as the presidential residence for more than 100 years. The *Heidelberg University Catalog* states that it was added to the National Register of Historic Places by the U.S. Department of the Interior in 1979, along with nine other campus buildings (*Heidelberg Catalog*, 2014–15, p. 8).

## **HISTORY AT 67 GREENFIELD STREET**

In his history of Heidelberg College, Philip B. Harner (2000) relates that the Heidelberg Honors Program was conceived in the early 1990s by the Dean of the College at the time, Kenneth Porada, to enhance the academic climate on campus (p. 92). The General Faculty officially established the program curriculum in 1993, with William R. Reyer, then Associate Professor of English, as its inaugural director (Harner, 2000, p. 92). The Heidelberg Registrar's Office reports that in 1994–1995, the first year of its existence, there were 20 students in the program and that the first four graduates completed their degrees in 1997. Amy Richards, writing for the student newspaper, the *Kilikilik*, described the new Honors Center, which was initially located in Williard Hall, a dormitory named for President George W. Williard. A suite of rooms housed a seminar room, a computer cluster, and offices for the Director and the Service Learning Coordinator (Richards, 1994, p. 1). The college's aspirations for

the honors program, however, were much more ambitious, and it grew rapidly. Ten years later there were 163 student members of the honors program, more than 15% of the student body. Dean Porada wanted to relocate the program to a larger, more central, and more visible site, one with gravitas that would symbolize excellence and scholarship. His choice was nothing less than the former presidential home, a structure built in 1868 by the same President Williard whose name graced the residence hall of the initial Honors Center. This two-story brick home, common to mid-nineteenth-century rural Ohio, was built more for function than show, although the rectangular home did feature some decorative detail, such as a front porch the full width of the house, latticework, scrolled brackets, and a widow's walk. In the history of the college commissioned for its 1950 centennial year, E.I.F. [Edward Irwin Franklin] Williams (1950) writes that the president himself had raised the money for the house, which cost \$4,250 to construct, and that the payment "was made without using a cent of endowment funds" (p. 137).

The last of the six presidents to reside at 67 Greenfield Street was W. Terry Wickham, president of Heidelberg College from 1948 to 1969, and the first who was not an ordained clergy member. His son, William (Bill) T. Wickham, now Professor Emeritus of Business Administration, Accounting, and Economics, reminisced about the house where he had lived while attending Heidelberg before his graduation in 1951. He recalled that the full-sized porch was removed in the late 1960s and replaced with a smaller porch accented with classic fluted Greek columns (Wickham, personal communication, April 13, 2013). Although the addition of classic pillars may have blurred the integrity of the other Victorian details, the Greek columns do lend dignity and formality and reference an age and place that celebrated education and free inquiry.

One of Bill Wickham's most vivid memories was of the visit of General Dwight D. Eisenhower to Heidelberg College and to the Wickham home on December 18, 1950. While this historic home probably hosted many distinguished guests, it is doubtful that any were more significant than General Eisenhower. Jean Edward Smith (2012) notes that Eisenhower was then president of Columbia University in New York City, a post he had assumed in 1948 after his

successful tenure as Army Chief of Staff and Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe in World War II (p. 467). Serving as Associate Provost of Columbia was John Allen Krout, a native of Tiffin and son of Charles A. Krout, a former superintendent of Tiffin Public Schools for whom one of the elementary schools in Tiffin is named. According to historians Clifford Lord and Henry Graff (1963), the younger Krout had attended Heidelberg College for three years before graduating from the University of Michigan (p. xiii). The local newspaper reported that because of John Allen Krout, the Eisenhowers decided to visit Heidelberg on their way to Denver to visit Mamie's family during Christmas vacation in 1950. According to the (Tiffin) *Advertiser-Tribune*, Ike said, "I think it is worthwhile making a very long trip to see the kind of institution which can produce that kind of a teacher, philosopher, and friend" ("General Eisenhower's Visit," 1975, p. 12C). Eisenhower was to speak at the regular convocation service held twice weekly in Rickly Chapel in the University Building. Students were simply told that there would be a special guest, not that it would be the former Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces in Europe.

Bill Wickham recalled a reception at the president's home following the convocation, an event that established for this house a unique status (W. T. Wickham, personal communication, 2008). According to him, after Eisenhower's address, President Wickham led General Eisenhower and Associate Provost Krout down the sidewalk to the presidential home to greet the Heidelberg faculty and a few special guests. A receiving line formed inside the front door and wound into the parlor. Behind the door to the parlor stood the M.P., watchfully guarding the General (W. T. Wickham, personal communication, 2008). A photograph of Eisenhower, Krout, and President Wickham beside a distinctive recessed bookcase in what has become the Honors Seminar Room is on display in that room, visual evidence of his presence in this now-historic space.

In November 2011, the current Associate Dean for the honors program, Doug Collar, whose office occupies the front half of the former parlor, found a way to commemorate the 60th anniversary of that event. Using honors students in his freshman seminar



to portray the three principal figures, he directed a program that dramatized the visit (Collar, 2011). The reenactment was an opportunity to incorporate institutional history into the curriculum and raise awareness of this instance of history and tradition among current students, faculty, and community.

Use of the house as the official presidential residence ended in 1969. The late 1960s was an era of student unrest when many college presidents vacated their campus residences. In 1969, the college acquired a newer presidential home on a property nearly five miles from campus, and the house on Greenfield Street was appropriated for another administrative need, space for the Director of Development and associated staff. During that re-purposing, this stately home was converted into an efficient place of business. To that end, several expansive rooms were partitioned to create multiple offices. Floors throughout the house were covered with gray, low-pile, indoor-outdoor carpet. The walls were painted eggshell white, and the woodwork, battleship gray, which resulted in a cold, sterile look. Even the cherry wood railing of the spiral staircase in the foyer was covered with white paint.

After the house served the development staff well for 27 years, its central location and historic significance eventually led to a third transformation in order to meet the needs of students. According to the *Heidelberg University 2014–15 Undergraduate Catalog*, this house became the center for the fledgling honors program in 1996—this time serving the academic mission of Heidelberg College. Its central location symbolically underscores the centrality of academic affairs to the Heidelberg experience.

## **CURRICULUM ON THE WALLS**

### **Facility**

Although not a residence hall, the honors house is accessible to honors students 24 hours a day. It currently includes offices for the Associate Dean for Honors, Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, and a part-time student assistant. The honors seminar room is ideal for small seminars and meetings. A spacious reading room

opens onto a welcoming terrace and can serve as a reception area or venue for small gatherings. A five-unit computer lab with printer, office supplies, and reference materials is available to honors students at all hours of the day or night. A small kitchen features a dispenser of bottled water and a supply of pretzels, microwave popcorn, and coffee. (It has everything but a kitchen sink—something we intentionally excluded in order to prevent piles of dirty dishes from accumulating.) A comfortable lounge on the second floor invites quiet study and conversation, while an upstairs classroom, the “Map Room,” accommodates small classes, group projects, and meetings. During unscheduled hours its bright lighting and ample table space are ideal for assembling projects. A tabletop podium is useful for rehearsing speeches. A white board for notes is helpful for small meetings or small seminars. And the remote privacy of the room makes it a popular venue for private phone calls or Skyping.

The small office at the front of the house on the second floor, which is where President Wickham wrote his speeches, is a convenient space for storing honors program records and files (W.T. Wickham, personal communication, 2008). Of greater immediate interest to the students is the copier, which is available to them for making duplicates of honors-related work. Elsewhere, various closets and cupboards house honors portfolios, scrapbooks, and other supplies. As Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, I happily occupy the former upstairs guest bedroom facing Greenfield Street and University Hall, positioned to communicate with the Associate Dean for Honors, honors students, and visiting prospective students on a regular basis, but with easy access to the administration building. Administrative support for the honors program is thus a tangible element of the Bryenton Honors Center.

## **Honors Procedures and Processes**

Students who enter the honors program are issued a key that they can use at any time to enter the building. They sign a House Privileges Agreement, which acknowledges that the space is only for the use of students in the honors program and that abuse of the facilities will result in disciplinary action (*Bryenton Center for the*

*Honors Program Handbook*, 2014–15, p. 27). Although the space allows for interaction between students, and there are a variety of rooms in which students can gather to collaborate, the unquestionable advantage is the privacy and quiet that it provides. It is not unusual to observe several students with ear buds in the computer lab, listening to their own iPod and working in a world of their own. Honors students giving tours to prospective students and their families assure them that the house is quiet, even at night. Students may send out for a pizza or brew a pot of coffee to prolong their late-night studying, but they observe quiet hours if others are trying to work. Although students claim empty territory simply by occupying it, seniors often establish habits and preferences that others recognize and honor. The honors program has never had to develop a policy or procedure about the occupation of a room: the principle of squatters' rights operates effectively.

Any unlocked space is available to students who want to study or work. The favorite study spot is the Honors Seminar Room, which is on the first floor in the center of the house. It contains a 42-inch-screen television connected to a computer, so the room is ideal for rehearsing a PowerPoint presentation. This well-lit room has a large oval table and 15 straight-backed chairs that are functional but not particularly comfortable or conducive for napping.

## **Curriculum**

The honors curriculum is explained in the annual Honors Program Handbook. At the core of "The Life of the Mind," is a series of interdisciplinary seminars in four categories: The Scholar, The Scientist, The Artist, and The Citizen. The categories are fixed, but their content changes as various faculty members develop courses that align with the expectations of each area, allowing them to explore topics they would not have the opportunity to teach in their own disciplines. In addition to these thematic seminars, honors students complete an introductory seminar as well as a 40-hour service-learning component, a senior honors project, and a reflective portfolio. The honors curriculum substitutes for the student's general education requirements. Students meet distribution requirements by

completing 10 courses taken in the disciplines of the Arts, Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences (*Brynton Center for the Honors Program Handbook*, 2014–15, pp. 9–15). This regimen integrates honors students into general classes where they often initiate discussions and model scholarship.

When the honors program moved into 67 Greenfield Street, the space was more than sufficient but less than inspiring aesthetically. Jan Younger was appointed Associate Dean for the Honors Program the same year as the relocation. Now Professor Emeritus of Communication and former coach of the Heidelberg Speech Team, Younger had a research interest in presidential humor and had developed an honors seminar under the category of the Artist: “The Art of Humor as Contemporary Political, Social, and Cultural Commentary.” Since he was teaching his seminar on humor in the spring of 1998, he saw an opportunity to combine the honors curriculum with this new honors space. He invited a colleague, cartoonist Polly Keener, to sketch her concept of the Scholar, the Scientist, the Artist, and the Citizen on one of the walls in the student lounge upstairs.

Keener, among the first women to matriculate at Princeton University and a graduate of that institution, had authored a book on *Cartooning* with a foreword by *Garfield* cartoonist Jim Davis (Keener, 1992). She spent three days on a ladder in the honors house during the first week of April in 1998, sketching her images and deftly outlining them with black acrylic paint. The mural depicts the four personae of the honors program. Students in the course observed her at work, making suggestions and enjoying the artistic process. (Keener solved the problem of an ill-placed fire extinguisher on the wall by incorporating a fire hydrant into the picture and adding an anxious dog. Student suggestions then prompted the addition of a cat, a mouse, and a block of Swiss cheese.) This mural brought character to the house and definition to the honors program. Keener generously granted Heidelberg permission to use the image in marketing, and it has become a signature representation of the honors program, appearing on honors brochures and T-shirts. It was prominently featured on the cover of the *National Honors Report*, a publication of the National Collegiate Honors Council, in spring 1999.

After the success of the initial mural, Younger invited additional cartoonists to create images that would portray the other aspects of the honors curriculum on the three remaining walls. In the spring of 2000, Dave Coverly, who draws the nationally syndicated cartoon "Speedbump," used Sharpies to depict his version of the Senior Honors Project, the final curricular hurdle on the way to graduation. This cartoon graced the cover of the *National Honors Report* in fall 2000 (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2000).

The third wall focused on service learning, with artwork by Chip Bok, cartoonist for the (Akron) *Beacon Journal*, who was a finalist for a Pulitzer Prize in 1997. Bok won the Berryman Award from the National Press Foundation in 1993 and the Fischetti Award in 1988. He has earned top cartoon honors from the National Cartoonists Society and the Associated Press of Ohio (Association of American Editorial Cartoonists, 2015). Bok depicted Heidelberg reaching out to the local community by incorporating the institution's service-learning mantra: "Stretch out of the comfort zone." The honors service-learning experience encourages students to reach beyond the familiarity of campus, friends, and faculty to try a different activity and interact with people of different socio-economic, racial, or cultural backgrounds as they volunteer 40 hours of service with a community organization. After completing his contracted portion of the mural, Bok asked for the remaining bit of wall to exercise his journalistic whims. On it he depicted four political figures who were newsmakers in the spring 2000 primary elections, all "stretching" in some manner: Hillary Clinton, stretching her residency to New York state in order to run for Congress; Al Gore, stretching his image to include earth tones and a beard and stretching his accomplishments about the creation of the Internet; George W. Bush, stretching his intellect to become a presidential candidate; and Bill Clinton, buffering the Monica Lewinsky scandal by stretching the truth. Not surprisingly, many of the prospective students who now tour the house (most were younger than age six in 2000) require some explanation of those images, but the wall remains a fine representation of the Citizen at work.

On the fourth wall, Don Lee of the *Sandusky Register* (Ohio) depicted a “thinker” reflecting on his portfolio of honors work. Lee also created an image of James Thurber, the Ohio humorist whose drawings on the wall of his attic originally inspired all of these cartoon murals. According to an Associated Press story, Thurber had occupied a house in Newtown, Connecticut, from 1931 to 1934 and, as was his custom, sketched several cartoons on the walls of his attic workspace. Years later, as the current owners were stripping wallpaper, they discovered these Thurber originals. Reported in newspapers, such as the *Tuscaloosa News* (Alabama), throughout the country, the story became national news. Recognizing their value, the owners of the house invited preservationists to cut the plaster sections from the walls and put them on display in the undergraduate library at Ohio State University, the institution Thurber had attended as a young man (“James Thurber sketches,” 1975). That exhibit inspired Younger’s vision of cartoons on the wall of the honors house. Juxtaposing honors programs, which often take themselves too seriously, and cartoons, which ridicule people and institutions that do, is unusual. Featuring the honors program curriculum in cartoons on its walls is certainly a rarity.

The honors lounge is a comfortable refuge for quiet study, texting, and an occasional nap and a favorite location to engage in lively conversation or Scrabble games. Because the lounge has also been transformed into a private art gallery, it is a source of pride among Heidelberg honors students, who work hard academically but understand the value of diverse interests, aesthetic inspiration, and a sense of humor. As Keener wrote in the dedication of her book to the class that had hosted her, “I wish you much Joy and lots of Laughter. . . . And remember, always keep smiling (It makes people wonder what you have been up to!)” (P. Keener, personal communication, April 3, 1998).

Aside from the cartoon lounge, wall space in the house is dedicated to images that will inspire students to travel and pursue education abroad at a variety of institutions. Posters and photographs depict sites from various points where Heidelberg students regularly study: Oxford University in England, with the Oxford

Study Abroad Programme; Universität Heidelberg in Germany, with the American Junior Year Abroad Program; the University of Glasgow in Scotland, with Principia Consortium; and Tianjin Normal University in China, with a faculty-student teaching team from Heidelberg University. A wall-sized map of the world covers the south wall in the upstairs classroom, putting Ohio and the United States in perspective. Perhaps the greatest inspiration for students is the larger-than-life poster of Albert Einstein with his quotation, "I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious." The poster encourages students to imagine themselves in positions that challenge their talents and inspire their creativity.

## **PRACTICAL AND LOGISTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The honors house offers an atmosphere unlike that of either a residence hall or an academic building. It is a home-like refuge for many an honors student seeking space to study and think, to exchange ideas with others, or to meet with friends. The building also offers commuter students a base on campus, which is especially helpful and convenient. Its central location allows students to stop there before an early class or between classes. The honors house encourages community regardless of a student's major or class level. Moreover, it offers the practical advantage of giving students access to non-residential honors house computers and printers throughout the night, while the campus computer center and library close by 11:00 p.m.

Furnishing an entire house can be a challenge, but rarely has this task involved a purchase. The house features a haphazard accumulation of furniture from various corners of the campus and beyond. The oak desk that had been used by the eleventh president of Heidelberg College, William C. Cassell, was plucked from the college warehouse for the Associate Dean for honors. A conference table from the Development House days remained in the house as a seminar table. Twenty-four oak chairs with square red fabric seats were claimed when Herbster Chapel acquired new furniture. These square seats function as chairs, footstools, and end tables throughout the house and add splashes of color against the

gray walls. Scavenging for serviceable, attractive, and often historically or personally meaningful furniture from campus buildings and faculty basements continues to this day.

Old houses can be charming, and for 10 years the honors program avoided significant outlays of capital. Old buildings, however, eventually require major maintenance: it cannot be deferred indefinitely or serious problems can arise. An invasion of squirrels led to the emergency repair of the soffits all around the house. Moisture has been an ongoing maintenance issue. The 140-year-old brick exterior was absorbing moisture, which then caused the plaster on the interior walls to bubble and become disfigured. Every year the maintenance department would have to sand, plaster, and re-paint the walls nearest the chimney on the northern side of the house, both upstairs and down. One benefit of the utility re-painting in 2010 was that funds were allotted to change the paint color—although only on the damaged walls. A rich yellow-ivory shade softened the severity of the ubiquitous gray and brought some warmth to the room that gray never could.

## **2012 RENOVATIONS FOR THE MILLENNIALS**

In the midst of a building fervor on campus in 2011, the former Chair of the Board of Trustees, Gary Bryenton, announced a generous gift to the honors program that would provide for significant improvements to the Bryenton Honors Center. He envisioned a terrace and landscaping on the north side of the house, an area for honors students to study and relax. Before such new construction could begin in earnest in the spring of 2012, performing some much-needed maintenance seemed prudent. This renovation included treating all of the exterior brick, pointing and tucking the foundation, and replacing the disintegrating basement windows.

As the institution contemplated whether to repaint or replace the standing seam metal roof, the current Associate Dean for honors, Doug Collar, found an archival photograph of the old presidential residence that revealed a slate roof topped with a widow's walk, which had long ago disappeared. He made the case for a more historic renovation, citing the building's inclusion on the National



Register of Historic Places. Slate would have been a considerably greater investment than a new metal roof, but when the roofing company offered to donate the used slate that they had removed from an area schoolhouse, it became a plausible option ("Bryenton Center Returns," 2013, p. 13). The renovation was substantial both inside and out, returning this important icon to its former classic distinction.

The spacious terrace was completed in September 2013; it features a surface of pavers, low seating around the perimeter wall, ample decorative lighting, and an access ramp that now makes the house handicap-accessible. The focal point is a gracious pergola over the French doors and Greek columns echoing those on the front porch, with extensive plantings that enhance the beautiful addition. Even without outdoor furniture, it has been the site of several informal gatherings. The donor's vision was to create a space where honors students will be able to study or gather outside, a space to enjoy for academic and social purposes. Exterior lighting not only illuminates the terrace for evening use, but serves as a beacon in the center of campus. For the careful preservation and renovation of this historic property, Mary Ann Kromer reported that the Tiffin Historic Trust presented Heidelberg University with the Nevin E. B. Martin Award for 2013 (2013, p. A3). A permanent marker acknowledging this recognition has been affixed to the front of the house.

## **IMPACT OF BRYENTON HONORS CENTER**

The Bryenton Honors Center at Heidelberg University has been a welcome sanctuary for current students and an attractive benefit for talented prospective students. On a campus with 34 buildings, including University Hall with its grand Victorian architecture, five massive Gothic structures from the 1910s and 1920s that incorporate area limestone and red clay tile roofs, and several modern buildings that carefully combine those traditions with contemporary styles, the honors house is perhaps the smallest structure on campus. Without the history and without the location, it would be a lovely, although not extraordinary, century-old brick house. But its provenance and its placement at the crossroads of Heidelberg's

campus command dignity and respect. Its position in both time and space afford it a much greater degree of importance. Designating this space—the Brynton Honors Center—for the honors program, which emphasizes both scholarship and citizenship, seems an appropriate tribute to its former presidential residents.

That several of the presidents who occupied 67 Greenfield Street were quite forward thinking must not be forgotten, and while respectful of tradition, they recognized the wisdom of looking to the future. Thanks to the generosity of the Bryntons, the exterior and interior of the house have been restored to reflect the stature of its presidential past. Gary Brynton stated:

Our thinking was that it would materially transform this part of campus and the Honors Program to restore this iconic landmark to its former state of importance, reminiscent of the home of Heidelberg's former presidents, and as a tribute to the future leaders it will inspire. ("Brynton Center Returns," p. 13)

Extending the honors footprint to include the adjoining green area makes the honors program and its students even more visible and central to the life of Heidelberg University. The Brynton Honors Center stands as a constant reminder and affirmation for the students and the faculty who are dedicated to "The Life of the Mind" that "This Place Matters."

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## APPENDIX

### Occupants of 67 Greenfield Street

- 1850 Heidelberg College was established. The fourth president of Heidelberg College, George W. Williard, took office in 1866 and built a brick home for the president at 67 Greenfield St., where he resided for the rest of his tenure as president.
- 1868–90 President George W. Williard, D.D., LL.D.
- 1890–1901 President John A. Peters, D.D., LL.D.
- 1902–37 President Charles E. Miller, D.D., LL.D.
- 1937–45 President Clarence E. Josephson, S.T.M., D.D.
- 1945–47 President Nevin C. Harner, S.T.M., Ph.D., D.D., LL.D.
- 1948–69 President W. Terry Wickham, A.M., Ped.D., LL.D.
- 1969–97 67 Greenfield St. was modified for use by the Development Staff.
- 1997–present 67 Greenfield St. became the home for the Heidelberg Honors Program. The Development Staff was moved to another house farther south on Greenfield St.

CHAPTER 9

“In an old nave’s grime”:  
The Spencer Honors House

RUSTY RUSHTON

UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

In an old nave’s grime,  
a mess of weeds has sprouted  
sweeter than flowers.

The University Honors Program (UHP) at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB), its 200 or so students, and its four full-time staff members (Director, Associate Director, Program Coordinator, and Program Manager), all have the good fortune to call home a beautiful old church on the south side of UAB and Birmingham. The Spencer Honors House is where the UHP holds its classes and conducts its business and where the program’s students convene for the myriad reasons honors students convene: committee meetings, late-night study sessions, general recreation especially of the pool and ping pong sort, hanging out, or spending private time by themselves. Its old-world ambiance lingers, countered by

remnants of its original graffiti wall, recast every so often by new students with new complaints or new drawing skills that fuel the dynamism of the environment. Its couches and computer rooms, its card-access and kitchen provide night owls with all they need for last-minute test preps or further procrastination. How this glorious domicile came to be, or rather how it came to belong to the honors program, is a story already and best articulated by the program's founding and now retired director, Dr. Ada Long. Long provided the following genesis story of the UAB Spencer Honors House a few years ago for an event celebrating its benefactors Bill and Virginia Spencer:

When I was first appointed honors director in 1982, Tom Hearn, UAB's Vice President of Academic Affairs, showed me with great pride a small duplex on 15th Street for our soon-to-be digs. It was one of the handful of actually old buildings on campus and the only one that had been a private house in the residential neighborhood UAB had razed to the ground when starting to expand its campus in the 1960s and 70s. We had only 33 students in the program that first year along with a half-time secretary and four teachers in the interdisciplinary course. The duplex worked for us, though the next year we would have had to teach the interdisciplinary course in some other location to accommodate a second influx of students.

The program's administrative assistant (Debra Strother) and I wandered all over campus, looking for a place to call the Honors House. The pickings were slim, but we looked longingly at another of the older buildings at least potentially up for grabs—a formerly Presbyterian and then Baptist church—at the western edge of campus. It had been used for several years as the ballet house and then had been ceded to the student government association. But the SGA had found new quarters and was moving out, so the house would be vacant. Rumor had it that this glorious Richardsonian Romanesque building might be torn down.

The students and Debra and I wrote a letter to the VPAA (I think Tom had left UAB and Jim Woodward had taken his place), which all of us signed, begging for the house. Our promise was that we would fix up and furnish the inside of the church if the university would provide its electricity and enough external repairs to keep it standing. Those were definitely the good old days. Our request was granted with no mention of liability(!) and with only one condition—that the art department, which was already occupying about a third of the building’s basement, would stay where it was.

During the summer months of 1984, all the first- and second-year honors students and a few of our faculty worked nonstop getting the place ready for fall. We dug old couches out of garbage bins. We found a hundred old-timey school desks in the UAB storehouse. We donated our own tables and chairs. One student donated a pool table. We stripped paint from old mantle pieces and original wood paneling. We painted and painted and painted. One of our incoming students was a house painter by profession who built us a huge scaffold from floor to ceiling—which meant 40 feet or so high—for the purpose. My scariest moment as honors director was hearing a loud bang as one side of the scaffolding fell with two students on the very top of it. They managed to hang on and scramble down: a good omen for the program.

Two days before classes started, we had finished enough of the repairs to make the building usable, an achievement we all celebrated by writing our names on one of the downstairs walls. Thus began the graffiti wall that soon snaked its way through most of the bottom floor save the kitchen, at the entrance to which we wrote: “Abandon graffiti, all ye who enter here.”

Our new honors house was never quite clean and never entirely lovely, but it was our clubhouse, really, in which

we had all invested time, sweat, and our home furnishings. Everything honors took place there, from classes to parties (we had a lot of those) to service activities to advising to administration to, on many more than one occasion, temporary and not-so-temporary housing.

But eventually there were problems: the building was crumbling; we had a major termite invasion upstairs; and our relations were often strained with the art department, who were less than amused by our 24/7 antics in the building. Most critically, though, we had no wheelchair access.

The lack of wheelchair access—combined with an institution-wide capital campaign—gave rise to the hope of finding funds for a full renovation of the building. Starting in about 1997, the honors program became an official part of the UAB campaign with a request initially for a million and then for two million dollars. President Claude Bennett, a loyal friend to the program (as all the previous UAB presidents had been), and the university's development director Shirley Salloway Kahn started arranging for meetings between me and various potential donors. I found the experience disheartening. None of the men I spoke to could fathom the idea of an honors program that embraced not only interdisciplinary studies, social service, and a strong sense of community, but also every kind of social diversity. They seemed to think of honors as something only for affluent kids from "over the mountain," and in my view they just didn't get it. Also, I became increasingly aware that any funding we might receive from such donors would come with strings attached. These were men who wished to change the direction of the program. I was starting to feel queasy about the whole venture.

Then one day in January of 1998, Claude Bennett asked me to have lunch with Bill Spencer at Birmingham's *The Club*, a venue overlooking the city employed for serious



potential-donor relations. I did not look forward to this lunch. Much to my surprise and delight, however, Bill and I clicked immediately. He got what the others had missed and then some. His first wife (he was a widower who had since remarried) had been the legendary headmistress of a private school in Birmingham and one who had insisted, as I did for the honors program, that all student applicants be interviewed and that diversity always be an important aim of admissions.

After lunch, Bill came over to the Honors House in its then current state for a visit. He got a big kick out of the place—its general spirit, its graffiti, the myriad ways we had made it serve our needs—while at the same time recognizing its decrepitude. When it became clear that he was at least considering what he might do to help us out, I mentioned that we really needed the art department to be . . . somewhere else, the goal of which would become his *cause célèbre*, so to speak, within the more general cause of restoration and eventually would be made a condition of his two-million-dollar gift in 2000. Before any of which, however, he elected to sponsor five two-thousand-dollar scholarships for precisely the kinds of students our prior potential donors had felt did not belong in the honors program. Our Spencer scholars over the years have come from Ghana and Russia and rural Alabama and Mountain Brook. They have been valedictorians or they have been homeless or they have already completed distinguished careers. They are athletes or they are eggheads; they are poets; they are mothers, and they are grandmothers. And they’ve all found connections with each other, as they have also with faculty—hundreds of whom have taught in the honors program since its beginning—and administrators. Bill and I became and remained great friends until his death in 2009, and I miss him with all my heart.

In *Beowulf*, the great Anglo-Saxon epic, Heorot Hall is the center of all human connections for the Danes; it is what makes human connections possible. It is a physical place, but it is also the symbol of a community. Its beauty is the exact equivalent as well as embodiment of the vigor and beauty and goodness of its people. UHP's Heorot is the Spencer Honors House, and the givers of it were true benefactors in the original meaning of the word: they were doers and makers of goodness.

### **HONORS HAIKU**

All they have of love  
and lack of love they're bringing  
to the broken church.

Science saunters by—  
a glittering tumbleweed  
headphoned to the spheres.

Brains from far boroughs,  
basting in a marinade  
of smoke and laughter.

Up here where I am,  
that crypt of rude graffiti  
smells pretty damn fine.

A mix of punches,  
spirits, flooding the mind's bowl—  
Dail ale; Ada ade.

The gone god looks back,  
stumped to see such soul in bloom  
so close to the ground.

## CHAPTER 10

# Pick Your Battles: It Is Possible to Have Belonging without a Space to Belong To

MARIAH BIRGEN  
WARTBURG COLLEGE

When Wartburg College began its new honors program 10 years ago, its architects thought they had done everything right. They sent a team to the National Collegiate Honors Council National Conference. They studied the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2014). They even decided to start small. Unfortunately, even meticulous preparation cannot overcome all difficulties. One of the characteristics, however, is to have a location to house the honors program. Wartburg’s 10-year saga of honors locations and lessons learned about honors space has produced this wisdom: honors directors and supporters should never give up in their search for a home, and they should not compromise if the space does not match the needs and the goals of the program.

Wartburg College is a small, liberal arts college in Iowa with an enrollment of approximately 1,600 students. Because it has a high medical school placement rate, a large majority of the honors students are science and math students. The program admits 30 first-year students. The students will take, at most, two independent courses within the honors program and then fulfill the rest of their honors course requirements using contract courses.

The year before the first honors class of students matriculated, the program was assigned a room in a new, upper-division residence hall on campus. The idea seemed promising because the director of the program was in a department whose offices were also moving to the same building. The room was not large enough to be a classroom, but it would have made a nice lounge, especially for the honors students who would be housed in the building. Unfortunately, this vision never materialized: the first director resigned before any students arrived. I became the new director, but my office was in a building on the opposite side of campus. Additionally, first-year housing for the initial honors class ended up being across campus from the new residence hall; thus the space was inconvenient to the students as well.

## **YEARS 1–4: SHARING SPACE**

The search for a more convenient space to locate the honors program began immediately after the change in leadership. Under-used space in the library had some distinct advantages for the students and the program. The space was on a major walkway and had a door that was accessible when the library was closed. It was close to both the office of the director and a coffee shop, but it had one minor disadvantage: the space would be shared with the new Center for Civic Engagement.

At first, the prospect of sharing the space seemed positive; after all, the Center would occupy the space during business hours, and the honors students would not need to use the space for studying until classes were over. Moreover, the students would become familiar with the new program and its opportunities to engage in civic and service projects, perhaps leading to jointly sponsored

programming. Unfortunately, possession during daylight hours is 9/10 of the law. Since no one at the Center saw the honors students using the space while they were working, they assumed the space was not needed and essentially took it over, reducing this beautiful honors space for students to three shelves in a bookcase. Unfortunately the students did not disclose that their space was slowly disappearing without their consent or that of the honors program.

On the other hand, the students were creating their own sense of community within their first-year class that extended far beyond the boundaries of any walls. They were forming their own study groups because they had strong connections and knew they could trust each other to do their share of the work. All first-year students live in just a few residence halls, but after that first year, students in the honors program were choosing to room together. They were even dating. In essence, the students were creating their own honors spaces. The lesson learned: When sharing space, the faculty and staff who work for and with the honors program should occupy and regularly use that space during the workday.

## **YEARS 5–8: THE BOONIES**

Because Wartburg College was in a building phase during the early years of the honors program, space was tight. When the last building was finished and the coaches were moving into their new Wellness Center, I asked the administration for space for the honors program. They found two rooms in a house on the edge of campus. This allocation looked like a good solution to the space issue because, unlike in the library, the honors program would not share these rooms, and no one would notice whether students were around or not during the day. The residents of the house, the international student group, and a non-profit organization that was strongly affiliated with the college shared common space: a kitchen, dining room, and living room. About a year later, the gay-straight alliance group was also assigned a room in the house. The students loved having 24-hour access to the house and its kitchen, but they were pretty disappointed with the housekeeping skills of the other people using the space.

Even so, the most problematic issue with this space was its location. In the sixth year of existence, the program was modified to include a residential, living-learning community component for the first-year students. The consequence of that arrangement was that the honors space was now far from the office of the director as well as the freshman residence hall. For example, when the weather is bad, the house will not be the students' first choice of study and hangout space. The students have to remember one code to enter the house and a different code to access the study space. In a mistaken moment of collegiality, the honors program offered the study space to the non-profit organization during the summer when the students were gone. Now far too much energy is expended to evict them during the year since they see that area as an ideal overflow space that they do not have to pay for.

The last straw for the students happened this last academic year. A student with mental health issues could not remember the code to the house and was found on the porch by security, freezing in the cold. The administration asked that the honors program remove the 24-hour access, preferring that the students retrieve a key from the security office. Although this request was rational, it essentially ended student use of the space by students who fondly remember the previous system. Negotiations are still underway to find a compromise that will allow students to use the space, but that has proven to be challenging because security staff do not believe the students should have open and unsupervised access. Of course, students use the space when the honors program hosts events at the house, and some students do use the space late in the evening, but rain and snow and having to ask for a key often deter other students from using the space. The ultimate objection to this space: it is in the campus boonies.

The lesson learned: When seeking space, honors directors should remember the importance of having a central location. Currently, new students who did not experience unfettered access to the house are using it periodically. Some other students have discovered that the areas outside my office are excellent for gathering and studying, especially during the end of the term when space in

the library is at a premium. Fortunately, my colleagues in the vicinity are amused when the students tape blankets to the walls to create a study fort. Finally, that coffee shop near the first honors location always has honors students commanding at least one table.

The lesson learned: Battles for honors program space need to be waged carefully and only when the priorities are clear. A small honors program with a director and no staff or only a person or two might want to pursue space that will keep the personnel together in a central location and good signage so that people can find the director easily. In these circumstances, asking for storage space and perhaps a small area in the vicinity with couches for students and bookshelves may be sufficient. At the point in the honors program's development when a residential option becomes feasible, then the director may want to lobby for a dedicated lounge in the residence hall. Space for housing the honors program should always be the director's wish, but fighting for space is only wise if it will actually work for the honors program and the students it serves.

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## CHAPTER 11

# Honors Space: What to Do When There Isn't Any

JOY OCHS

MOUNT MERCY UNIVERSITY

I direct a small honors program from my faculty office in the English Department at Mount Mercy University, which is an institution that is outgrowing its tiny campus. It is an exciting time, with new graduate programs and athletic facilities being added. But there is not enough space. At the end of May 2013, a memo from Academic Affairs made this request: “please contact your students to pack up any personal items they have left in the Honors Lounge, as we need to repurpose that room over the summer.” I have received a memo like this about every year or two since I began directing the program in 2005. The university values the honors program, but multiple constituencies are vying for the same limited and precious spaces even as strategic priorities keep shifting over the years.

Mount Mercy began offering honors courses in 1989, but these courses did not grow into a program with a director until 10 years

later. The first honors space, a student lounge dedicated in 2003, was a small cinderblock office that had become available when a staff position was eliminated. It was conveniently located in the same building as student housing, across the hall from the Academic Center for Excellence, and in a reasonably high-traffic-flow area. Unfortunately, it was so small that it could accommodate only one computer station, and no more than six people could congregate there at a time without inducing claustrophobia. The director at the time did the best he could to make this inaugural space homey by buying a small electric fireplace to occupy one corner. Small groups of students did hang out there, doing homework or socializing.

Then, in 2009 or so, plans were made to gut the building that housed the honors lounge and rebuild it into a new student center. The Academic Center was moved to temporary quarters, and the honors lounge was put in limbo until the construction could be completed. Two years and a new dean later, every room in the new building had been claimed by essential offices: Financial Aid, Health Services, Admissions, and Security. There was no room at the inn for honors.

Since that time honors students have lived, academically, as nomads. Like those self-sufficient peoples, these students have become adept at pulling up stakes and shifting locations every time the university landscape shifts. In spite of, or perhaps because of, the difficulty acquiring and maintaining a designated honors space, the honors program has optimized space when it fleetingly had it and had to develop non-geographical ways of building a sense of community for the students.

## **LOSING THE LOUNGE, BUT NOT THE CONNECTION**

Back in the days of the small cinderblock lounge, the Student Honors Association initiated a program called Fireside Chats. Once a month, the students would invite a faculty member to join them in the lounge for lunch and discussion. These informal meetings allowed students to learn about professors' interests beyond the classroom and for professors, most of whom taught outside the honors program, to learn about and connect with these bright and

engaged students. The original Fireside Chats were small and intimate and took place in front of an actual fireplace.

When the honors lounge was lost during the construction project, the students maintained their sense of community by continuing Fireside Chats, albeit without the fireplace. Working with Events Services to reserve an empty conference room added an extra step in preparing to host these lunches, but the upside was that more students could attend them than had been possible in the honors lounge. During the growth phase heralded by the new construction, several newly hired faculty members attended a Fireside Chat with honors students. These occasions were mutually beneficial because the students were exposed to new mentors and their research interests and the young faculty got a taste of working with honors students, leading some of them to commit to teaching in the program. Although the original Fireside Chats had been tied to a specific aspect of the old honors space, the students quickly learned that they did not need to be tied to that space and could still create a sense of community while floating.

## **WHAT'S AN HONORS SPACE GOT TO DO WITH IT?**

An unexpected set of events happened just prior to losing the honors lounge that allowed the honors cohort most affected by its loss to pull together more strongly than any previous group had done who had had uninterrupted access to the space. In retrospect, these events had a much larger impact on students' self-identification as honors students than mere access to a designated honors space had ever had.

In June 2008, while a colleague and I were preparing the fall semester course for that year's incoming honors freshmen, the Cedar River rose out of its banks and inundated 400 city blocks in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where Mount Mercy is located. Thus the incoming class of 2012, many of whom had themselves been affected by the flooding around the state that summer, arrived as newcomers to a community in crisis. The flood was a truly devastating event, and my colleague and I scrapped our course preparation and began designing a new course that would focus on the flood and its aftermath.

Because the problems from the flood were still occurring when school began in August of that year, the course adopted a two-pronged approach to studying it. We understood that new freshmen, already displaced from the familiarity of home, would have a hard time adjusting to a community whose essential services had been dislocated; the city hall, the public library, and the main fire station had all gone under water, not to mention a saddening number of restaurants, shops, and homes. The goal was to provide academic engagement with the science, politics, and sociology of the flood while also helping these new students integrate into their new community.

The first prong of the course centered on the study of river systems, a unit that culminated in an overnight field trip to the Mississippi River. The class visited Effigy Mounds National Monument, Lock and Dam No. 9, and the National River Museum. Beyond the academic content, this trip was important because these students began to think about themselves as a community inhabiting a space. The use of City-as-Text™ pedagogy informed their evolving understanding of community. Working in groups of three, students explored and asked questions about the river, its history, management, perils, and ecosystems. This pedagogy forced them to carefully observe their physical surroundings, make connections, share their discoveries with other groups, and reflect on their findings. With nature as the classroom, the vans became the social space where students relaxed and got to know each other during the drive between sites. Exploration teams and van groups were forced into further collaboration when they set up camp for the night and discovered that one of the borrowed tents was moldy; five students suddenly found themselves homeless on a night when it was sure to rain, and they were invited to squeeze into the other students' already-crammed tents. I am not suggesting that deliberately creating miserable situations to force honors students to work together is ethical, but there is nothing like shared misery to motivate students to problem-solve as a group.

Back on campus, the class also used City-as-Text pedagogies to explore the impacts of the flood on the Cedar Rapids community.

The students took exploratory walkabouts in some of the most ravaged neighborhoods to experience what was happening in these areas. The class also collaborated with the Kohler History Center for a service project that involved collecting oral histories to document the experiences of those affected by the flood. Students went out in pairs with a video camera and a notepad to interview flood survivors and write up their stories. Students also teamed up online with students from Macauley Honors College of the City University of New York, who do an annual photo documentation of New York City post 9/11. At the end of the course, two honors students flew to New York to help curate a photo exhibition of these two cities in recovery.

I mention these details because the sense of community that the students in this course constructed—in the class, in the city, and nationally—was key in holding this cohort together over the long term once the honors program lost its space on campus. This group of freshmen had to overcome a number of challenges that other incoming classes had not: the physical disaster, the miserable camping trip, their hesitance about talking to strangers. For them, the demolition of the honors space did not matter so much during their sophomore year: they were not shy about asking faculty to Fireside Chats in strange locations or inviting their honors director to club meetings in their dorm rooms. They had formed acquaintances during the course that did not require additional hanging out time in any honors lounge to cement into friendships. By the beginning of their senior year, still loungeless, this group had made the whole campus their space; they were student ambassadors, undergraduate research assistants, newspaper editors, and double majors at a higher rate than any class before or after them.

With limited space for honors on campus, the first line of community building has taken the form of meaningful, challenging classroom experiences that propel students out of their chairs and promote working together. Although no event has been as conducive to City-as-Text pedagogy as the flood (thank goodness!), building excursions, community outreach, and hands-on problem-solving into freshman honors courses has been fairly easy. While

this pedagogy does not replace having an honors space, it does go a long way toward encouraging honors students to get to know each other and intermingle in a way similar to what they might have experienced in the lounge.

## **HOW TO MAKE THE BEST OF A BAD SPACE**

Still, honors space is important. After the river trip students clearly understood that the honors lounge was not coming back; they worked with me to pressure the administration into providing a new one for their senior year. In addition to wanting to enjoy the lounge for themselves, they also realized that their unique community would be disbanded when they graduated, and they wanted a space where they could socialize with the honors students in the classes below them and help them carry on the work and the legacy of the Student Honors Association.

Obtaining a new honors space when it has been factored out of the equation is easier said than done. The provost agreed that the honors program needed one. The chair of the Space Utilization Committee concurred, as did the Facilities Department. The problem was that the potential spaces available were not suitable: a windowless room in the basement of the library, which students would have to vacate at midnight (defeating the purpose of an honors lounge—the ability to provide students a quiet space to work when they finally open their homework at 2:00 a.m.); a walk-through area connecting the residence hall to the student commons, with more traffic than Grand Central Station; an empty faculty office in the attic of Warde Hall (same midnight problem with the added ick factor of being surrounded by faculty).

Once those spaces were rejected, the only plausibly available room that would make sense as a student space was located in the old commons; it had formerly housed the mailroom and was now being used as a storage closet by the Copy Center. In other words, the honors program and its students were begging to be allowed to move into a closet. After months of negotiations about where all that paper was going to be stored, the room was handed over to the honors program in November of 2011. The nomadic students were

too relieved to complain about the space, which was nearly as small as the old cinder-block lounge, was located in a deserted area, and had an awkward sliding customer-service window that opened into the hallway.

These resourceful students did everything they could to turn this dubious space into an honors home. With no budget and only their charm, they talked Facilities into letting them pick their own color and paint the room themselves. The painting party involved students from three different cohorts and marked their first social event before the lounge was even officially open. Following the same color scheme as the paint, one student made curtains to obscure the window while another donated a “comfy couch” she found on Craig’s List. On the last day of class that semester, the honors program ordered in food and had a Grand Opening, ceremonially presenting each of that year’s new cohort members with a key to their lounge.

While I still walk past the lounge and cringe a bit that my students had to be content with this less-than-ideal space, the students were happy there. A second couch joined the first, and throw pillows sprouted in the corners. The lack of a budget to buy the institutional furniture that otherwise would have occupied that room turned out to be a boon because this iteration of the lounge was completely personalized with accoutrements belonging to the students.

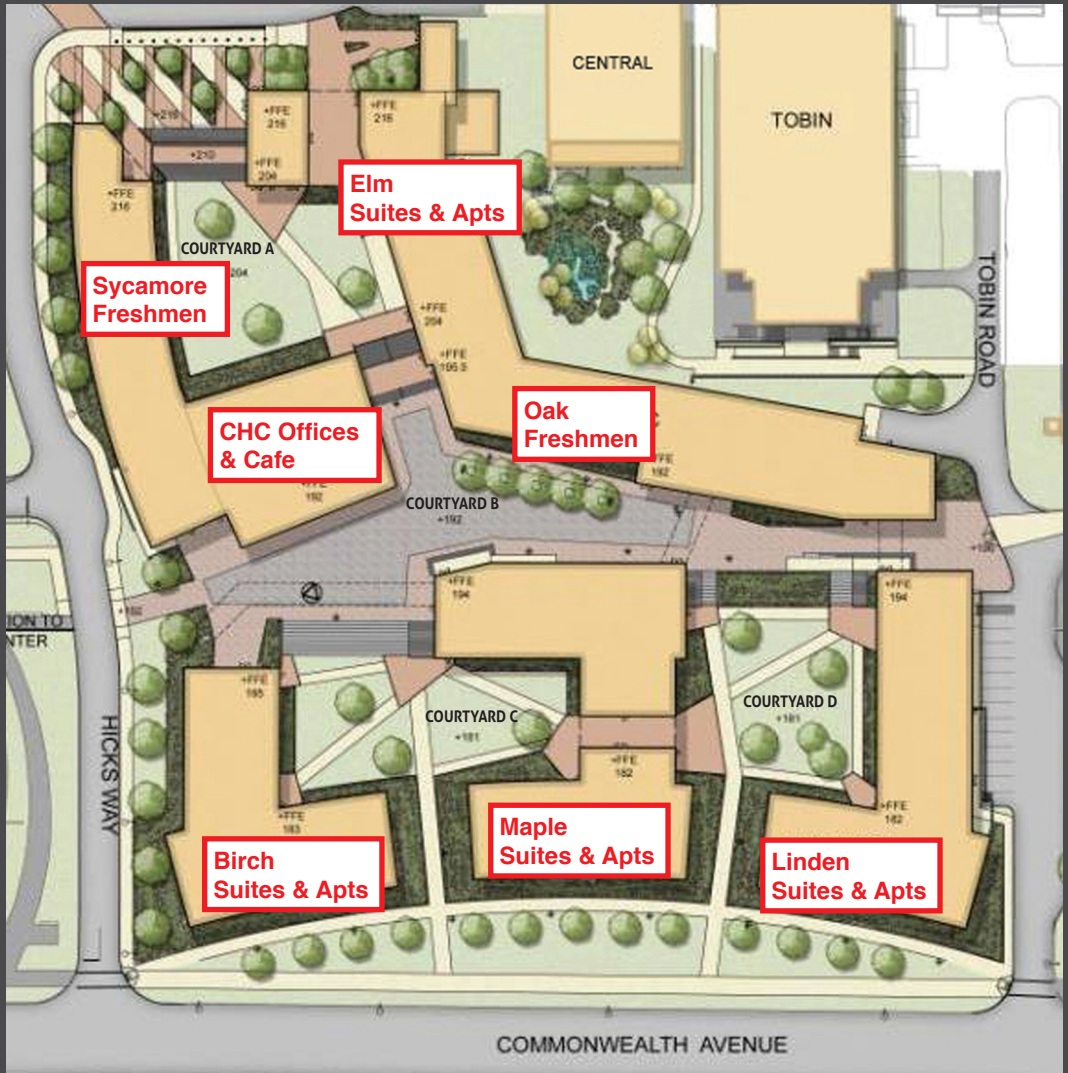
## **BACK TO SQUARE ONE**

When the notice came again this spring that the honors program was being evicted, it was harder to take than the first eviction or even the years without a space at all. The mailroom, it seems, wanted its old space back for easier access to the loading dock. This does make sense. But the new mailroom, which I assumed would be designated for honors in this transaction, has already been claimed by Security, which needs a more visible presence in the new student center. The new provost feels badly about this situation and is trying to find a permanent space “from which,” she promises, “you will never have to move again.”

As of this writing, the honors program is technically homeless although the students have compiled testimonials about why an honors lounge is important to them and have presented them to the dean. Facilities workers, who have grown sympathetic to the students' plight, have put their furniture into storage until a new place is assigned. Despite the geographical uncertainty, students will continue to form communities in their honors courses and will continue to take pride in being in honors, regardless of whether they have a designated honors space or not. And when they do finally get their own room once again, they will break out the paint cans!



# The Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, Chapter 2.



Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, University of Massachusetts Amherst. CHRC map.



Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Maple House.

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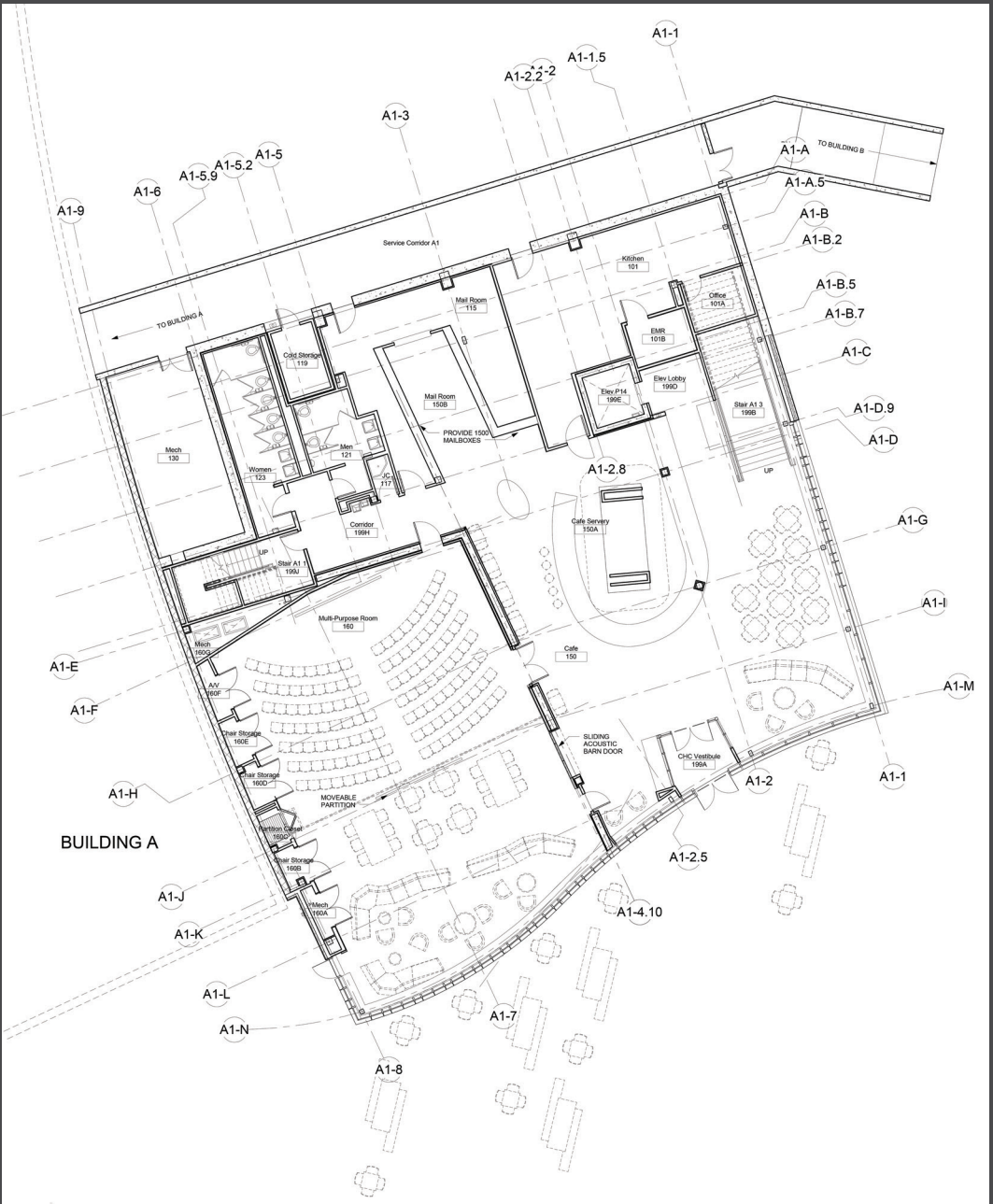
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Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, University of Massachusetts Amherst. CHCRC Promenade. Classroom.



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Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, University of Massachusetts Amherst. CHCRC Promenade. Looking north along promenade toward central courtyard.



Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Project drawings for Commonwealth Honors College Building.



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Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Roots Café, first floor of Commonwealth Honors College Building.



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Commonwealth Honors College Residential Community, University of Massachusetts Amherst. Balcony of faculty apartment in Birch House.

## Kent State University Honors College, Chapter 3.



Kent State University Honors College. Honors Center from the Commons, with Johnson Hall on the left and Stopher Hall on the right.



© Elisif Photography

Kent State University Honors College. Bridge study lounge, with view of the Commons.

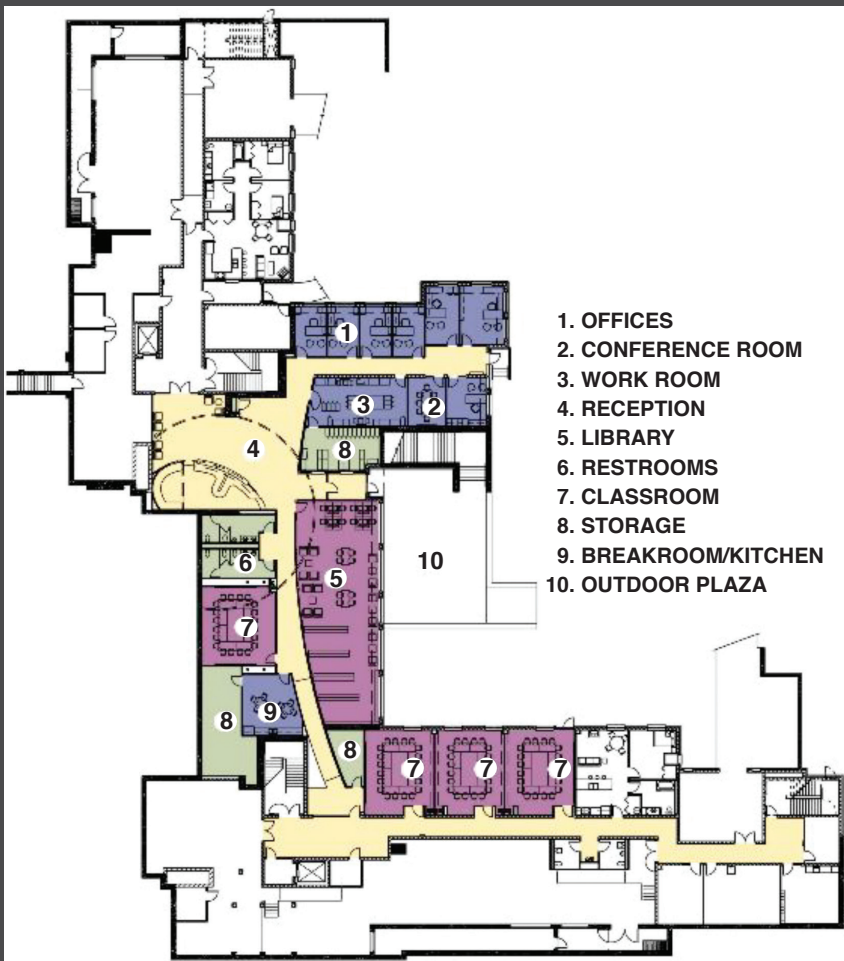


Kent State University Honors College. Three of the two dozen student-produced art chairs in the Honors Center.



© Eitsf Photography

Kent State University Honors College. Reception desk, with library in the background.



Kent State University Honors College. Floor plan for Honors College Center.

## Arizona State University, Barrett, the Honors College, Chapter 4.



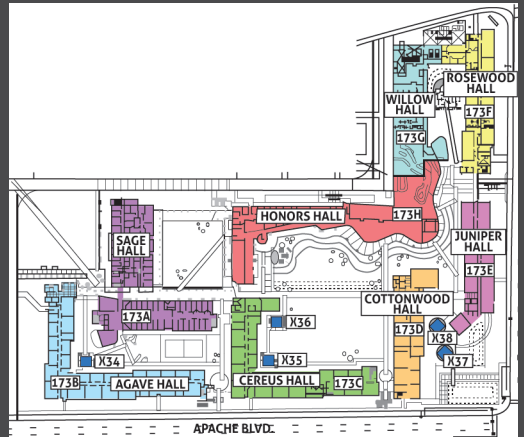
Arizona State University, Barrett, the Honors College. The Great Court.



Arizona State University, Barrett, the Honors College. The Academic Court.



Arizona State University, Barrett, the Honors College. Barrett Refectory.



Arizona State University, Barrett, the Honors College. Campus map showing Barrett buildings.

## University of Arizona Honors College, Chapter 5.



University of Arizona Honors College. Artist sketch of *Árbol de la Vida* Residence Hall.



University of Arizona Honors College. *Árbol de la Vida* slot canyon.



University of Arizona Honors College. *Árbol de la Vida* slot canyon exterior.



University of Arizona Honors College. *Árbol de la Vida* slot canyon from above.





University of Arizona Honors College. Árbol de la Vida, Poet Tree window.



University of Arizona Honors College. Árbol de la Vida, study bridge.

## University of Nebraska-Lincoln Honors Program, Chapter 6.



Greg Nathan

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Honors Program. Popular hallway study spot in Neihardt Residence Center.



Greg Nathan

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Honors Program. Classroom in Neihardt Residence Center. Students perform a scene from *Much Ado about Nothing* for their instructor and classmates.

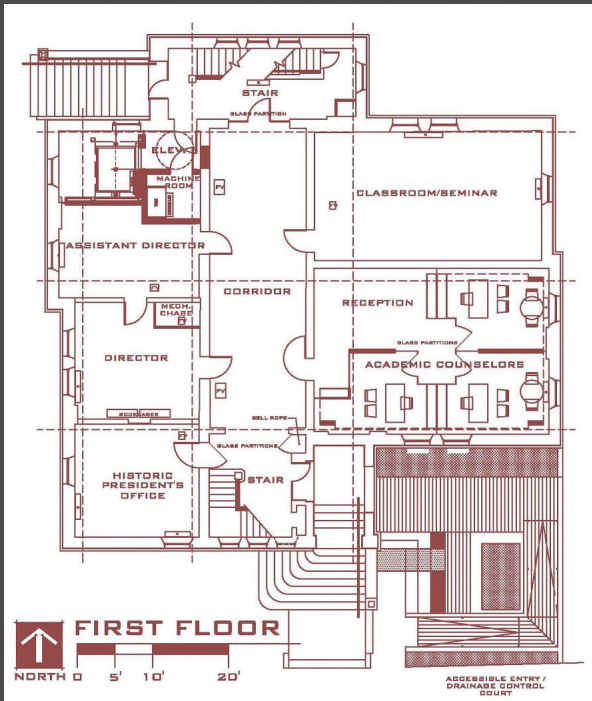
## Oklahoma State University Honors College, Chapter 7.



Oklahoma State University Honors College. Old Central exterior.



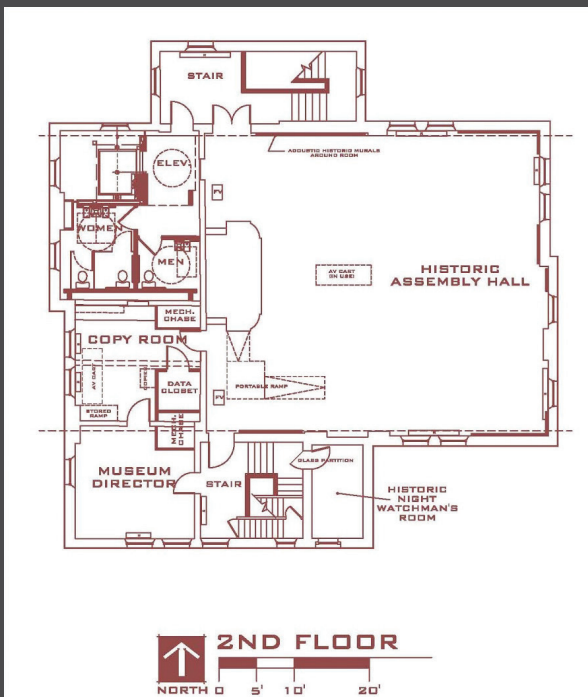
Oklahoma State University Honors College. Old Central Assembly Hall.



Oklahoma State University Honors College. Old Central, floor plan for first floor.



Oklahoma State University Honors College. Old Central interior offices.



Oklahoma State University Honors College. Old Central, floor plan for second floor.



Oklahoma State University Honors College. Members of the University Honors Student Council on the roof of Old Central.

## Heidelberg University Honors Program, Chapter 8.



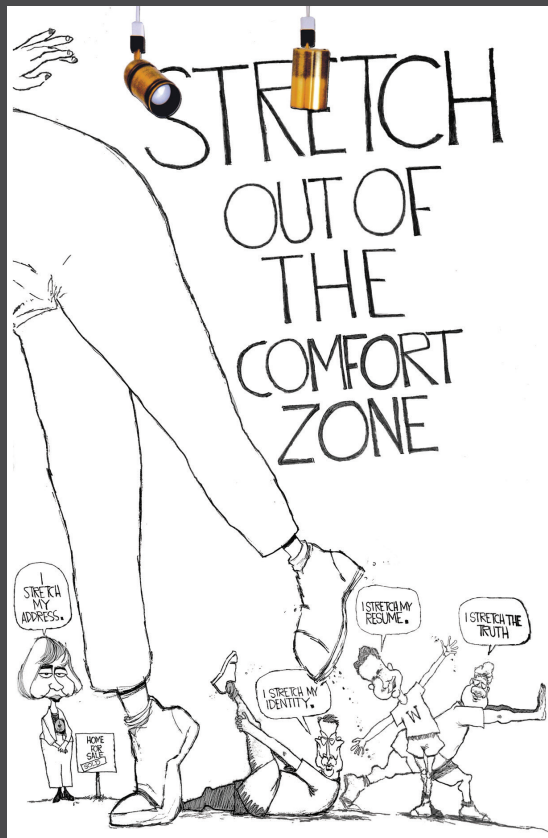
Heidelberg University Honors Program. Bryenton Center for Honors exterior.



Heidelberg University Honors Program. Bryenton Center for Honors renovation.



Heidelberg University Honors Program. Cartoon by Polly Keener painted on the Honors Lounge wall.



Heidelberg University Honors Program. Cartoon by Chip Bok painted on the Honors Lounge wall.



Heidelberg University Honors Program. Cartoon by Dave Coverly painted on the Honors Lounge wall.

## University of Alabama at Birmingham University Honors Program, Chapter 9.



University of Alabama at Birmingham University Honors Program. Spencer Honors House.



University of Alabama at Birmingham University Honors Program. Spencer Honors House stained glass windows and classroom.

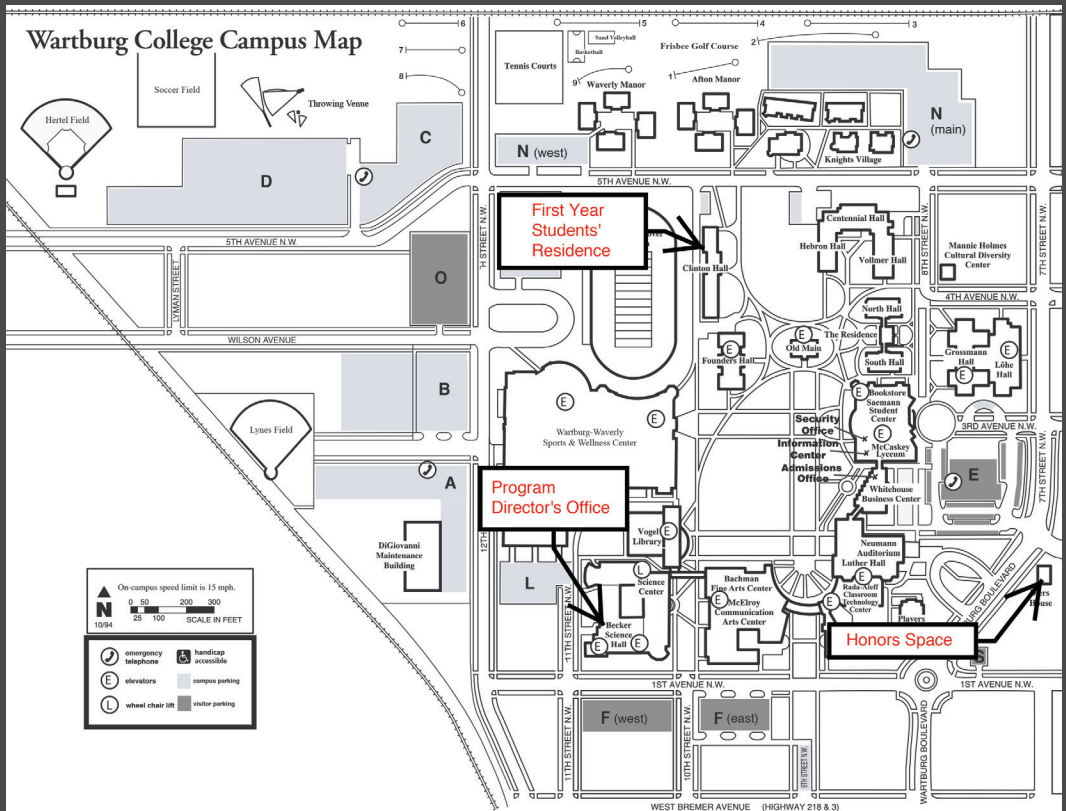


University of Alabama at Birmingham University Honors Program. Spencer Honors House classroom.



University of Alabama at Birmingham University Honors Program. Spencer Honors House pool table and downstairs view.

# Wartburg College Honors Program, Chapter 10.



Wartburg College Honors Program. Campus map showing locations for honors on the campus.



Wartburg College Honors Program. Community-engaged space.



Wartburg College Honors Program. Honors students creating community via Twister.



# HOUSING HONORS

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PART III:  
A FORUM ON HONORS HOUSING



## CHAPTER 12

# Honors Students' Perceptions of the Value and Importance of Honors Housing

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AND LESLIE SARGENT JONES  
APPALACHIAN STATE UNIVERSITY

In 2011, we participated in a panel presentation, entitled “Where Honors Lives,” about the new honors college complex then under construction at Appalachian State University (ASU). This complex was to consist of two new buildings: a ten-story residence hall for the honors college students and a three-story building with honors offices and classrooms on the top two floors. Unfortunately, between initial planning in the mid-2000s and building five years later, University Housing changed its mind and decided freshmen would not be allowed to live there because suite-style housing was deemed inappropriate for that population. Current honors students could live there, but it was unclear how many, and it appeared they were to be scattered throughout the building whose residents would primarily be non-honors students.

These decisions put the honors college in an awkward situation because current students had to be told that the honors residential option, which had been a long-standing benefit of being in honors, was no longer guaranteed for continuing students. This change also meant that the honors community, which had included all years living together for over three decades, would now be split, with the freshmen living in a third, traditional-style hall adjacent to the new tower. This plan precipitated an outcry from students and parents, and it put the honors college in the uncomfortable position of either not making the student constituency happy or generating the ire of University Housing by questioning this policy.

In order to evaluate how strongly the community felt about the proposed changes, the Appalachian State Honors College sent an open-ended email to all of the students, asking for their input. The 105 responses (13% of the total honors population, but ~37% of the number in honors housing), as well as a student petition, were delivered to those in charge of the decision. In the end, a compromise was achieved, splitting the honors students between the two buildings; honors students would live together on honors-only floors within the two halls: continuing students in the new hall and freshmen in the traditional, corridor-style hall.

The email was not sent with the intention of gathering material for an article, but the responses were compelling and provided insights into honors students' views that merited further study. The 105 qualitative responses revealed that honors students do, in fact, strongly value the honors-only housing option, primarily for the sense of community it provides, the academic benefits of being surrounded by other honors students of all years, and the physical environment and location of the honors residence hall. This article will present these findings and discuss the students' opinions in light of honors programming goals.

## **BACKGROUND**

Participation in an honors program or college, according to Alexander W. Astin (1977), increases persistence in college and encourages post-baccalaureate school aspiration, but some specific

program elements also increase the likelihood that students will persist specifically within honors (p. 221). Many honors programs offer a residential community to allow honors students the opportunity to live with similar students, and K. Celeste Campbell and Dale R. Fuqua (2008) have found that students who live in honors housing are more likely to continue in honors than those who do not (p. 145). Their data probably underscore the NCHC emphasis on housing in the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College”: “Where the home university has a significant residential component, the honors college offers substantial honors residential opportunities” (2014, item 10).

Because students spend so much of their time where they live, the residence can have a profound impact on their academic performance. Research about honors living-learning communities is limited. Data suggest that honors housing provides specific benefits to honors students, with certain caveats. For example, Eric Daffron and Christopher Holland (2009) reported on their experience of instituting a new honors living-learning community, including their successes and challenges. Their students reported high levels of satisfaction with the physical environment of the residence hall, had a strong sense of community, and were engaged with honors programming. On the negative side, students complained that both living and taking multiple courses together meant they spent too much time with the same students; they also wanted a balance in the social and academic aspects of the living-learning community. But, for three of the four years of their experimental data, students involved in the honors living-learning community were more likely to remain at the institution than honors students who were not in the honors living-learning community and more likely to continue in the honors program (pp. 203–205).

One rationale behind honors residence halls is what Anne Rinn (2004) calls “environmental press,” where students tend to meet the achievement levels of the students around them (p. 71). So “if students with high achievement and high aspirations surround a gifted college student, the student is likely to raise his aspirations to meet those of students around him,” whereas those same gifted

students were found to be less satisfied living with non-honors students (Rinn, 2004, p. 71). Honors residence halls are important, according to Rinn, because of their academic orientation and because students who choose to live in the honors residence hall reinforce this academic orientation with each other. Also, since honors students are more likely to remain living on campus than non-honors students, they create a multi-year community (Rinn, 2004, pp. 71–72).

Martha L. A. Stassen (2003) compared retention rates of students in several different types of residential learning communities, including honors. This study of over 5,000 students found that participation in a learning community yielded increased retention (p. 584). Participation in an honors residential learning community had the highest retention among all groups, but Stassen speculated that this may be related to the characteristics of students in those programs because they are selective programs that typically attract and enroll well-prepared students (p. 595).

Karen K. Inkelas and Jennifer L. Weisman (2003) also compared outcomes of various types of living-learning program environments: transition programs, honors programs, and curriculum-based programs that concentrate on a specific major or research topic. The authors focused on the impact of the type of program on involvement and found that participants were generally more positively engaged than students not in a living-learning community and that the students in the honors programs reported higher levels of critical-thinking skills, social meetings with peers, and discussions outside of class. Although they were more likely to study individually than in groups, they also reported the highest level of social support coming from their residence hall environment and were the most likely to discuss academic issues with their peers (pp. 344–346).

Nancy L. Reichert (2007) conducted a survey of members of the National Collegiate Honors Council on the numbers and impact of honors programs that also offer an honors housing option. Of the 43 responses, 88% reported that they do offer some type of an honors housing option to their honors students. Sixty-six percent found

that honors housing was beneficial to recruitment, and 55% stated that honors housing was important to student success in college (p. 114). Some of the respondents reported an increased interest in honors after implementing an honors housing option and that standardized test scores improved rather dramatically afterwards. One respondent reported a significant difference in the GPAs of honors students who lived in the honors residence hall space versus honors students who chose to live in another type of housing (p. 117).

Campbell and Fuqua (2008) examined 16 variables to try to find a relationship between them and which students complete the honors program requirements and graduate with some type of honors award at a large Midwestern research university. While a number of demographic and academic elements did predict success and graduation from the honors program, the initial assignment to the honors residence hall was the third-highest predictor of completion of an honors curriculum. Fifty-eight percent of students who lived in the honors residence hall as first-semester freshmen graduated with honors, compared to 32% of freshmen who lived in a non-honors setting. Campbell and Fuqua concluded: "These results suggest that the social reinforcement within the honors residential setting is related to students' decisions to complete honors award requirements" (p. 145). Four major metrics predicted graduation with honors: first-semester GPA, high school grades and rank, first-semester housing (honors vs. non-honors), and gender. Of these variables, institutions only directly impact whether honors students are housed with other honors students or not, which "implies that honors housing facilities should be an honors program priority" (p. 150). Honors administrators may improve retention, persistence, and graduation rates by offering honors housing options to students, particularly in the first semester (pp. 149-150).

Overall, the literature shows that living-learning and residential learning communities typically have a strong, positive impact on student achievement and persistence, and an honors residential learning option in particular has a positive impact on honors student engagement, retention, and persistence to graduation with honors. While some of the articles cited here discuss possible challenges

to be considered, overall, most of the literature demonstrates that honors residential learning communities enhance recruitment to, engagement with, and graduation from an honors program.

## **METHODS**

In fall 2011, the direction of honors housing at Appalachian State University for the future was under debate. An email request was sent to all active honors college students from first-semester students through graduating seniors, approximately 800 students, in October 2011, asking them for their input on the role of and importance of honors housing.

There were 105 responses to the open-ended prompt, which was approximately 13% of the honors college population, but closer to 37% of the total number of students then living in honors housing. Responses came in as individual emails, and four years were represented. Once the decision was made to analyze the results, all identifying data were removed so that identifying respondents by class standing was not possible.

The email prompt read as follows:

Dear Honors College Students,

As many of you know, Student Development has proposed to separate the Honors Residential Community next year. They propose to put the freshmen in Cone, mixed in with mostly non-honors freshmen, and the continuing students in the new residence hall (being built next to the future office/classroom building for Honors), also mixed in with a majority of non-honors students.

I am writing now to ask for your opinion on this question in order to gain a better understanding of how the whole Honors College population views this matter.

So, whether you are currently in East or not, I would welcome a response from you indicating your views on this matter.



The authors obtained approval to analyze the data *a posteriori* under the Exempt category for “Collection or Study of Existing Data” from the ASU Institutional Review Board. Responses were coded for keywords and analyzed qualitatively. A word frequency chart was created to indicate how often specific words were used in the narrative responses. For the qualitative analysis, each response was read by two of the authors for accuracy. Twenty-one keywords and three main themes emerged from the data collected.

## FINDINGS

When the 105 responses were analyzed using word frequency, a number of words or phrases were found to be shared across the respondents. The word frequency data appear in Table 1.

The word “community” was by far the most common word used to describe the role and effect of honors housing on the students who responded to the survey. Students often used the word “community” to describe a sense of belonging or a family-like feeling within the honors population, rather than simply referring to the residence hall that houses honors students. Nearly half of all respondents, 50 out of 105, included the word “community” in their response; 20 students mentioned it more than once. The words “unity” and “family,” frequently mentioned at 14 and 6 instances respectively, also referred to the same sense of belonging to a group. The keywords “community,” “unity,” and “family” were used 106 times in 105 responses, with most students using at least one of the three words.

“Support,” “encourage,” and “mentor” were used 51 times. These words typically described the phenomenon of having honors students from all four years available to provide encouragement, advice, and support. Students also frequently mentioned how important it was, especially for first-year students, to have access to upper-class students who had already made the transition to college successfully.

Honors housing also was important to success in college, with 18 students using the word “success.” Similar words were “respect,” “excellence,” “achievement,” “pride” “motivation,” and

**TABLE 1: WORD FREQUENCY**

Word	Count
Community	86
Support	33
Success	18
Unity	14
Encourage	11
Respect	11
Image	8
Perk	8
Mentor	7
Leadership	7
Family	6
Friendly	6
Friendship	4
Excellence	4
Recruitment	3
Resource	3
Challenge/Challenging	3
Achievement	2
Pride	2
Motivation	2
Determination	2

“determination.” Students reported that being with other highly motivated students was a major benefit to their academic success and achievement in college.

## COMMUNITY

Once the 105 narrative responses were coded, they were reviewed by two of the three authors to ensure accuracy. From the responses, three main themes emerged, along with several additional subthemes. The first theme was about creating a sense of community and belonging. Respondents called it by several different names, including “community,” “friendship,” “family,” and “mentoring,” but the explanations referred to the same phenomenon: feeling a sense of connection with their peers. Many students referred to having a tightknit community because of their shared living space. One student explained, “Housing the students together enhances the community experience that is a big part of what the program offers.” Another student agreed, saying that honors housing “brings the honors community closer together, and my experience at ASU would not have been the same if I had been in just a regular dorm.”

This sense of community had several subthemes. One of the primary subthemes was that of making friends. Multiple students said that their friends were often other honors students who lived with them. One upper-class student wrote about her experiences: “I am still close friends with almost every single person from my hall freshman year. The community is very tightknit and helps to provide a support system for new students in particular.” This reflection was an oft-repeated theme, with first-year students explaining how their friends were usually their hallmates and upper-class students saying that they were still close friends with those whom they had met through honors housing.

Some students mentioned that their relationships went beyond mere friendship, and they developed a family within the honors housing community. Several other students claimed that living in honors housing had created a family atmosphere. “I have grown so close to all the honors students while living in [honors housing,] and I feel like they are my family,” said one student echoing a common sentiment.

Another benefit of honors housing was having mentors living in the same physical space. One student elaborated:

A part of what I loved so much about being a freshman in the honors program was being able to come home to peers that I considered mentors[,] . . . upperclassmen who could guide me and give me insight into life, stress, and succeeding at Appalachian.

Many others agreed; they cited the unofficial mentoring offered by sophomore, junior, or senior students living in the next room or down the hall as a major benefit, especially for first-year students. Another student explained how mentoring was a cycle for students living in honors housing: "I remember being a freshman and consulting older members of my hall for academic help, and I remember being a sophomore and having help requested of me." That this process emerges organically from the group and is not an imposed feature is important to note.

Several students mentioned being advised by older students in the community to pursue leadership roles on campus. They reported becoming residence assistants, club presidents, and members of journalism organizations as a direct result of their honors residential experience. Many students cited their peers and upper-class mentors as the ones who encouraged them to pursue these extracurricular activities and to become involved in the university outside of the classroom.

This theme of community focused on the shared experiences made possible by living together in honors housing. One student explained, "Our friendships have lasted in part because while we come from different backgrounds, we share academic values, and we probably would not have met had we not lived in the honors dorm." Many students reported that social situations were important, but having roommates, hallmates, and peers who also understood that academics were important was a key factor in their satisfaction at ASU.

## **ACADEMICS**

A second major theme referred to the academic benefits of living in dedicated honors housing. One student reported that living

in honors housing “has made a significant impact on my success here at App and more specifically in the honors college. The opportunity to surround yourself with other strong students who share your priorities is an opportunity that all honors students should have.” Several students referred to the ease of forming study groups because of the proximity of classmates in honors housing. One student reported that “having all the honors students together in one place will give them a chance to build relationships and form study groups.” Another expressed that sentiment this way: “We studied together and understood how important our studies were.” Others emphasized the convenience of having classmates living in the same building when it came time to work on projects and study for exams. Some students mentioned that having their peers nearby encouraged them in general to work together on their academics. Several students referred to group projects in classes, and, that by living together, they were able to work on projects much more easily.

Students also reported that having upperclassmen in the same building was helpful. Having upper-class students allowed younger students access to tutors in specific subjects, as well as models and mentors for developing important study skills. One student reported, “I have been able to meet upperclassmen who know exactly what I am going through. They have already taken some of these classes and offer help and guidance.” Another student wrote that she had “developed some fantastic study skills” from being around other honors students, especially older students. While many of the comments focused on study groups, several students also mentioned that upperclassmen guided them in transitioning to college, adapting to higher expectations than in high school, and learning coping skills to balance academics and personal life.

Students appreciated being in an environment where success was celebrated and actively encouraged. Comments also highlighted how honors students encourage one another to succeed academically. One student observed, “It is wonderful to have other students with the same mindset of school. We encourage each other and keep one another focused.” Other students agreed, saying that sharing housing space with honors students encouraged planning for the

future. Encouragement was important in all aspects of academics, the students reported, but several students specifically pointed out how having other honors students in their residence hall was helpful in encouraging them to remain in the honors college despite the additional rigors associated with the honors curriculum. One student explained that, by living in honors housing, one was always around other students who understand what it is like to be in an honors program and would then provide encouragement to persevere and remain in the honors college. Moreover, being physically surrounded by intellectual peers with a similar drive to succeed proved to be motivating and encouraging to students, and they felt challenged by a healthy competition that pushed them to perform at the highest level and to achieve academic excellence.

Many students reported that living in honors housing actually assisted in their academic endeavors by providing an environment that was respectful, friendly, and quiet. One student valued the lack of noise and distraction in the building:

I felt accepted by my dorm-mates who valued academics and, consequently, understood the importance of living in an environment where you could study any time of the day. I think it was helpful to be surrounded by honors students of all grade levels who shared my passion for learning.

Students appreciated enforced quiet hours in the honors dorm, which allowed them to study, sleep, and relax in a relatively quiet and calm environment. One student explained, "My floor was respectful of quiet hours and studying because we shared the honors experience." Students also mentioned that they felt that living in honors housing was conducive to studying because of the quietness, the respect other students had for academics, and the common expectation to focus on academics. One student reported being told horror stories about loud and disruptive neighbors, all-night parties, and the inability to sleep in dorms before she came to college, but she was relieved to find that "living in the honors dorm was almost the opposite experience" for her.

Students readily acknowledged that honors housing is a strong recruiting tool. One student claimed that students needed some benefits, such as honors housing, for being in the honors college. Another student explained how honors housing provided “incoming honors students something to look forward to as well as an immediate feeling of belonging as soon as they arrive.” If students know they will be housed with other honors students, they look forward to having students with similar priorities nearby, thus helping to recruit future honors students, according to the respondents. Several students reported that they had to decide between multiple institutions for their college careers and that knowing that they would be living in honors housing was part of what swayed them toward ASU. One student said that if he were a high school senior trying to make the decision of where to attend college, he would only attend a university where honors housing was an option.

## **PHYSICAL LOCATION**

Students reported satisfaction with the physical environment of honors housing as well as the location of the honors residence hall. The then-honors residence, East Hall, was located centrally on campus, close to the library, student union, and main dining facilities. Despite being an older building, it featured some of the largest rooms on campus and the convenience of having a sink in each room. This finding came up less in the written comments, probably because the proposed new residence hall was only a few hundred feet away, but in conversations with students at other times, many students said that the physical location on campus was appealing, especially to first-year students who would have otherwise been assigned to housing on the other side of campus and away from most academic classroom buildings, support facilities, and student development offices. Both the old hall and proposed new honors residence hall were also connected to the honors college offices and classrooms, and a few students wrote that they liked the convenience of having some classes and their advisors in the same building.

## DISCUSSION

Many of these themes are difficult to tease apart because they are so interconnected. For example, students reported that having upper-class students in the same building was important because it provided instant mentoring, encouragement to succeed, and a strong sense of community across the academic years. So a single comment like this was factored into the count total of multiple themes and subthemes. Honors housing is inextricably linked with both academic and personal success in college, according to the data, because it provides so many tangible and intangible benefits. Although students reported that living in the honors dorm had a certain cachet and commanded respect, the data confirmed the importance of the intangible benefits of community, friendship, mentoring, and encouragement. Students did indeed like the physical surroundings of the honors residence hall, but even when describing the physicality of the building, they still focused more on quiet hours and a sense of respect for academics rather than the location on campus, the size of the rooms, or the convenience of having sinks in each room. While several students reported those features as nice perquisites, many more students wrote about being able to study without distractions, making friends with similar values and priorities, and receiving help from upperclassmen on how to transition smoothly to college life.

Creating a sense of community across all years was clearly a major goal of housing honors students together. The word “community” was the most frequently used keyword, being used almost three times as often as the next most popular keyword. This repetition may be due to the initial email prompt containing the word “community.” Nevertheless, the sense of community established within honors housing was clearly the primary theme that emerged from the data. This finding corresponds with previous research that suggests the sense of community within honors housing is important to the overall academic and sociocultural success of honors students (Daffron & Holland, 2009; Rinn, 2004).

Since students are in honors programs because of their academic ability and dedication, being around other honors students



reinforces academic goals and behaviors (Rinn, 2004, p. 71). The data also supported this perception: the honors students stated repeatedly that living with other honors students increased their academic achievements and made it easier for them to focus on academics. Because of the reinforcing effect of the environment on academic achievement, Rinn argues, high-achieving students living together are already inclined to succeed academically (pp. 70–71). Many students reported that having friendly competition with classmates and being encouraged to do their best greatly contributed, as predicted by Rinn, to their academic success.

While research from Inkelas and Weisman (2003) found that honors students in a residential learning community were less likely to study together, the ASU findings were the opposite. Many students mentioned working on school assignments together and forming study groups. Study groups were one of the major ways in which the respondents reported that honors housing benefitted them academically. Perhaps this difference is due to institutional factors and the culture at Appalachian State University.

Daffron and Holland (2009) set up their initial honors housing experiment with two upper-class students serving as mentors (pp. 199–200). They had mixed success with this model, as did the Appalachian State Honors College in the past when it attempted to have formal peer mentors for honors students; however, the students definitely expressed in their written responses that having the upper-class students living with them provided them with built-in mentoring.

The data was also congruent with that of Campbell and Fuqua (2008): the students reported that being surrounded by other honors students made them more likely to remain in the honors college (p. 145). This result is partially due to the proximity to the honors college offices and classrooms, which makes it easier logistically to get to class or ask questions, but also because the students looked to the upperclassmen in the residence hall as leaders and mentors. Honors housing traditionally has students from all four years living together, which means that a number of upper-class students are available to answer questions and provide guidance.

Ultimately, the students who responded to the email survey overwhelmingly valued the option of honors housing. They were enthusiastic about the sociocultural benefits conveyed in being with a like-minded community of scholars. Many students reported making deep friendships with other students in honors housing, and older students reported that these relationships often lasted well beyond their years in the hall. Students also stressed the academic benefits of having built-in study group access, tutors, and the quiet and mostly distraction-free environment.

This study sought to find out why honors housing has an impact on student retention within honors. While students appreciated some of the advantages, like bigger rooms, they spoke far more often about the academically supportive environment, mentoring, and quiet environment, intangible benefits that make honors housing both appealing to students and an effective means to improve retention and graduation rates. Based on these findings and previous research, honors housing provides both academic and sociocultural benefits for students, which lead to increased retention and graduation rates.

All of the respondents were in favor of keeping honors-only housing as an option, and only four supported the proposed freshmen-upperclassmen split, since one of the major benefits of honors housing was access to more experienced, upper-class students in an environment that allowed organic mentoring to develop.

## **CONCLUSION**

Many administrators in honors programs and colleges have an intuitive sense that honors housing is desirable, and the literature and this study largely support that feeling. What has been challenging is communicating to those who manage housing that the research on housing options is almost all on non-honors populations, and a great many of the reported findings do not generalize well to this specific population. While many freshmen students may want residence life that is centered on activities, such as outdoor life or athletics, most honors students want a community that supports their academic ambitions. The housing specifics, whether

the rooms are in suites or not, for example, are not as important to honors students as the opportunity to be together. In fact, the very point that housing experts warn against for freshmen—putting them into private rooms or suites because it will interfere with joining and creating a new community—is actually valuable for students focused on their studies. The evidence to the contrary is not drawn from honors students, and, of more concern nowadays, many studies on the impact of residence room styles were done at a time when students were coming from larger families. Students used to have more siblings, but now the average number of children per family is decreasing (Bachu and O'Connell, 2001, p. 1). Students now come from homes where they had their own rooms, and the adjustment to college-life with a roommate is, in fact, challenging (Moore, 2010, p. ED20).

ASU students reported that honors housing was a major benefit for them, and, for many, housing played a key factor in determining where they would go to college. Students in this study overwhelmingly reported that honors housing had a positive impact not only on recruiting them to the program, but on their social and academic lives once they came to live on campus.

Ultimately, the decision was made that honors students would be split between the two proposed buildings, with first-year students in a traditional floor-style residence hall and upper-class students in a suite-style arrangement. Contrary to the plan to intermix honors and non-honors students, the compromise was that all honors students would be grouped together on honors-specific floors within the two buildings. While this arrangement was contrary to the original aims of the honors-housing proposal, the administration opted to pursue this compromise.

Three years later, we can report that this option seems to have worked well and certainly better than we had expected. While the upper-class and first-year students are physically separated, the buildings are adjacent to one another as well as the honors office and classroom facility. The honors college has also implemented a freshman retreat, which includes a dozen or more upper-class honors students as well as honors residence assistants, which allows

first-year students the opportunity to meet possible mentors. We have not yet replicated this survey to see if responses are the same or differ, but continue to monitor students' grades and reports during academic advising. An interesting feature that has emerged as a consequence of this model of an honors-only, freshmen-only community is that the within-class bonding and community is, according to student anecdotal reports, very high. It will be interesting to run a survey again to determine if the trade-off for losing some of the upper-class mentoring was increasing the connection among incoming classmates.

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## CHAPTER 13

# Honors Housing: Castle or Prison?

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In its “Basic Characteristics” of fully developed honors programs and colleges—lists that have become increasingly prescriptive over the years—the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) identifies “best practices that are common to successful” honors programs and colleges (2014a). One of those practices includes the establishing of separate honors residential opportunities for students, despite the fact that such dedicated space is a bad idea in many instances. In light of the old saying that “one man’s castle is another man’s prison,” I will lay out some of the reasons why honors housing is not a good in itself. I hope to complicate the understanding of the benefits and risks of cordoning off honors students from the rest of the campus population in the hopes that programs and colleges considering honors residential arrangements might interrogate their own assumptions about the value of such a move. Doing so will help those groups ask hard though useful questions about

student learning and development, the allocation of resources in challenging financial times, and the way in which honors relates to the campus-wide community.

The argument for honors housing goes something like this: similar to members of other special populations (athletes, international students, etc.), honors students have particular needs that can only be met by herding them under the same roof. They study more and thus require quiet residential settings; they benefit from the intellectual mentoring of upper-class high-achieving students; they are less interested in the typical after-hours shenanigans of the regular undergraduates; and they can continue their enlightened conversations from classes in the comfort of their residence halls. In short, the story goes, the academic and social development of honors students is enhanced when individuals with similar backgrounds and aims live together. Could anyone object to this rosy narrative? Well, let me try.

The most obvious objection to honors housing is that such dedicated space segregates a specific population from the rest of the student body. Such isolation can create problems of perception for honors programs as well as introduce difficulties related to personal and academic growth. Honors has sometimes been attacked on the grounds of elitism, of giving much to a special few in ways that reinforce distinctions and unequal power relations; if a program or college has struggled with this charge, creating separate honors housing will only exacerbate it. As Celeste Campbell (2005) has noted:

The arguments against honors programs stem largely from the feeling that they are elitist—that they isolate the top students from the rest of the academic community, that they lack diversity, and that they are at least partly responsible for the growing extent to which merit-based scholarship and programming funds are taking precedence over need-based awards and other deserving programs. (p. 98)

In many respects, honors housing becomes a physical representation of all that critics find wrong about honors. Such a separation is



particularly tricky if a program buys into the tradition that honors should raise the bar for everyone on campus, an ethos that has been a cornerstone of the NCHC “Basic Characteristics” since their inception. This role for honors is so significant that it is mentioned twice in the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program,” in terms of the program’s ability to model excellence for populations across campus and as a place where faculty can experiment with new pedagogies that will then become institutionalized across campus. Situating honors students (and faculty, for that matter) behind specialized walls, however, would seem to suggest a trickle-down model of excellence rather than one that evolves out of equal standing, collaboration, and shared purpose.

Honors programs and colleges also might want to question whether the most effective environment for the emotional, psychological, social, and intellectual growth of students is one in which individuals are housed among students of like academic accomplishment and cultural background. While themed housing based on a shared academic interest or ethnicity or race has been popular on campuses for many years, a recent meta-analysis of dissertations on residential life in higher education suggests this research, according to James H. Banning and Linda Kuk (2011), “reinforce[s] the need to attend to diversity as a major area of emphasis within the residential experience” (p. 98). Diversity is a cornerstone of most academic institutions because of the rich learning that typically takes places when students and faculty from different backgrounds interact inside and outside the classroom. Additionally, write Vanessa D. Johnson, Young-Shin Kang, and George F. Thompson (2011), “it is widely understood that college and university residence halls provide the greatest opportunity to expand students’ cultural knowledge about one another” (p. 39). Since data show, observes Catherine Rampell (2009), that a strong positive correlation exists between family income and student performance on standardized tests like the ACT and SAT and the majority of programs and colleges overweight the role of such scores in shaping their honors classes, there is already a built-in bias towards homogeneity in the honors experience. If anything, honors programs

should be spreading their students around campus rather than gathering them together. Would educators ever imagine, for example, that segregating all of an institution's low-achieving students under one roof would be a good idea?

A relatively new honors program that has thought creatively about housing is the one at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, which intentionally matches a pair of incoming honors students with a pair of non-honors students in a freshmen residence hall called Ledges. Each group brings different strengths to the quad rooms, which end up truly embodying the belief that growth comes from encountering difference. This model, asserts Campbell (2005), also seeks to address previous research suggesting honors participation may encourage isolation of honors students from their peers as well as resentment from non-honors students (p. 98). In addition, the living arrangement represents a recruiting opportunity for Quinnipiac's honors program, for current honors students often identify especially promising applicants for the second round of admission in the spring of the freshman year. Interestingly, these second-round applicants apparently are more engaged and retain at a higher rate than those from the regular application process. It helps that the university has an excellent residential life program complete with its own learning outcomes tied to the core values of community, diversity, service, and responsibility.

One of the reasons the NCAA banned athletic dorms in 1991 was because of the negative effects on athletes' personal development when they lived together. College presidents who helped to enact the change, which went into full effect in 1996, believed that athletes would benefit from being better integrated into campus life. While I am not suggesting that honors residence halls will lead to the sort of behavior like that at the University of Oklahoma in the late 1980s—where a rape, a shooting, and drug sales that occurred in athlete housing led to the ouster of the football coach and prompted the NCAA to act—it does strike me as curious that honors programs that base their academic philosophies on the notion of challenge would turn around and argue for residential arrangements that emphasize the comfort that comes from

homogeneity. That students learn the skills to negotiate living with people who are different is especially important because that reality will confront students in their post-collegiate lives even as corporate interests in the media and technology world attempt to comfort consumers by delivering them content that reinforces their beliefs rather than challenging them. In fact, for the past few years, Google algorithms have so personalized searches that users are directed to content based on interests tied to previous searches. According to one activist, Eli Pariser, such a practice “locks us into a specific kind of pixilated versions of ourselves. It locks us into a set of check boxes of interest rather than the full kind of human experience” (as cited in Parramore, 2010). Never before have people lived in such a resounding echo chamber in which they incessantly hear opinions and arguments that seem so much like their own. Honors residential life policies that calcify students might fortify this state of affairs.

In one of the most extensive discussions of honors housing, Anne Rinn (2004) speculates about the benefits of such residential arrangements, emphasizing that honors students presumably reinforce each other’s social and academic development. Along the way, though, she introduces a note of caution, pointing to research showing that high-achieving students perform well “regardless of their living arrangement,” that “living in a small residence hall does not provide a better community atmosphere than living in a large residence hall,” and that honors students themselves indicate a sense of “isolation from the mainstream student body,” which like theme dorms promote a kind of “self-segregation” and wall off honors students from students of “other ability levels” (pp. 68, 69, 72–73). Rinn notes in conclusion that while “research literature generally provides support for the positive academic and social effects of living in college or university residence halls . . . , evidence concerning honors residence halls is far less clear” (p. 75).

There are other reasons to think twice before plunging into the honors housing pool. Many programs and colleges use the prospect of dedicated residential honors space as a perk during the recruiting process to entice high-achieving students. Along with distinctive

advantages like priority registration and honors scholarships, access to special housing is typically featured in glossy brochures that are mailed by the thousands around the country. Yet this marketing strategy sends a message of entitlement to students who often have already received many benefits during their high school careers and risks building an incoming class shaped around questions like “What can you give me?” rather than “What is unique about your approach to learning?” It is no wonder that students who come for perks drift away in huge numbers from honors as they move through their academic careers: after having secured housing, scholarships, and early registration, they have little left to gain. It did not surprise me to learn from a recent honors graduate of a large state university program that she was one of 13 honors students to graduate from her entering honors class of over 150. And yes, the program offers honors housing. Completion rates of 20%–25% at similar institutions are not uncommon. In a thoughtful recent piece for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, University of Florida Honors Director Kevin Knudson (2011) laments the fact that many families now see honors as akin to flying first class; he confesses that he has moved away from the “perks” model of recruiting and now emphasizes to potential students that “honors is a challenge, not a reward, and that moving from high-school honors to university honors is shifting from a culture of achievement to a culture of engagement.” I would argue that the best kinds of engagement and most challenging ones are those in which students interact with individuals who possess different backgrounds, values, and belief systems.

Some programs or colleges might not need honors housing because the outcomes that honors directors expect such residential arrangements to deliver have already been achieved. For example, if a particular honors program already possesses a strong sense of community and identity on campus, honors housing might seem redundant or even make the honors group appear excessively cliquish. Indeed, for programs with an especially strong bond, having students out amongst other communities is usually healthy, as anyone who has ever witnessed stressed-out honors students preparing for final exams can attest to. This situation is certainly

evident at Westminster College. Programs or colleges that suffer from financial challenges, that do not wish to participate any more in the facilities arms race in higher education, or that can imagine other uses for a donor's money that might have a more powerful effect on student learning and development should not feel pressure to blow their budgets on capital expenditures, even in spite of the language in the NCHC "Basic Characteristics." Many programs have been successful in designing other forums to facilitate bonding, like an intense learning-community environment in the classroom, a robust peer-mentoring program, specialized orientation programming, experiential-learning opportunities, or outside-the-classroom meetings in which the entire honors class comes together regularly.

Some people might ask: "If honors is designed to reward exceptionalism, why wouldn't honors have separate dorms?" Honors can be about exclusivity and separation, but it does not have to be. If honors is based on a distinctive learning design featuring interdisciplinarity, service, leadership, global studies, and/or team-teaching, the emphasis is on learning differently rather than being exclusive and separate; if this is what is stressed, special treatment in the form of dedicated residences somehow rings hollow. The University of Wisconsin College of Letters and Science Honors Program embodies this approach, for it does not use standardized test scores as a criterion for inviting students to apply; instead, all students who have been admitted to the college are offered the chance to submit an application, since the program is designed around specific learning outcomes that ask students to challenge themselves in a variety of areas tied to academics, leadership, and service. Such egalitarianism is particularly attractive because it encourages students to self-select into the program and puts students on an equal footing at the start of their academic careers rather than codifying differences even before students arrive on campus.

It makes sense, of course, that directors and deans of large college and university programs may feel the need for such segregated housing. These are often places where community building is more of a challenge due to the considerable scale of such operations,

missions that are much less coherent than at smaller schools, and the difficulty of bringing students together on campuses that may stretch across hundreds of acres. While the roots of honors education and dedicated housing for students involved in that academic project can be traced to the British university model of residential colleges, such segregation by interest and background can be taken too far. Are we going to see the day when all students who, say, own guns should be housed together? Actually, that time already arrived in 2012, when a state Supreme Court ruling caused Colorado's flagship institution to establish a separate residential unit for students who possess a concealed carry permit ("Campuses Define," 2012). (I wouldn't want to be the RA in that dorm on a Saturday night.) While it makes sense to imagine honors housing as a potential solution, I also want to suggest that there is a built-in bias in documents like the "Basic Characteristics" toward such programs, especially in the emphasis on inputs and resources rather than things like learning outcomes, as if the solution to any problem involves locating money and expending those funds on more "things" for students. Part of this tendency grows out of the reality of honors program having been historically underfunded relative to other academic enterprises, but that ethos has also generated some of the problems documented by Kevin Knudson at Florida. The "Basic Characteristics" reflect a fairly narrow perspective that this essay is attempting to expand and thus the reference in my title to castles and prisons suggests that neither is an attractive option for young people seeking authentic learning experiences.

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## CHAPTER 14

# Building Honors Community through Honors Housing

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A strong sense of honors community is a fundamentally important characteristic of a vibrant honors program or college. In fact, I am fond of saying that “community, community, community” are the three most important characteristics of a strong honors program. The idea of community does not appear, however, in the National Collegiate Honors Council’s “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” or the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program.” Perhaps that absence is because this characteristic, regardless of how it is expressed, would be difficult to verify.

A strong sense of community among honors students enhances the honors academic experience, inside and outside of the classroom. In class, the camaraderie that is engendered by being part of the honors community fosters greater comfort, engagement, and respect, both among the students and between the students and the

instructor. Community facilitates student interaction outside of the classroom. Honors students frequently share common concerns and dreams about a variety of things—from grades, to course and major selections, to plans for life and career after college. Community among honors students provides an enhanced support system for students. And a strong honors community can help provide these students with a strong lifetime support network.

In a small honors program, a sense of honors community can develop through common experiences such as honors classes and social events, elements that routinely bring the entire group of honors students together (or at least those within the same cohort). In a large program, however, honors students will not routinely encounter each other over and over again in classes or in social settings. In fact, honors social events in large programs probably will not be successful if the only link honors students have to one another is through honors classes. While honors classroom experiences will likely lead to important and long-lasting friendships among small groups of honors students, they are not likely to lead to a strong sense of honors community within the program or college overall.

The honors program at James Madison University (JMU) is large. Its entering freshman class has over 200 students and the program's total enrollment is over 900, including students who enter the program sometime after the first semester of the freshman year. Total undergraduate enrollment at JMU is slightly over 18,000. These honors students typically take one honors class a semester until they begin the capstone project in the second semester of the junior year. With honors classes capped at 20 students and with the capstone project being largely independent work, the honors academic experience at JMU is not conducive to the development of a strong sense of honors community.

I arrived at James Madison University as Honors Program Director in the summer of 2007 to find a strong academic program but one without a strong sense of community. My priority in developing an honors community was to create an honors residential hall that would anchor that community. My vision was that

entering honors students would arrive on campus early for honors orientation activities. The camaraderie developed in these activities would be supported and cemented by a common living experience. These students would eat meals together, walk together to their honors classes, study together in the residence hall's study areas, plan common social activities, attend cultural activities together, and form their own intramural sports teams. The vision was not to isolate them from the rest of campus but rather to have honors provide one community among a number of communities with which these students could engage. It would, however, be their first community experience on campus.

For some number of years, the honors program had a learning community that housed about 20 entering freshmen. These students were distributed randomly throughout a residence hall that also housed several other non-honors learning communities. Roommate pairings deliberately mixed roommates from the various learning communities. Soon after I arrived, I met with the Vice President for Student Affairs and told him that instead of just an honors learning community, a dedicated honors residence hall was a key priority for me. His response: "We don't do themed housing at JMU. We do learning communities." Two years later, in the fall of 2009, the entering honors class occupied the new Honors Learning and Living Center, one of two wings in a brand new 400-bed residence hall, Shenandoah Hall.

How did this happen?

While the Vice President of Student Affairs vehemently opposed the notion of dedicated honors housing, the director of the Office of Residential Life bought into the vision advocated by the honors program. Honors housing played a critical role in that vision. As the Director of the Office of Residential Life explained to one of her associates on campus: "This train is leaving the station and we need to be on it!"

Enhancement of honors community among the students was perceived to be the main benefit to creating dedicated honors housing on campus, but honors housing for freshmen also was expected to serve as a valuable recruiting tool for the university overall. The

JMU Honors Program provides little scholarship support to its students. Honors housing does not substitute for the lack of scholarships, but for some number of students, it is an enticement to be in the program that is of low cost to the university. Honors-bound high school seniors often note that they want to be in the JMU Honors Program so they can live in Shenandoah. For some students, of course, being forced to live in a hall full of other honors students constitutes an equally good reason not to join the program. Honors housing is optional for entering freshmen partly for this reason and partly for more practical reasons that will be addressed below.

Although generally supportive of the concept of honors housing, the Director of the Office of Residential Life was concerned that making an exception for honors would open the door to requests from the Department of Music, the Department of Chemistry, and other units that might want their students housed together. The logic behind the argument that honors is substantially different from these other units was sufficient to prevent Residential Life from extending dedicated housing to other units. It did articulate a willingness, however, to consider making exceptions in the future if the experiment with honors was successful. In fact, based upon the success with honors housing, the Office of Residential Life enthusiastically opened another themed residence hall in 2011, this one dedicated to the creative arts.

Ideally, I would have liked to see the honors residence hall include honors students from each class so that upper-level students could mentor less experienced ones. With 400 beds in the residence hall, it seemed like the space should have been sufficient to accommodate this plan. But on-campus housing at JMU is so limited that, other than residence hall advisors, only first- and second-year students can live in the residence hall. Even though many second-year students prefer to live off campus, not every second-year student who wants to can live in a residence hall. Although space in the B wing of the residence hall could accommodate up to 200 second-year honors students, only about 100 second-year honors students made this choice. Many second-year honors students who move off campus continue to room with other honors students who lived

with them in the residence hall the preceding year. The honors program is exploring the possibility of working with private landlords to create off-campus private honors housing for upperclassmen.

The A wing in Shenandoah Hall accommodates up to 200 students, almost entirely in double rooms. Honors freshmen are given priority for these rooms. Most of the resident hall advisors in this wing are honors students, and the honors program works with the Office of Residential Life in their selection; a faculty-in-residence is housed there as well. Although requiring entering honors students to live in Shenandoah Hall would have been consistent with the desire to have the residence hall enhance the honors community, allowing entering students to opt out of honors housing avoided the problem of not being able to accommodate all of the entering students' housing preferences, especially since the target freshman class size is also about 200. This flexibility also provides an option to those students who are attracted to other aspects of the program but who prefer to live somewhere other than the honors residence hall.

Generally 170 entering students choose the honors housing option each year, and usually 10 of these entering honors students who prefer specific non-honors roommates are accommodated on a space-available basis. The university's housing office allocates the remaining 20 spots to other freshmen. First-year students covet Shenandoah Hall for its amenities (central air conditioning, for example, and its proximity to the university's newest and best dining hall); for providing academic high achievers the opportunity to live in a community with like-minded students; and because it offers a ready-made community for entering students. Parents of prospective students find it reassuring that their children will live in a community of honors students rather than a random collection of freshmen. Honors housing has become an important recruiting tool for the honors program.

The Office of Residential Life has been extremely pleased at how this experiment has worked. The dorm is vibrant and relatively trouble free (even so, the Director of Residential Life will occasionally remind me that "not all honors students are angels!"). The study

areas in Shenandoah are used more heavily than those anywhere else on campus, and the retention rate for the residence hall is relatively high by JMU standards. Faculty members who teach honors classes have noticed and commented on the benefits of having honors students living and studying together. Group work and learning occur more easily and naturally. Students come to class more prepared and will often respond to an instructor's question or comment with the reply that they were "just talking about that in Shenandoah last night."

The residence hall has contributed to the sense of honors community at JMU in other ways besides academic achievement. The day after freshmen arrive, the honors program hosts a series of morning orientation activities including icebreaking and team-building activities, all followed by lunch. Rather than dispersing in many directions after eating, thereby diluting the community-building effects of the morning activities, students now return en masse to Shenandoah for the afternoon, reinforcing these effects. Social events planned by Shenandoah's students for the group are not simply residence hall events but are, by the nature of Shenandoah, honors events, too. Honors information and group advising sessions are routinely offered in the residence hall because of its convenience for so many of the students in the honors program. Both the honors program director and the program's academic advisor spend time each week in a small office in Shenandoah.

Had circumstances been different, my preference would have been to house the honors administrative offices in the residence hall because Hillcrest House, the honors administrative building that was once the President's home, is located on the other side of campus. Hillcrest House is a wonderful, spacious, and elegant facility, one that includes several student lounge and work areas, conference rooms, and a computer lab, in addition to the staff offices. Even though I would have left that facility had space and planning allowed the honors offices to be moved to the residence hall, Hillcrest students are now using Hillcrest much more than they did before the honors wings in Shenandoah were established. Students who live in Shenandoah use Hillcrest as their base for

work or sleep when they are on the other side of campus. Other students just like to hang out at Hillcrest, even venturing over from the residence halls in groups.

Maintaining an honors residence has created two new challenges. The first is relatively minor. Honors administrators and staff have to work with the Office of Residence Life to keep track of those entering honors students who do not want to live in Shenandoah Hall as well as the non-honors roommate preferences among those who do. Further, the honors program must ensure that freshmen understand the process they must follow to reserve their spot in the hall for their sophomore year; occasionally the honors staff must deal with the student or parent who is unhappy about the outcome of this process. The larger challenge is accounting for the fact that while 250–300 honors students are living in Shenandoah at any one time, another 600–700 students are not. Many of these honors students will have never lived in honors housing. Maintaining and developing a sense of community among students who are no longer living in, or who have never lived in, Shenandoah remains difficult. For example, the tendency to hold many informational events in Shenandoah sometimes has the unintended consequence of isolating non-residents or privileging the residents.

Despite these challenges and the various operational limitations, the JMU Honors Program has clearly benefitted from the addition of an honors residence hall. The honors residence hall has fostered honors community, helped recruitment efforts, strengthened the relationship with Student Affairs, enhanced both the students' and faculty's academic experiences, and made contacting and advising students more efficient. Exit interviews and surveys now indicate that living in the honors residence hall is one of the most rewarding elements of the JMU honors experience.

After their first or second year in Shenandoah, JMU honors students, like other upperclassmen at JMU, must move off campus into private apartments or houses. This obligation continues the practice that developed at JMU when, during rapid enrollment growth, on-campus housing was not an option for third- and fourth-year students. While these honors students often move into off-campus

housing with other honors students, they are dispersed widely across the many off-campus housing options that are available to them. One consequence of this situation is that third- and fourth-year honors students become more isolated from one another as they pursue their majors and their capstone projects. Although the strong sense of honors community that developed during the first two years weakens considerably for this group as a result, new initiatives on campus may improve this situation.

The university is now building its first apartment-style housing, exclusively for upperclassmen, on the perimeter of campus. The honors program has been offered the first shot at these units. It is also working with the university on a plan in which the university would lease and manage a private apartment building to provide off-campus rental units to a community of honors students. These steps will help the honors program maintain the strong, vibrant community created by honors housing through all four years of the honors experience at JMU.



## CHAPTER 15

# Lessons Learned from Nevada's Honors Residential Scholars Community

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For the past 30 years, intentionally structured living-learning communities (LLCs) have sprung up across residential college campuses in the United States. Recent research has suggested that LLC participation facilitates faculty and peer interaction (Blimling, 1993; Schoem, 2004), influences student learning and the development of critical-thinking skills (Terenzini, Springer, Pascarella, & Nora, 1995; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Nora, & Terenzini, 1999), improves retention (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008; Daffron & Holland, 2009), reflects a commitment to civic engagement, and promotes smooth academic and social transitions to college life (Inkelas, Daver, Vogt, & Leonard, 2007; Stassen 2003). In fall 2005, in response to growing university enrollment and expressed student interest, Residential Life at the University of Nevada, Reno, expanded its campus housing options to include a living-learning program. To capitalize on the strong partnership with Residential

Life, the honors program offered its incoming class of honors students the opportunity for a living-learning experience. The goals of the Honors LLC were to build a community of like-minded scholars by providing meaningful learning, innovative teaching, and the shared goal of intellectual engagement in a residential educational setting. Residential Life managed the facilities, budget, and program operations; the honors program created the learning opportunities: honors courses, co-curricular programming, community engagement, and faculty-student interaction.

Now entering its tenth year, the Honors LLC, renamed the Honors Residential Scholars Community (HRSC), has progressed from a split traditional dorm-style model of 30 honors residents to the innovative pod-style living arrangement of over 60 residents in the new Nevada Living-Learning Community building. As its popularity, reputation, and success have grown and changes have been made to improve its existing curricular and extracurricular programs, the HRSC has generated a new way of thinking and become the model for other residential LLCs on campus. This chapter reviews the history of the HRSC at the University of Nevada, highlighting practices that were successful and offering suggestions for avoiding pitfalls. This discussion takes into account three stages of development: the first stage of establishment and growth begun in 2005, the second stage of continuance and flexibility over the following six years, and the third stage of stabilization and expansion at the present time.

## **STAGE ONE: FIRST STEPS**

The Honors LLC was the first residential community on the University of Nevada campus. In fall 2005, 30 incoming honors students were recruited to live on the Honors LLC floor in one of the residence halls. Each honors resident submitted an application to the office of Residential Housing, requesting residence in the Honors LLC; students agreed to enroll in three common core honors courses in the fall and two common core honors courses the following spring, be actively involved in honors activities and Residential Life programming, and attend campus activities and events.

Faculty who taught the common core honors courses were invited to hold office hours in faculty office space on the honors floor and to participate in all Honors LLC programming. The Honors LLC was housed in a wing of a modern suite-style residence hall with the amenities of large double rooms; a bathroom/shower in each room; a laundry, television, and study room on each floor; and the dining facility conveniently located on the first floor. A student resident advisor was assigned to the Honors LLC.

### **Lesson 1: Allow Flexibility in Curricular Requirements**

Foundational to the definition of a living-learning community is connecting students' residential experiences with their academic experiences. All Honors LLC students in the first-year cohort were required to co-enroll in three honors fall classes: honors English, the first-year Honors Seminar, and honors math. To accommodate the diverse curricular tracks of STEM, business, and non-STEM, non-business majors, as well as the differing interests of this student population, Honors LLC students were enrolled in either Calculus I or Pre-Calculus. Because honors students enter college with as many as 40 AP and IB credits, considerable college credits, and high ACT and SAT scores that satisfy the prerequisites of courses or place students in upper-level math and English classes, the honors residents did not fit neatly into a conventional first-year plan. Most of the incoming honors cohort elected to enroll in the calculus class over the pre-calculus, thus leaving the pre-calculus class with unfilled seats. Because the three-honors-classes policy was difficult to enforce, the number of required honors courses was reduced to two of the designated Honors LLC courses.

### **Lesson 2: Offer a Variety of Honors Curricular Choices**

The honors program administration realized after the first semester that the 30 Honors LLC students required 30 different class schedules. Rather than enrolling in two designated honors classes, students could register for any of the honors offerings to fulfill the spring requirement of taking two honors classes for which they met

the prerequisites: offerings such as psychology, music, political science, economics, or core humanities.

### **Lesson 3: Recruit Faculty Who Are Willing to Be Involved in the Academic and Social Experiences of Students**

In the hopes of fostering student-teacher relationships, developing problem-solving challenges, and enhancing advanced and accelerated instruction, the honors program and Residential Life extended support and opportunities to LLC instructors. LLC faculty were offered office space, provided 20 meals per semester at the dining hall, and given tickets to cultural events; yet, the gratuities were not appealing enough to recruit full-time tenure-track or permanent faculty to teach the honors math and honors English LLC courses. The common assumption held among honors programs is that regularly appointed faculty members have a record of teaching and scholarship, a commitment to the university, and high standards for students. Students and parents believe that a tenured professor is more knowledgeable; the title “Doctor” carries greater prestige; and the position of non-tenured instructor or lecturer falls short on status. In point of fact, the teaching of honors math and honors English fell to non-tenure-track faculty, part-time instructors, and lecturers interested in teaching small classes to high-achieving students. Unfortunately, these instructors were disinclined to stimulate the team spirit and group engagement necessary for building community. Only one HRSC instructor held office hours in the LLC honors office, and only the honors program staff participated in the meal plan at the dining hall and attended the cultural events. The year-end student evaluations indicated, nonetheless, that the students appreciated the “extraordinary access” to their LLC instructors. Unfortunately, the direct faculty involvement and increased interaction between students and faculty did not occur as hoped. In hindsight, the instructors should have been consulted early in the planning process on what interactive activities were feasible and could be implemented throughout the semester.

#### **Lesson 4: Consider Residential Life as an Ally**

Residence halls now see themselves as providers of learning opportunities: students who live on campus have higher GPAs than students living off campus, retention and graduation rates are higher for those who live on campus, and students are more engaged in campus life and community service than their off-campus counterparts—all traits of the serious honors student (Thompson, Samiratedu & Rafter, 1993; Zhao & Kuh, 2004). A cooperative and collaborative partnership between the honors program and Residential Life was critical to the success of the Honors LLC. Residential Life provided staff, resources, financial backing, physical space, marketing, and funding for campus programming and cultural events. Residential Life advertised, recruited, and assigned students to the HRSC. In return, the scholars in the honors residential community raised the GPAs, improved retention rates, increased involvement in campus and residential life activities, and brought prestige to on-campus living. Building a strong, solid foundation and maintaining frequent communication with Residential Life and Student Services were essential for the successful launch and future growth of the HRSC.

#### **Lesson 5: Assess and Look to the Future**

Despite all the challenges in the first year of the Honors LLC, the students and faculty evaluated the experience as a positive one. Ninety-three percent of the honors residents evaluated the living-learning experience as meaningful: students cited the living-learning experience as one that developed a sense of common group identity, an academic safety net, intellectual exchanges, and life-long friendships and social partners. In fact, a few of the first-year honors scholars banded together to form an LLC in the sophomore residence hall for the following year. Eighty percent of this first-year cohort eventually completed the requirements of the honors program; 100% graduated from the university. Moreover, the LLC won over the parents of these students. Parental enthusiasm led to many years of goodwill and a legacy of future honors applicants.

## **STAGE TWO: FROM 2006 TO 2012**

Recognizing the need to better integrate the academic and social experiences and remove the existing curricular barriers, the honors program evoked its primary purpose in establishing the residential learning environment: the promise of a scholarly community. Returning to its roots, in fall 2006, the Honors LLC was elevated in name and status to the Honors Residential Scholars Community (HRSC). Entering honors students were assigned to one of two honors floors in two different residential halls: one hall with the modern suite-like arrangement and private baths and the other, a less expensive option, with the traditional 2–3 person-bed layout and a communal bath. Both halls featured a central lounge and study area. Each floor had an upper-class honors advisor in residence.

All Honors Residential Scholars signed an agreement to enroll in a minimum of nine honors credits the first semester (the Honors Seminar and two additional honors classes of the student's choice) and two honors classes in the subsequent semester. In addition, the honors program and Residential Life required the residents to participate in a certain number of outside activities. Through the years, to make up for the declining number of required hall activities, the honors program offered the scholars more opportunities to participate in events related to research, career development, service learning, and international study. Although the honors program recruited faculty instructors to teach honors classes, the instructors were not obligated to participate in outside events or activities.

### **Lesson 1: Frontload the Honors Curriculum**

The honors program structured the Honors LLC on the curricular model of shared honors courses and shared learning experiences. If honors students elected to live in the Honors LLC, they were required to enroll in a minimum of 15 honors credits their first year. By frontloading the honors curriculum, honors students not only connected early to faculty, the curriculum, and honors expectations, they also made a substantial commitment to honors education and the university overall.

## Lesson 2: Require a First-Year Seminar

Sharing the intellectual experience is integral to building a strong sense of community. To meet that expectation, since its inception, all Honors Residential Scholars have been required to enroll in the first-year Honors Seminar. The goal of this skills-based course is to enhance the quality of the undergraduate experience by emphasizing research-based education, optimal communication skills, civic engagement, responsible self-learning, and internationalization that form the core of the honors program's curricular objectives. Students deeply bond with each other and with faculty around academic themes and relationships. Although students earn three honors credits and the course extends beyond the boundaries of the classroom, the first LLC cohorts commented that enrolling in the Honors Seminar was an unfair additional load placed on Honors Residential Scholars. They questioned why only the participants in the LLC were required to enroll in a set number of classes, and why honors students who did not live in the HRSC were not bound to the same constraints. Their disgruntlement, however, was short-lived; when the Honors Residential Scholars reached their junior or senior year, they were the primary promoters of the Honors Seminar and the HRSC experience. For example, those students who were successful in winning nationally competitive awards or in conducting research alongside faculty credited the Honors Seminar as being key to meeting professors, learning about national fellowship opportunities, seeking international study opportunities, and building a record of community service. The Honors Ambassadors, a distinguished group of current honors students who serve as liaisons between the honors program and prospective honors students and their families, championed the benefits of the honors residential program: connection to a diverse group of students with similar academic aspirations; access to study buddies, support groups, and an intellectually challenging environment; and membership in a dynamic social and intellectual community. And, of course, living in the HRSC created memories and friends to last a lifetime.

### **Lesson 3: Maximize Scheduling Flexibility for Students**

Students want good schedules; they want the opportunity to interact with good faculty; and they want to be members of a campus community. In scheduling honors classes each semester, the honors program learned to account for the special needs of the entering HRSC by offering multiple sections of the Honors Seminar and honors English, class times ranging from 8:00 a.m. to early evening, and the traditional 50-minute MWF honors English class as well as the three-hour art class. Scheduling complications and class conflicts underscored the necessity for priority registration and early advisement.

### **Lesson 4: Encourage the Opportunity for Instructors to Build a Teaching Community**

To achieve the goal of integrating educational learning and community living, the honors program's administrators soon realized the value of bringing the honors faculty into the LLC discussion. The honors program held joint meetings with the faculty teaching honors courses in English and physics and the Honors Seminar, as well as with the library specialists to discuss common themes and shared assignments. This approach created opportunities for interdisciplinary teaching and deep learning. For example, the five honors English classes invited the upper-level honors physics class to participate in a multi-media presentation as a final project; library services offered its expertise on professional posters, PowerPoint slide shows, YouTube videography, and research skills to all honors classes. The Libraries Teaching and Learning Technologies office remained the resource for the instructional design of the semester-long electronic portfolio project. The instructional design team provided training workshops on the electronic learning software, assisted in the final evaluations of the project, and recognized winning portfolios at an awards ceremony the following semester.



## **Lesson 5: Include Community-Based Learning**

Beginning in 2010, Honors Residential Scholars in their first semester of college were introduced to community-based service activities. Committed to offering an engaging and meaningful participatory educational experience, the honors program identified local non-profit partners dedicated to the areas of health and human services, education, and the environment to engage students in 15 hours of community service as part of the Honors Seminar experience. This arrangement proved to be successful in building a close and well-connected community among the honors students, goodwill with the neighborhood, and a sense of civic duty early in the students' academic careers. Each year, the first-year students log over 2,000 hours of service with non-profits in a single semester.

### **STAGE THREE: 2012 AND BEYOND**

In fall 2012, the total number of LLCs on campus increased to nine when the university opened the five-story 320-bed Nevada Living-Learning Community residence hall—a space that includes faculty offices and instructional classrooms. The building features a pod-like structure for its living areas. These pods accommodate living group sizes ranging from 18 to 64 students, and each floor of the building houses up to four living groups. The first floor features dedicated state-of-the-art classrooms and faculty offices. To increase interaction outside the classroom and to enhance the honors presence, the honors program was given office space for honors staff and honors faculty to hold office hours, be available to students, and socialize in a student setting. One wing of the building was assigned to the HRSC.

## **Lesson 1: Maintain an Honors Presence in the LLC Building**

To promote an honors presence in the building and goodwill among the other LLCs, the honors program took full advantage of the new high-tech digital facility. The honors program scheduled

nine honors classes and the honors orientations in the classrooms; held regular office hours including advising sessions in the honors office; offered student-led programming on the HRSC floor; scheduled the final multi-media English project in the classrooms and open areas; arranged the honors faculty lecture series and other activities in the multi-purpose room; used the bulletin boards to publicize events, market the honors program, and post honors information; and offered pre-professional programming for all LLC students, not only the scholars in the honors residential community. By increasing the honors presence in the building, the honors program not only increased contact with the Honors Residential Scholars but also raised honors visibility among the other LLCs. By opening its activities to all students participating in the LLCs, honors students made friends outside their community; as a result, the honors program gained a number of high-quality applicants from other LLCs. Capitalizing on the community environment, the honors program created opportunities for learning wherever and whenever possible. Honors faculty and staff took on new roles, engaging students as instructors, mentors, advisors, and programming directors. To smooth the transition to college living, honors faculty and staff became familiar faces willing to help students adjust to their new social and academic life.

## **Lesson 2: Work Closely with Past HRSC Students**

Many satisfied Honors Residential Scholars continue their relationship with Residential Life as resident advisors and directors. The current HRSC is overseen not only by an Honors Resident Advisor but also by an Honors Academic Director. The LLC honors staff coordinates with the honors program and Honors Ambassadors to plan, publicize, and offer programs and other activities to the HRSC and to help with the recruitment and retention of good students.

## **Lesson 3: Maximize the Honors Experience**

Being a member of the honors program is a mark of distinction. Being a part of the HRSC is a bonus. By being flexible in curricular

scheduling and in faculty recruitment and identifying teaching faculty early in the process and involving them in the programming and social events, the honors program connected the Honors Residential Scholars to honors classes, honors faculty, and honors activities in the first semester. Intentionally including the non-honors LLCs from across campus units enhanced the academic and residential experience for all of the participants.

To ensure that Honors Residential Scholars enroll in the necessary courses, the honors program designates a number of slots for them in the most popular honors classes. First-year students who commit to the honors program early benefit from priority registration, which gives these entering students a fair shot at high-demand course offerings. HRSC offers special programming for the scholars and gives them the opportunity to design their own academic programs and social activities. For example, the honors program offers Honors Residential Scholars the option of completing 40 hours of community service to fulfill one of their spring honors requirements.

The HRSC complements the mission of the university in its efforts to recruit high-achieving students and promote intellectual engagement. By offering entering honors students the opportunity to live, work, study, and socialize together, an instant community of scholars is formed. In fact, year after year, the incoming Honors Residential Scholars have reconstituted their own living-learning communities in the upper-class residential hall. And retention and persistence rates show that not only do students in the HRSC complete the honors program requirements, but also 80% of them graduate from the university within four years. The success of the HRSC has been the result of a shared partnership and vision with the students, faculty, residential housing, and the honors program. To assist residential housing in achieving its mission to provide educational and social opportunities to students who live on campus, the honors program developed a set of student learning outcomes with the goals of developing students' responsibility outside the classroom and engaging them in leadership development. The goals for the HRSC, established by residential housing, are listed in the

Appendix. The implementation of an Honors LLC has produced an active and supportive learning environment. Unifying all of the honors students on one floor of the new Nevada LLC building has enhanced the sense of community by integrating the academic experience with a campus experience. The Honors Residential Scholars living-learning community has transformed the students' learning experience and the institution. From the time that these students attend the annual incoming honors retreat to the time they cross the stage at the honors program convocation, the Honors Residential Scholars have grown into a distinguished community of scholars, leaders, international travelers, and engaged citizens.

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## **APPENDIX**

### **Goals**

Goals: By the end of the academic year, students in the Honors Residential Scholars living-learning community will

- practice sustained engagement with the university honors community through involvement in organized honors activities and events outside of required coursework,
- organize study groups and peer academic support for honors courses and other courses with the active involvement of their resident assistant and designated academic mentor, and
- demonstrate community engagement in addition to mandatory first-year seminar requirements, and reflect on experiences with their service learning assignment.

## CHAPTER 16

# It's All in the Family: The (Honors) Ties that Bind Us

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**F**or many years, the Texas A&M Honors Program functioned in an extremely fluid manner. Students were deemed “honors eligible” according to their grade point average; if that average dropped below the set requirement, they became “honors ineligible.” If the GPA rose, they were eligible again. Under this policy, students continuously floated in and out of the honors community. The recent shift to an application-based process has created an official cohort of honors students as well as the challenge of building a community in a program that has had little sense of continuity.

At the same time, the residents of the Honors Housing Community (HHC) have long been known to be the most participatory members of the honors program. The program directors decided to build the rest of the community around this HHC, with its long-standing history of student involvement, in an attempt to foster an equivalent level of interest in the rest of the honors population. Since

the students who stayed in honors housing were more invested in the honors program than those who lived elsewhere, the first action in the restructuring of the program was requiring all incoming honors students to live in the honors residence halls. Although this requirement is only a few years old, anecdotal evidence suggests that students are responding as anticipated: their commitment to the program has increased. In addition, more students are applying for the Sophomore Advisor positions, perhaps because the connection between honors housing and the honors program is stronger.

The honors residence halls are home to a unique social structure created more than 20 years ago. The summer before they arrive on campus, first-year honors students receive a personal, handwritten letter from one of the Sophomore Advisors (SAs), affectionately nicknamed “parents,” welcoming them into the residence halls. These honors parents are SAs, student leaders living in the honors halls who have volunteered to help the students navigate their first year on campus. The SAs are honors students selected and trained during the spring semester of their first year to help the incoming class tackle difficult situations that may arise. As leaders and mentors in the HHC, they are also responsible for programming and community development in the halls. Each SA is assigned a group of incoming students—their “children”—for whom they are responsible. Each year three Junior Advisors (JAs) are selected from the current group of SAs to be in charge of the next generation of SAs. This program has a long and colorful history on campus. The advisors keep fairly in-depth records, and many “families” trace their lineage to the mid-1990s. (The first honors hall opened in 1989.) Along with the family trees are pass-downs, family heirlooms entrusted to those who have been selected to become SAs for the next class of students, as well as stories and pictures. Families treat the pass-downs as a serious and mysterious business; even the Honors Housing Coordinator, the staff member who maintains the strongest and most intimate relationship with the SAs, is unaware of exactly how many pass-downs exist or even which SAs are currently tasked with their safekeeping. One of the most colorful examples of a pass-down has been in circulation for almost 20



years. This item was stolen from a campus construction site in the 1990s and is purportedly hidden in the ceiling of one of the residence halls. Of course, all pass-downs are not this old. Periodically SAs may decide to create or designate a new item as a pass-down. Incoming SAs who are particularly well liked by the senior family members may find themselves the keeper of several new or newly historic pass-downs.

With guidance from the Honors Housing Coordinator, the SA team creates a steady stream of social, academic, and service events. Hallmarks of the program are Howdy Week, a weeklong orientation designed to introduce students to the campus and teach them about honors traditions, and Pizza and Profs, a program that brings professors into the residence halls for informal, intimate discussions. At first, the SAs are responsible for choosing professors they feel would be particularly interesting to the students. As the year progresses, however, and the first-year students learn more about their instructors, they organize their own Pizza and Profs discussions.

Even though the focus of the halls and the families is on the first-year students, the housing student leadership system and structure are as much for the SAs and JAs as they are for the first-year students. These leadership positions provide an opportunity for students to learn how to function in an organization and to take charge in the planning and executing of both small and large-scale events. They learn the value of working with others, time management, and conflict resolution, and they gain a greater understanding of the issues and obstacles faced in creating and maintaining a living-learning community for the students.

Over the years, the family structure has established continuity and a sense of belonging among the students, even after graduation. When the Texas A&M University Honors Program recently adjusted its curriculum by including a first-year seminar, the family structure in the residence halls became more important than ever. Now, families of freshmen are truly living and learning together; they meet weekly to discuss current topics, to share study habits, and to make homemade root beer floats. Outside of the weekly meetings, they have dances, talent shows, and movie marathons.

The success of the program lies in the building of community by emulating a support system inherently familiar to most students: family. It creates an organic transition into the collegiate environment that is not readily available on such a large campus. Students maintain their ties to their families and, by extension, to the honors program, continuing to attend programming events years after leaving the honors residence hall. Residents of the honors halls have even organized 10-year reunions and will return to campus to reconnect with their college friends and family members years after they have graduated.

In large universities like Texas A&M, programs and organizations compete constantly for student interest. In order to persuade students to commit to the academic challenges of the honors program, it has to offer something different: a support network established through the honors residence hall families. Ultimately this recognizable social structure helps students to see the program as more than an academic undertaking; it becomes an opportunity for personal and social development. First-year students are uprooted when they come to college, removed from their comfort zone, and forced to create a new life for themselves. The family system in the residence halls provides roots, that sense of belonging to a group that not only understands their challenges but cares about them on a fundamental level. They commit to the honors program by committing to each other. Because of this sense of family, they continue to stay involved even after leaving the residence hall, and they continue to support each other in their development and growth: just like a family should.

CHAPTER 17

Winging It:  
Why Offering Honors Wings Works  
at Oral Roberts University

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Perhaps the first feature visitors notice about the campus of Oral Roberts University (ORU) is the drama and bravado of its futuristic architecture. With symbolic, gold-plated buildings and a Prayer Tower positioned at the campus' center, ORU's structural design certainly stands as a testament to the Jetsons-esque flavor of its 1960s and 1970s origin. ORU is a private Christian university located in Tulsa, Oklahoma. For many parents, one of the main draws of the school remains its strict policy against co-ed housing.

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Unlike some of its peer institutions, ORU only offers unisex dorms, which are divided into floors or wings. Every wing has a resident advisor, a chaplain, and a peer advisor assigned by the housing department. Each floor is then paired with a floor from the respective dorm of the opposite gender, forming a brother-sister wing.

The Oral Roberts University Honors Program officially began in August 2001, more than three decades after the university's founding. Since that time, ORU has offered honors students the option of living on four floors or wings that serve as honors housing. ORU requires that all students live on campus unless special circumstances exist. The housing office grants a policy exemption based on marital status, health concerns, or parents who live in town. Based on figures for the 2013 to 2014 school year, residential students make up about 70% of ORU's undergraduate population. Some residence floors at ORU are designated to specific sports, such as the volleyball floor or the baseball floor. These designations are not absolute; students do not have to be on the volleyball team to live on the floor, nor do they have to live on the floor if they are on the volleyball team. Besides sports, the only other designated floors are those for the honors program. Like the other designated wings, the honors floors are also open to non-honors students after honors students have first claim to open rooms. The non-honors residents are, of course, welcome members of these blended honors communities on the four wings.

Of the nearly 250 students in the honors program, 192 are residential and 54 are commuters. With the bulk of honors students living on campus, these four wings act as touchstones of the program's tradition-making, social interactions, and distinct cultural rhythms.

Honors housing at ORU generates a distinctive culture compared to other housing options. While our impression was that honors floors do something special for the honors population, we wanted to know exactly why that was, as well as why other students also thought it was this way. We created an in-depth questionnaire about honors housing at ORU, which alumni and current students completed. (See the Appendix.)

In keeping with the spiritual subtleties infused elsewhere in the ORU culture, students have given the four honors dorm floors off-beat but significant names: Bliss, Consuming Fire (CF), Brigade, and Lambda Phi. Residents refer to these bro-sis wing pairs as CF-Bliss and Bri-Phi. Honors students are not required to live on the honors floors; in fact, the designated honors floors can only accommodate approximately half of the students in the program. Offering the option of honors housing but not forcing anyone to utilize it lets each student decide what manner of housing would be most beneficial to him or her.

The composition of the honors wings tends to be predominantly freshmen because the veteran honors students are apt to become involved in campus leadership and typically fan out to other floors. Many upperclassmen note the strength and durability of the relationships with their wing-mates from freshman year. Christabel Jaiyeola, a senior, observed that “it allows students to form a support system” because these bonds formed when living together as freshmen extend throughout the entire college experience (personal communication, June 25, 2011). While the freshman honors students benefit most from the mentoring of the few upperclassmen who live on the honors floor, the great advantage of this arrangement is that the incoming students form a tight-knit group of friends who experience the highs and lows of freshman year together.

Upperclassmen generally take an extremely proactive role in making sure floor conventions are passed to the next generation of students. Consuming Fire, for example, passes the torch in the form of a 70-page manual complete with a detailed floor history, odes to successful former residents, explanations of traditions, and a rather lengthy defense of community. This often tongue-in-cheek document helps floor newcomers to feel a part of the legacy and tradition. A sense of community and the particular wing’s traditions are key to creating a distinctive honors culture. The brother-sister wings go on retreats, have game nights and sports nights at houses of alumni, organize annual Christmas parties, participate in intramurals, and organize service projects together. In addition, the student

officers on the Honors Program Council (HPC) work closely with the honors floors, either through members of the HPC who live on the floor or through the student leaders placed on the floors by the housing office. These students are normally, but not always, in the honors program. The honors housing network allows the HPC to contact honors residents directly through announcements distributed via the housing office, which probably reaches half of the university's honors students and leads to increased attendance at the events. Senior Eleanor Turk agrees:

I was better informed about honors events because they were a part of the lives of every person on the floor. I had strong friendships with people on my floor, and was more inclined to attend honors events and participate in the honors program. (personal communication, June 25, 2011)

Honors housing benefits the honors program by forming cohorts of students who are more likely to participate in honors events because they are more likely to hear about them and because all of their friends are attending. The honors program also now has a Facebook page through which all honors students and faculty may communicate about activities, events, questions, and important news.

Although ORU is a relatively small school with limited housing capacity, the benefits of housing dedicated to honors in terms of the advice, recommendations, and community provided for the incoming honors freshmen are significant and justify the preservation of the program. The honors wings play an important role in helping students pick classes, buy books, and navigate honors course assignments. They also help incoming freshmen reach their potential academically and socially.

The danger that comes with separate honors housing, however, is that the residents will see themselves as a separate and privileged group, possibly becoming insular as a result. Because this environment can create a sort of honors bubble that is not beneficial for the growth of a student, each floor intentionally tries to ensure that its residents do not become a clique that fosters the belief that its members are somehow better than other students. Thus honors

students are highly encouraged to become involved in leadership positions, intramurals, and service activities across campus. Much of this motivation comes via the mentoring of upperclassmen who either previously lived on the honors floors or are living there currently. The blended culture of honors and non-honors students on the floor also encourages students to forge valuable relationships beyond the confines of the honors program. Students clearly value the diversity this policy adds to their experience of living in designated honors housing.

As a university that promotes a holistic—spirit, mind, and body—education, Oral Roberts University encourages and supports positive peer influences. Alumni remember developing these healthy peer relationships as part of the blended communities on honors floors. Many alumni stay connected with the friends made from their time in honors housing and network with current students. Alum Karl Utz offers the following reflection:

Living on an honors wing was the best decision I made when coming to ORU. It opened doors to friendships that I will cherish for a lifetime. The advantage of an entire honors floor, rather than just an honors roommate who shares these traits with you, is having a safe, nurturing, caring environment. Fellow honors students recognize and empathize when school takes priority over other matters, and there is no fear of hurt, rejection, or ridicule. . . . Being on an honors wing allowed me to thrive during my time at ORU. The community gave me a safe place to discover who I was and then allowed me to fully express myself within the community. (personal communication, September 3, 2012)

## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire for Current Honors Students and Alumni

1. How would you describe living on an Honors wing?
2. How has living on an Honors wing affected you academically and/or socially?
3. Do you believe Honors students require particular kinds of space to best reach their academic and social potential?
4. What benefit/loss is seen from blending honors students and non-honors students in residential situations?
5. What benefit/loss results from giving honors students a “dorm (wing) of their own”?
6. How has living on an Honors wing impacted the brother-sister wing relationship?
7. Please comment on whether or not you view the Honors floors as predominately freshmen and the pros/cons you see to this.
8. How would you describe the Honors culture on the wing to someone from another university?
9. How are Honors floors related to the Honors Program in terms of attendance and announcement of events on floors vs. off the floors?
10. If you’ve lived on both an Honors wing and a regular wing, please respond to the following: The Honors wing did or did not . . . compared to the regular wing.
  - . . . have enhanced academic help (including study groups).
  - . . . lead to more personal friendships.
  - . . . had respected quiet/study time and also social time (including intramurals).



. . . had meaningful brother-sister wing interactions (including wing retreats).

11. Do you have any suggestions for the Honors Program and future Honors students regarding the Honors wings?
12. Please include any further thoughts that you have regarding Honors housing.



## CHAPTER 18

# One Size Does Not Fit All: When Honors Housing May Not Work

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CONVERSE COLLEGE

The gracious donor, the dean, and the other honors program director and I walk down the corridor of an old campus building needing repair but possessing a great deal of charm. While a science classroom building is being renovated, this hall houses temporary offices for displaced faculty. We look at the high ceilings in a room now used as a faculty break room and admire the way the morning sunlight plays on the walls. This room would make an amazing honors student lounge. Renovating the entire building would create a terrific honors dorm that could attract talented prospective students and encourage current honors students to remain at the college.

Within a few weeks, my co-director and I face one unexpected but significant obstacle to creating an honors dorm: the honors students oppose the idea. Although the student body is generally happy to have newer, better residential housing, the Honors

Program Student Board firmly rejected the concept of separate honors housing when these conversations took place in October 2008. Of course, student perceptions have their limits, and student desires and needs may change. Years later, however, their attitude that honors housing may not be the best use of funds for the Nisbet Honors Program at Converse College, a small college for women in South Carolina, remains largely unchanged. At Converse, honors students often find in their honors coursework and in research with faculty the kind of honors community they want.

Admittedly, in some ways, the choice not to build honors housing may put Converse at an initial disadvantage when recruiting in the state since honors students at larger state institutions definitely have the option of honors housing, often in attractive, well-appointed spaces. Shannon Earl, the mother of two students at the University of South Carolina's Honors College, reports that the new honors dorm there is "ecologically green and high-tech" and impressive to outsiders (personal communication, October 16, 2012). She notes that the honors dorm at USC has features such as "its own cafeteria" and special study areas that look appealing to visitors (personal communication, October 16, 2012).

The much more intimate scale of Converse and of its honors program, however, means that an idea like honors housing that works well in honors colleges at large state universities does not necessarily work as well here. Converse, although categorized as a master's university because of several large graduate programs, is physically a small residential undergraduate college. The honors program's size reflects the college's size. The college has approximately 700 undergraduates and roughly 400 graduate students. The honors program averages 110 on the rolls, with 60 to 70 members taking honors courses during each long term. About 20 seniors graduate as Nisbet Honors Scholars each May. The honors program currently has a student advisory board; extracurricular activities; an alumnae newsletter; funding for undergraduate research; and several options and financial support for study-travel, including the option to study at the University of Glasgow through the Principia Consortium. The main focus, however, remains on the challenging

discussion and lively intellectual interchange that students seek in an honors class.

I had thought students would want an honors dorm to build that intellectual community; however, to my surprise, students and alumnae have different understandings of how community works here. Nicole Dumouchel Watford, who graduated in 2010 and recently completed her MEd in gifted education, recalls the debate in 2008. While at Converse she sat on the Honors Program Student Board. She recalls the student board's firm opposition to an honors dorm. They were responding, she observes, to the already existing "small, close-knit community":

We felt that choosing to group ourselves in housing with other honors students could potentially hinder our development of community with other Converse students. Basically, we did not feel that we were a 'lost' group at Converse (such as at a larger university) where we were struggling to make peer connections with similar students. (personal communication, November 8, 2012)

Instead, honors coursework and opportunities to do undergraduate research already created meaningful connections with similar students and with faculty. An honors dorm, to students like Watford, felt unnecessary.

An honors alumnae survey conducted in March 2012 confirmed how intellectual community grows at Converse: in the classroom and in research with faculty. Of the 162 surveys sent to alumnae, 45 people responded. The community and challenge created by honors coursework and research seemed central to their generally positive views of the program. Particular courses and instructors figure prominently in open-ended responses to the question about their most influential experience as a Nisbet Honors Program student. Twenty-four respondents (53%) answered that question by referring in some way to honors coursework, and 10 respondents (22%) referred to the honors thesis or other research experience in the program. Several alumnae identified honors class discussions and chances to interact with other honors students in honors classes as

the most influential experiences in the program. Discussions with faculty and students in honors courses seem already to build the kind of community our students seek.

An alumna who graduated before the program began provides another insight into the strong opposition to honors housing that the students voiced: an honors dorm might be perceived as a threat to the close-knit campus community. Emily Harbin graduated *summa cum laude* from Converse in 1999 and later completed a PhD in English at Vanderbilt University. She is clearly the kind of student who would have been invited into the program had she entered after it began in 2001. When asked her view about how an honors dorm might work here, she, too, expressed strong reservations, partially based on her experience as an intellectual woman from the South. An honors dorm, she feared, might be perceived as perpetuating the isolation from peers that many academically gifted students who come to Converse have already unhappily experienced: “Intellectually gifted students here in the South are often set apart from other students in isolating or stigmatizing ways. What those students may be looking for is a way to finally ‘fit in’ socially while still enjoying rigorous academic classes” (personal communication, November 2, 2012). Her voice echoes Watford’s comment that honors students feared that an honors dorm might harm the “development of community” with non-honors peers.

In addition, the college’s size and housing policies encourage each student living on campus to live among students with varying interests and strengths. All traditional-age undergraduates must live on campus unless they live with their families and commute. Converse also has no sororities and no themed housing such as a hall for the debate team. Instead, the college offers many opportunities for student involvement and leadership development and allows students to try on new identities. “One of the strengths of Converse,” Harbin remarks, “is that it allows a student to be more than one thing. You don’t have to pigeonhole yourself” (personal communication, November 2, 2012). You can be in the honors program, on the varsity soccer team, and in student government. An honors dorm might make being equally involved in all three difficult.

For smaller institutions, honors housing may not appeal to students. Although one might argue that student perception is not everything, at a small tuition-driven institution, student perception looms larger than it may at a large state institution. When faced with the choice of student misgivings about spending money to create honors housing, the honors program at Converse made the better decision to spend its resources elsewhere. In this instance, the generous donor instead funded study-travel scholarships for honors students and honors academic programming. Clearly, the honors students value the community created by their honors classes and research more than the promise of community created by physical living space. When it comes to honors housing, one size does not fit all. In fact, for small honors programs, honors housing may not fit at all.





## CHAPTER 19

# Living-Learning Communities: As Natural as Cats and Dogs Living Together

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Fully achieving all the potential benefits of a living-learning community requires effective collaboration between academic affairs and student affairs. Unfortunately, because of differences in organizational structures, priorities, cultural norms, and even the types of people drawn to work in academic affairs and student affairs, collaboration between faculty and staff is as unnatural as cats and dogs living together. Understanding these differences and recognizing the two subcultures that operate within most college housing departments can mitigate the challenges that honors faculty and staff can face when collaborating with staff in housing.

Elizabeth Blake (1979) has offered a number of still timely insights from the perspective of a faculty member as to why collaboration between faculty and staff is difficult. She characterizes student affairs staff as “manager types: entrepreneurial, gregarious, practical, ambitious, . . . [who have] bureaucratic expertise, and [a]

love of structure” (Blake, p. 284). In contrast, she describes faculty members as scholars who value “ideas and reflection . . . reason and proof, detached judgment, originality, [and freedom to engage in] the exciting pursuit of understanding” (Blake, p. 284). These differences lead to having very different views about the university itself. Whereas student affairs staff members tend to see institutional success as a function of effective management, faculty members recognize that independence, creativity, and academic freedom are critically important for the pursuit of learning (Blake, p. 285).

Blake’s (1979) generalizations of the differing priorities, values, and working styles of faculty and student affairs staff suggest a greater potential for misunderstanding and conflict than collaboration. Faculty members value autonomy and independent work, and hearing a faculty member wryly quip that an academic committee or department meeting can be like herding cats is fairly common. This sensibility is completely foreign in student affairs not only because so much of this work cannot be done independently, but also because it usually requires supervisory approval. “Always remember to consult with your supervisor” is a mantra at every level of student affairs. Even though the academic affairs structure might look like a pyramid (provost, deans, department chairs, and faculty members), student affairs is truly a rigid hierarchy. The titles say it all: while academic departments will often have a chair, student affairs departments have a director. Student affairs staff members operate more like dogs in a pack, with each staff member in a position of a clearly defined hierarchy. Thus, cats and dogs living together is an apt metaphor for faculty and staff collaborating on a living-learning community. Just as faculty members are attracted to the independent and egalitarian culture of the academy, student affairs staff members have chosen to work in a hierarchical, interdependent, and often frenetic work environment.

Faculty seeking to work with their campus housing department may find this situation further complicated by the fact that housing tends to be a department with two distinct personalities. At its core, campus housing is a self-funded auxiliary (i.e., an independent, not-for-profit business); it must generate enough income

from room rent to cover all of its operating expenses and, on most campuses, contribute funds to other campus departments and programs. Because empty beds do not generate revenue, every housing department has staff who operate primarily, if not exclusively, from a business perspective that emphasizes heads in beds. These staff members often have responsibility for setting room and board rates, budgeting, occupancy management, marketing, and maintenance of facilities and amenities. Consequently, these staff members focus on operational stability and efficiency, student and parent satisfaction, and, above all, ensuring expenses do not exceed income.

The other side of campus housing is often called residence life, residence education, or, simply, the hall staff. In contrast to the rest of the department, most hall directors and their supervisors perceive living on campus as an educational experience that makes a meaningful contribution to the educational mission of the university. These staff members see themselves as educators who are maximizing students' learning and success by focusing on community development and educational programming, engaging students in hall governance, and connecting students to campus resources. The dichotomy between the business and educational perspectives can be a source of conflict within the housing department and a confusing challenge for faculty seeking to collaborate.

The following scenarios are composites drawn from my own experience and provide examples of these two perspectives in action.

### **SCENARIO 1: EVERYTHING WAS GOING SO WELL. . . .**

Soon after moving to a new university to accept a leadership position within the residence education unit of campus housing, I met with the head of the honors program. She revealed that she was disappointed with some changes made to a relatively new honors living-learning community. She said the first two years of the program were great; the honors students in the community really got to know each other and often moved off campus and continued living together. She was concerned that this pattern was not happening as much anymore. I then met with the hall coordinator. He told

me the honors students had all lived on one co-ed floor those first few years, but they only took up about half of the floor. The honors students bonded with each other, but they had not connected with the non-honors students who also lived on their floor. Each year the Resident Assistant, who was not an honors student, complained that being an RA on the honors floor was more difficult because their floor operated like two separate communities. The hall coordinator brought this problem to his supervisor, and they discussed it with the assistant director responsible for occupancy management. After reviewing the occupancy data trends, these three determined there would not be enough honors students to fill the floor in the coming year, so they fixed the problem by distributing the rooms for honors students among many floors within the building.

In the above scenario, the business perspective dominated the educational perspective. Although the solution addressed the priority of the hall staff to build strong floor communities, it almost completely negated the intent of the honors living-learning community. In the same way pulling apart a camp fire and spreading out the coals almost stops the fire from burning, putting a few pairs of honors students on every floor in the hall inhibits those students forming a sense of community with the other honors students in the building. Other solutions were possible, such as leaving rooms empty rather than putting non-honors students on that floor, or moving the honors community to another location better matched to the size of the program. Leaving beds empty, however, results in reduced revenue, and moving a community requires considerable work: determining where it will go, updating marketing materials, re-programming the software that assigns students into each bed, and facing the complaints of students being told they cannot live in their same room next year because it is being given to another living-learning program.

That the housing staff did not discuss this issue with the honors program indicates that the housing staff did not see the development and care of the honors community as a collaborative venture. If the housing staff had seen this enterprise as something jointly created and co-owned with the honors program, they would not

have made a fundamental change to the program without consulting the honors program. The honors program seemed to have had a similar perspective, for the director of the honors program was so disconnected from the hall staff she did not even know they thought a problem existed.

## **SCENARIO 2: DESIRING EDEN**

An example from my current campus further illustrates these conflicting perspectives within housing. The honors program director asked if the honors community could be moved to the most aesthetically pleasing residence hall on campus, which happens to be named Edens Hall. He noted that prospective honors students and their parents grew excited on their campus tour as they neared Edens and then were disappointed when they realized the honors community was in another nearby building.

His request made sense because the university wanted to attract more high-ability and out-of-state students. Such students typically have a variety of institutional options, and many of those campuses have honors programs with attractive residence halls. The director understood that this request might not be approved since other high-profile academic programs on campus might be asking for the same thing. He was surprised, however, to hear why his request was not granted. Staff operating from the business perspective had offered two arguments. First, the fact that current residents now choose their own rooms for the following year made it seem unfair to them if the most popular residence hall on campus was restricted to honors students. Second, and perhaps more compelling, was the concern that fewer current students might choose to live on campus another year if they were not able to live in this popular building, which would result in empty beds and less revenue. After extensive conversations within the housing department, the honors community was moved to Edens Hall, but only on a pilot basis with clearly defined and measurable outcomes. Assessment done the following year revealed the number of returning and incoming students in the honors community dramatically increased, the honors program

achieved a small increase in admissions, and moving the community did not result in more empty beds in the housing system.

In this scenario the residence education perspective was prioritized, but to do so required framing the solution as a pilot project that would be assessed and reconsidered if it resulted in financial costs that outweighed the educational benefits.

## IMPROVING COLLABORATION

My experience has been that many faculty and staff members have inaccurate perceptions of each other's roles, responsibilities, and priorities. Peter Magolda (2005) has observed that faculty members and student affairs staff also struggle to collaborate effectively because they do not have sufficient awareness of their own subcultures.\* By learning more about each other, they can minimize false assumptions, miscommunications, and mistrust. Of course, reading about similarities and differences is a useful starting point, but the groups must also engage with each other in person if they are to move beyond generalized stereotypes to context-specific, in-depth understanding of each other. Interaction and engagement will improve their ability to collaborate. Fortunately, both faculty members and student affairs staff enjoy learning. Taking advantage of that shared trait by continuing to learn how to work together more effectively will make their jobs more enjoyable and will definitely benefit students. And thus, cats and dogs can learn to live together, without warfare if not entirely in harmony.

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\*Greg Blimling (2001) provides an insightful description of the four primary subcultures within student affairs.

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## CHAPTER 20

# The Colliding Cultures of Honors and Housing

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UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

The University of Florida's honors residential college was completed in 2002. It remains the newest and most expensive residence hall on campus to this day, housing more than 600 honors students, a faculty-in-residence, a classroom, and a multi-room study lounge. On paper, the residential college is a beautiful partnership between Florida's University Honors Program and the Department of Housing and Residential Education. In practice, however, two distinct cultures have emerged between the two offices.

From having the locks changed on shared learning spaces to not having a voice in the selection of housing staff, the honors program involvement with honors residence life has been tenuous at times. Even a decade after the building's dedication, more than half of the student resident assistants are not honors students, a figure

that has remained constant over the past few years. When honors students questioned the director of housing several years ago in an open forum about this underrepresentation of honors students in these positions, they were told that honors students simply had not applied for the position. The students quickly pointed out the plethora of resident assistant positions filled by honors students in other housing facilities on campus.

It is perhaps through the Student Honors Organization (SHO), however, that the colliding cultures have become most apparent. SHO serves as one of three honors-sponsored student organizations, filling the role of an honors student council that serves the entire honors student population, a group that exceeds 3,000 people. SHO also serves as the governing body of the area government for the honors residence hall, specifically representing the hall's 600+ residents to the Inter-Residence Hall Association (IRHA). SHO has a faculty advisor through the honors program, as well as a graduate student advisor through the residence hall.

SHO is led by six officers, typically sophomores who served on a SHO committee as freshmen and then were elected by the honors student body. These officers oversee four committees that plan monthly events around the following themes: academic, social, residential, and community service/campus outreach. Primarily freshmen apply and interview for positions on the committees, with six or seven students serving on each committee. Because honors students perceive a position with SHO as one of the first opportunities to become involved with the program, they demonstrate a high level of interest in the application process.

Unlike other area governments in the Inter-Residence Hall Association, SHO does not receive any funding from IRHA. In fact, in one of the first IRHA meetings each year, the SHO treasurer formally renounces funding. The honors program completely funds SHO with the understanding that the group represents all honors students. Aside from keeping an eye on the budget and ensuring that the executive board publicizes their events to all honors students, the honors program places few limits on SHO. The philosophy is that student leaders need the freedom to be creative

with their program development, the confidence to make decisions on their own, and the ability to execute events with minimal supervision.

Even as it maintains this level of autonomy, SHO is responsible for following the same IRHA guidelines and regulations as other area governments that receive funding from IRHA. In addition to the weekly IRHA meetings for the general body that last multiple hours, each officer is responsible for attending weekly meetings with corresponding officers in other area government groups. Even the treasurer must attend a weekly meeting despite the fact that SHO does not receive any funding from the organization. Officers report that they are constantly told discussion points do not apply to them in their various meetings; nevertheless, they are still required to attend.

Aside from the governance meetings, other requirements and expectations include attendance at monthly IRHA socials and a highly decorated office door. The SHO officers must complete extensive paperwork before and after each of their events. During certain times of the year, SHO is not allowed to schedule programs because of their required participation in IRHA-sponsored events, events that honors students are often less interested in attending than events organized by SHO. And because of housing regulations, honors students who serve as resident assistants are not allowed to hold office in SHO.

Because of the high expectations that SHO members set for themselves, typical for honors students, their level of programming is of exceptionally high quantity and quality. Obviously, SHO members are excited to plan events for their fellow honors students and work hard to enhance an honors community that will last beyond a year in a residence hall. In the past several years, SHO has been recognized as the area government of the year as well as the student organization of the year for the entire university. Unfortunately, the increasing obligations and demands for time outside of programming for honors students have started to wear on the SHO officers in particular.

In 2010, the SHO officers at the time began to question their purpose as officers and that of the organization as a whole. They wondered why IRHA regulations restricted their programming in and for the residence hall since they were funded by the honors program. They felt as though they were no longer serving all honors students, which was the overarching purpose and function of their organization. And most importantly, they were exhausted. Pulled in multiple directions and feeling responsible to multiple parties, the officers faced a serious dilemma of how to move forward.

When new officers were elected in 2011, the 2010 officers continued the discussions about the future of SHO. They created an ad hoc committee that included representatives from the other two honors student organizations and current SHO officers. Representatives from Housing were invited to participate in many of these conversations, but they chose not to do so. The ad hoc committee reviewed the purpose of SHO and discussed the potential ramifications of changing the structure of the organization. At one point they seriously considered separating SHO from the area government in order to more fully represent all honors students, rather than just those living in the residence hall. After much discussion, the group ultimately decided to maintain the structure of SHO, but to continue adding new opportunities for honors students to get involved with the program through other outlets. The members feared that programming space within the residence hall would not be available to SHO if it no longer served as the area government. Despite increasing limitations on SHO, the group perceived a need for involvement in areas falling more in line with the philosophy of the honors program. Those opportunities have included establishing a retreat for first-year honors students, which allows them to get to know each other prior to the start of their first semester; appointing junior and senior event-planning interns who coordinate large-scale events for the program; and creating fundraising teams for various campus philanthropy events such as Dance Marathon and Relay for Life.

Interestingly, conversations about the purpose of SHO have reemerged with the latest group of SHO officers. As the students

find themselves busier and busier with academics and social obligations, they are more concerned about how they spend their time. When they realized that their meeting obligations for IRHA were impeding their ability to program events for honors students, they approached the honors program with their concerns. On top of these obligations, officers often were faced with snide comments about being “special” during these meetings.

This time, the housing staff has been more responsive to the concerns related to SHO. At least from the administrative levels, the two groups are working towards creating a common understanding about the larger purpose of the organization, but the negotiations are difficult. From a broader level, the cultures of honors and housing, despite sharing an interest in facilitating the academic success of college students, approach their roles with students in different ways. Honors at Florida has long been about celebrating the uniqueness of high-achieving students, encouraging independent thought, and supporting innovative activities. In fact, students know that they can approach the honors administrators with any new idea for the program; often, these plans will find support.

Housing, on the other hand, is driven by facilities and operations. With almost 10,000 on-campus residents to manage, this enterprise is a full-service business with policies and procedures necessary to keep afloat; the operation supports too many students and facilities to allow for deviations from the established norms and regulations.

Not surprisingly, student leaders mirror the cultural divide. Members of SHO favor the independence they have to develop programming for honors students; honors advisors encourage them to be flexible and creative in their work. They are also genuinely passionate about serving the honors program through this organization. Student leaders in IRHA prefer rules and procedures applicable to everyone, as expected in a business or regulatory agency. This organization also sees itself as the governing body over smaller organizations that serve at its pleasure. The focus on service inward versus service outward, as with SHO, accounts for the major collision between these two organizations.

Housing has been listening to concerns about the two organizations, and the matter has been a topic of conversation at several staff meetings. These sessions have provided a mutual understanding of the needs of honors student leaders; however, the collision continues between the two student organizations because the macro-level accommodations have not readily filtered down to the students. The challenge of bridging the competing obligations and responsibilities of two different worlds remains a difficult work in progress.

CHAPTER 21

**It Came with Everything:  
A Baby Grand Piano, Hardwood Floors,  
Regular Flooding, 200 Honors Students,  
and a Live-In Scholar**

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UNIVERSITY OF NORTH TEXAS

**W**hen the University of North Texas (UNT) opened its new Honors Hall on a hot Sunday in late August 2007, it was a residence hall in which everyone took considerable pride. Students loved the many amenities that the building featured, and they took pride in being able to call Honors Hall home. From the perspective of the honors college, the most significant feature was an apartment in which a scholar would live—a scholar who would be involved in the life of the hall and would, therefore, be engaged with the students who lived there. At that time, no other residence hall on campus had a live-in scholar. Now, with seven years and five live-in scholars under its belt, the UNT Honors College is able to share what has been learned along the way.

Including the apartment for a live-in scholar reflected the commitment the administration of the university had to making Honors Hall a desirable place for students to live. The support was so strong for building an honors residence hall that UNT willingly put substantial extra funding into the hall for multiple study lounges on every floor; wall coverings throughout; chair rails along every hallway; a lobby with large, comfortable leather sofas; a kitchen that would please HGTV viewers with its stainless steel appliances; and a beautiful new baby grand piano in the lobby. The live-in scholar would be provided, at no cost, a professionally furnished and decorated two-bedroom apartment.

The goal for the apartment was that a scholar could arrive with a suitcase and a laptop and be able to live comfortably. The apartment is located on the first floor, at the end of a wing, with an inside and an outside entrance. It includes just over 1,200 square feet of space divided into a living area, kitchen, two bedrooms, a bath and a half, and a laundry room. Everything was provided, including pots and pans, dishes, and linens. To date, five different faculty members have occupied the apartment, serving as live-in scholars to the 200 honors students who call Honors Hall home. The disciplinary areas of these scholars have included operatic music, visual arts, behavior analysis, history, and studio art. Two were visiting professors at the university, one was a new faculty member, one was a tenure-track assistant professor, and another was a tenured professor holding an administrative position in his college—all talented and accomplished individuals.

Honors housing is just housing, of course, unless it can serve as an extension of the honors program and its mission. Carefully selected live-in scholars can enrich the entire undergraduate experience for students and bring substantial value to the university and honors experience. These individuals organize events, help staff members identify students who may need additional support, and bring in faculty members to assist with programming. As we all know, however, problems and issues will arise, even among the best organized, most skilled, and most cooperative individuals.



At the outset, some sorting out was necessary. For example, when candidates interviewed for the position, they asked questions about when they could move in, when they had to move out, where they got keys, who would fix the bathroom leak, and where they got their mail. Realizing that those issues would never be the purview of the honors staff was a relief. Housing officials provided a contract that spelled out every detail, including financial obligations, rules and regulations, dates for moving, use of one's personal furniture in the building, care of the apartment and furnishings, repairs, the term of service, and a host of other issues. In fact, the director of housing has been a partner in every aspect of this endeavor, making the whole experience easier for everyone. For example, one of the questions that arose early on was whether pets could live in the apartment. The director said yes, and that dimension has increased the perception of students that the apartment really is someone's home. This year, Hunter, a small mixed-breed dog blessed with a large personality, is calling Honors Hall home, and on move-in day, he kept a watchful eye on new residents, almost all of whom came over to greet him.

Rule Number One has to be that housing professionals should run all residence halls, including those that serve honors students and programs. To campus housing professionals, the honors residence hall is just like all the others, albeit a bit quieter. Because housing is complicated, having professionals with the skills, experience, and expertise to do it properly is essential. Unless honors college personnel have made a terrible mistake and agreed to manage their own residence hall, they should visit the hall as guests and for clearly stated purposes. The reality behind this recommendation should make all honors personnel realize that they need to establish a close working relationship with the housing office and agree to work cooperatively on matters pertaining to the hall. Although the honors program will not own or govern the building, it will be relieved of worries about maintenance, safety, behavior, and liability.

Although a partnership with the housing office means that honors staff will never be called to fix the microwave or a leaky faucet, the question may become whether honors staff have any privileges at all in the building. At UNT, honors staff members have sometimes felt that they are quite disconnected from Honors Hall. For example, the commons room is a great asset, but the terms under which the honors staff can use it and whether they have some sort of priority over other users are murky. Another issue is whether honors students who do not live in the hall can even attend programming arranged by the live-in scholar. How welcome these students feel when they find the building locked or have to buzz the front desk to be admitted is another complicating factor. Clearly, the influence the honors college enjoyed in the hall at the outset has diminished over time, and that diminution seems to be part of a natural process.

Housing is, of course, a student affairs issue while honors is an academic one. As such, the groups have had on occasion differing priorities and concerns that require negotiation. Even on the UNT campus where these two divisions are proud of their great working relationship, the honors college sees honors housing as an extension of the academic program, while student affairs personnel see honors housing as, well, housing. Because all of the personnel working in Honors Hall are employees of the housing division, not the honors college, honors staff members rely heavily on non-academic staff to help them achieve academic goals. Thus, maintaining a cooperative working relationship is important.

While the honors staff will happily leave many issues to the housing professionals, one that should not be left to them is selection of the live-in scholar. Several halls at UNT now have residential faculty, and a standard process for selecting faculty for each hall has been developed, but it was a housing process, not an academic one. It did not, therefore, provide for much input from the honors program or college staff. Early on, housing established a committee to set up a selection process for those live-in faculty members, and logically, but without the knowledge of the honors college staff, the Honors Hall position was thrown into the mix. The honors staff

learned eventually that someone had actually been selected for Honors Hall without any input from them. They were even more concerned when they learned that the committee's selection was not only a graduate student, but also one who would be teaching only graduate classes and who would have few opportunities to connect his interests with those of honors students. Fortunately, things were juggled about a bit to make other arrangements. Since then, the honors college has selected, with advice and support from housing, its own live-in scholar.

Selecting the scholar-in-residence is not an easy process or one to be taken lightly, and the level of interest at UNT is high when it comes to choosing a person to live in Honors Hall. The situation works best, of course, when the interests of the faculty member parallel those of the honors program and housing. Experience has taught the honors selection committee to determine how the interest level and goals of candidates intersect with those of honors so that the position is not taken lightly by its holder. Living in the honors apartment is free of any charges for rent or utilities. Cable television is provided at no charge, laundry facilities are available in the building, and getting a repair done is as easy as a call to the front desk. Additionally, the scholar receives a generous number of meal passes for campus dining halls so he or she can join the students who have a meal plan or bring along a fellow faculty member. The live-in scholar even parks free, thanks to the honors college paying for a nearby reserved space.

Although this arrangement offers significant inducements, many people find such an arrangement too confining or lacking in adequate freedom and privacy. Having a discussion with candidates about the realities of living in a residence hall is important because the position is not suited to everyone. Usually several good candidates emerge each year. Recommendations often come from deans and department chairs who are bringing in a visiting professor for a semester or two, or who have a new faculty member who is having trouble arranging housing.

Herein lies one of the potential pitfalls. The natural inclination to help one's colleagues and fellow faculty members simply must

not be allowed to override the obligation to consider the needs of students and the ability of the candidate to work well with residents of the hall. While some candidates may be excellent choices, the critical factors must be that they really are excited about working with students and that their motivation is not just having a place to live. Members of the honors college want intellectually talented and prepared people who easily and warmly engage college students in conversation, who model the life of an academic, who work cooperatively with hall staff, who willingly give of their time and energy mentoring and planning events for the hall's residents, and who spot the students who are having trouble making friends or console the student whose parent has just died. The live-in scholar must demonstrate a commitment to students that will make living in the residence hall a successful experience.

For those for whom the arrangement is just having a place to lay one's head, the result is likely to be that they spend their time away from the residence hall in the laboratory, the classroom, the music practice room, or other areas where students are less likely to interfere with one's regular life. Prospective live-in scholars must clearly understand the time, energy, and focus they will need to be successful in the position. After all, these are men and women who are carrying a full load as faculty members. In addition to preparing for and teaching two or more classes, they have research interests and responsibilities as well as service obligations to their department and the university. For most faculty members, that work adds up to far more than 40 hours a week, and if they are also a live-in scholar, their responsibilities will not end when they walk through the door of their home.

Based on past experience at UNT, the honors staff has concluded that two years is the ideal upper limit for faculty members to live in the residence hall because a longer period adversely affects their work in their college or department or disrupts their research agenda. Prospective live-in scholars should be well briefed on the expectations of the honors college as to their contributions. On this campus, the expectations are a minimum of 10 hours per month of interaction, which equals approximately three events. With

planning and implementation, the actual number of hours logged, however, is likely to be closer to 20 hours per month.

While a perfect model for a live-in scholar probably does not exist, some factors are important to consider. Avoiding the candidate with an extensive travel schedule is prudent. Being on the road reduces the time available to make connections, plan activities, and be part of the honors community. If other commitments require the applicant to spend 12 hours a day in the studio, rehearsal hall, or lab, that individual is unlikely to bring much energy to activities with honors undergraduates. If the candidate is a graduate student struggling to finish a dissertation or a fifth-year assistant professor worrying about tenure, a better selection would be from among the candidates who are at the point in their career at which they have the time and energy to devote to students rather than personal goals. The personal circumstances of the candidates may be an impediment as well. Candidates looking for opportunities to entertain their own friends rather than relate to undergraduates are not a good fit, and neither are candidates whose primary goal is saving money for the down payment on a house.

Spelling out expectations about programming, including how many activities are required, how they will be paid for, and who should be invited, is critical. If honors housing is designed to be an extension of the honors program or college, then programming, while varied, should rest on a foundation of enriching the undergraduate experience. The activities can vary; a concert or bowling alley can provide that benefit if building community is an important goal. Most activities, from popcorn and football to Diwali and Eid dinners, are successful if they feature accomplished and learned individuals and opportunities for enrichment. Because having a live-in scholar should support the goals of the honors college, the live-in scholar must agree in advance to the following conditions: 1) coordinate events with the events director of the honors college, so that activities do not unduly compete; 2) invite members of the honors staff to major events that include guests such as faculty members or community leaders; 3) extend an invitation to all honors college members for some events during the semester;

and 4) submit reports about attendance and expenditures for all events paid for by the honors college from the allocation made by the honors college to the live-in scholar each year.

The current live-in scholar lives in the hall with his wife, two children, and a dog, and his performance has made him a model for other live-in scholars. He relates well to students and seems to know exactly what will appeal to them. For the spring 2014 semester, he put together a Thursday night movie series that features older movies (pre-1995!) selected by faculty members who teach in honors. The faculty member who chose the movie attends the screening and talks a little about the film. Among the movies included were *Name of the Rose*, *Oliver*, and *Hunt for Red October*. This kind of programming achieves the enrichment the honors college seeks to provide students, in that they see a film, having been provided some information about what makes it interesting and appealing, and view it with their fellow students and current faculty members teaching in the program. Students are easily inspired by the faculty members they meet and by the scholar's ability to relate to them as talented young people. When one live-in scholar taught knitting, students embraced the idea wholeheartedly, and some gave it a try. When another hosted dinners marking important cultural events around the world—Diwali, for instance—students again responded with enthusiasm. Honors students are open to a great variety of learning opportunities, and accomplished scholars are able to put their own brand on whatever is planned. The bottom line is that presenting such opportunities to students enriches their undergraduate experience and adds to their intellectual growth.

The honors college makes a substantial investment in these scholars because they play a role in the retention of students and in the image that students and others, including parents, have of the honors college. It is in the best interest of honors to find a great candidate for the position and then provide strong support to that individual: a budget and freedom to plan. At this time, the honors college does not have a formal assessment process. The honors evaluation is informal with input from the scholar and students. Because honors staff are invited to events from time to time, they

have opportunities to talk with students on an informal level about the Honors Hall programming and their interactions with the live-in scholar. Of course, attending events at the residence hall also ensures that the connection between the honors college and the honors residence hall remains solid. The formal evaluation process resides with the housing professionals at UNT. The housing division monitors and evaluates all campus live-in scholars, and housing professionals work with them throughout the academic year to increase performance in areas that may not be going well rather than evaluating them at the end when the time is gone and no improvement is possible. This arrangement underscores the notion that having an honors residence hall with a live-in scholar is a real partnership with the division of housing. The hall staff, including professional staff and student employees, are partners in the effort to provide the best possible undergraduate experience for students in the honors college. On a practical note, because the housing staff members are present on a daily basis, they are often the first to recognize the waning interest and diminished involvement of a live-in scholar or other problems in the hall and to communicate that information to the honors staff. Working together allows the two groups to take a collective approach to problems and to share in accomplishments, too.

The live-in scholar position started with Honors Hall and contributed to its success over the last seven years to the extent that it is now an accepted position at the University of North Texas. In fact, several other residence halls have live-in scholars. That a second honors residence hall, which opened in August 2015, features an apartment for a live-in scholar underscores the value of the concept at UNT and the contributions of these scholars to the honors program.





## CHAPTER 22

# Living in Hogwarts: The Experience of a Dean of Honors and His Wife While Living in an Honors Residence Hall

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On Friday, May 17, 2013, we watched the class of 2013 Honors Scholars at West Virginia University (WVU) enter the Honors Convocation to the sound of *Non Nobis Domine*. While certainly not our first Honors Scholars graduation since Keith had been running honors at WVU, it was nonetheless special. This cohort of graduates was the first freshman class to live in the specially built residence hall that houses the honors college administrative offices, each new freshman class of the honors college, and an apartment for faculty living in-residence.

When construction of the Honors Hall was completed in 2009, the honors college needed to find a faculty member to act as the

Resident Faculty Leader (RFL) for the hall. The West Virginia University RFL program was started by President David Hardesty in 1996 in what turned out to be a successful effort to bring an academic component to the residence halls as well as to change the culture of the residence halls from one primarily focused on socializing and, unfortunately, partying to one that was more in keeping with the academic mission of the university. All residence halls have RFLs who live in apartments in the halls or in adjacent townhouses. RFLs provide primarily academic programming for their individual halls and each hall has its own theme. There was no question in our minds that we wanted to be the first faculty leaders in the Honors Hall, so we applied and were accepted. The experiences of the next five years changed the way we viewed students, not just those living in Honors Hall, but all undergraduates, and gave us a deeper understanding of the wide range of issues facing undergraduates in the twenty-first century.

## **PHYSICAL STRUCTURE**

In the summer of 2009, we moved into an apartment on the first floor of the Honors Hall. The apartment is set up with both private and public space. A great room is furnished as part of the apartment, but it can be used for programming within the hall. One wall is lined with bookshelves, and the room also features comfortable leather sofas, two wooden rocking chairs, and a large dining table that can accommodate 12 people. The room can easily seat as many as 30 people.

The design of the Honors Hall was informed by other recently built residence halls on the WVU campus; its five floors house 360 students. Floors two through five are identical and consist largely of student rooms set up as suites in which four individuals living in two bedrooms share a bathroom. Suites are single gender but floors are mixed. The central hub of each floor features a large recreational lounge with a large-screen TV and comfortable chairs where students may socialize, play video games, and sometimes do their homework. The other half of the hub is dedicated to a study lounge. This area, with individual carrels and tables for group study,

is strictly reserved for academic activities and may not be used for meetings of clubs and student societies or for social activities. On the ground floor of the Honors Hall are the RFL and Residence Hall Coordinator apartments, the honors college administrative offices, the administrative offices for the Residence Life unit, the student laundry, one wing of student rooms, and a large multipurpose room that serves as the primary programming space for the hall.

## **HALL ADMINISTRATION**

Honors Hall is administered by a leadership team consisting of the Resident Faculty Leader (Keith Garbutt), the Live/Learn Community Specialist (Christine Garbutt), and the Residence Hall Coordinator (Jeremiah Kibler). Kibler's wife, Keisha Kibler, also volunteers with the hall programming although she does not have an official position in the hall. Kibler and his wife also live in an apartment in Honors Hall. The RFL is responsible for overseeing the programming of the hall and acting as an academic guide and mentor for the students who live there. The Live/Learn Community Specialist supports the RFL and is responsible for the day-to-day logistics and coordination of programs designed by the leadership team. The Residence Hall Coordinator (RHC) is responsible for managing the Residence Assistants (RAs) and the judicial system in the residence hall. In addition, the RHC and the RAs are also responsible for the social programming in the hall.

In practice, the leadership team works closely together in order to generate a coordinated collection of programs for the hall. The idea is that the majority of the programs should in one way or another support the academic mission and vision of Honors Hall. (See Appendix 1 for a list of some of the programs in Honors Hall and their frequency.)

## **PROGRAMMING IN HONORS HALL**

One of the requirements of the RFL program at West Virginia University is that each hall should have a basic theme. For Honors Hall, the obvious theme was academic excellence. As the leadership

team designed programs for Honors Hall, they realized that Honors Hall needed a vision and a mission statement based on the honors college mission and vision. Initial vision and mission statements were generated; they were modified slightly after the first year to include the concept of internationalization. (See Appendix 2.)

While the presence of an RFL is not necessarily required for all the programs available in Honors Hall, the presence of the RFLs living in residence halls creates the potential to generate a type of programming space and opportunities for programs within that space that provide unique educational experiences and faculty-student interactions. These programs are multi-layered in their instructional and social content. In particular, programs like Book at Bedtime would be unlikely to happen if faculty members associated with the program were not residents within the hall.

Book at Bedtime happens on Tuesday and Thursday evenings at 10:00 p.m. in the great room of the RFL apartment where cocoa, marshmallows, and home-baked cookies are provided. Students take a break from their homework and come down to the apartment, some of them even in their pajamas, and listen while we read to them. Each semester we talk to the students and then each pick a book to share. These cover a variety of genres and have included such titles as Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows*, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, and Christopher Moore's *A Dirty Job*. In addition, both early in the semester and again towards the end, we will have special evenings when we will read shorter books that the students request. It is amazing how many college students can cram into the apartment to hear books such as *Where the Wild Things Are*, *The Little Engine that Could*, and *The Night before Christmas*. At one level this event could be viewed simply as a cozy hour at the end of the day, which in part is indeed what it is. In choosing what to read, however, we try to pick books that will sometimes lead to discussions of differences in culture and provide positive role models across genders, ethnicities, and sexualities, and, at the same time, just be fun. So, close to the winter break one of us might read *The Best Christmas Pageant Ever* while the other reads selections from NPR's *Hanukkah Lights*. The genesis

of this program is interesting in that when we first moved into the residence hall, students actually came to us and asked that we read to them; they had heard us speak at orientation and at other events. Since both of us are from the British Isles, they found our accents interesting. One student told us: "We want you to read to us because you sound funny."

On a social or pastoral (in a non-religious sense) level, this program also serves another important purpose in that it allows us to get to know some of the students in the honors college very well. Book at Bedtime often appeals to students who lack some social skills. We have seen young men and women who, early in the semester, were shy loners slowly develop and become part of the group by attending this program. Book at Bedtime provides a non-threatening environment in which they can sit with others but are not required to interact. They slowly become comfortable, and they eventually feel like they are part of the community by participating in the discussions and conversations before and after the readings, ultimately building connections and friendships with others.

The Student/Faculty Dinner is another program that works well because we are living in the hall. Each week on Wednesday, we invite faculty from a particular discipline to the hall to have dinner, home-cooked by Christine, with students interested in that major. Students sign up at the front desk for this event, which has a maximum of 30 attendees because of the capacity of our apartment. For popular majors, we will host several dinners that focus on sub-disciplines within those majors. Engineering is a good example; we might have one dinner for civil engineers, another for chemical engineers, and another for mining engineers. These dinners provide students with the opportunity to interact with faculty on a social level and frequently run for two to three hours as the faculty and students linger over dinner and talk not only about the discipline but also about a wide range of subjects. Feedback from the students on these dinners is extremely positive. They value them highly, and many students make important connections with faculty and the department through these dinners.

Hall Council is a student body that, with the oversight of the RFL and RHC, plans and implements many, if not all, of the social events in the hall. The Hall Council is run as a class in practical leadership (Garbutt, 2006). This class requires students to learn the fundamentals of leadership theory and organization. Working in groups of three or four, students submit proposals for activities they wish to plan. These proposals are substantive documents that describe the proposed activity, including budgets, logistical timetables, and assessment methods. They are peer-reviewed by the members of the class. Each group must organize two events during the academic year. That the class rejects the first proposals or sends them back for significant improvement is not unusual. Once a proposal is accepted, the group must create and run the program. The group is responsible for all aspects of the event, including advertising, setup, takedown, and cleanup, and then they must write an academic reflection on the planning and implementation process. They must critique their program and critique the members of their group in terms of their work as leaders or as group members. In addition, all members of the council are required to evaluate at least six programs that they attend that are not their own programs.

We have run the Hall Council this way for three years, and it has proven to be extremely successful with high enrollments each term, approximately 50–70 students. Because of this arrangement, Honors Hall offers more programming than any other hall on campus even though it is a relatively small residence hall. The success of Hall Council and its programs can be attributed to the fact the students feel they have ownership of and are responsible for activities that take place in the hall.

Another important program that could be run in any hall but does not require a resident faculty leader is our Tutoring Program. This program uses upper-class students as mentors and tutors and is in some ways a standard peer-education program. What makes it stand out from others is that in order to become tutors, students must take a class in mentoring and tutoring that is designed and delivered by Dr. Marie Lechlitter Krause, the Program Coordinator for the WVU Honors College. Krause's academic background is in

education. She has designed a sequence of three courses that develop the tutors' and mentors' understanding of educational theory. Students are not required to take all three courses but must take the more advanced courses if they wish to continue tutoring beyond one year. The first course is practical: basic methods of tutoring, knowledge about learning styles, and methods for tutoring students with different learning styles. The later courses concentrate on educational theory and practice and require students to play a larger role in both the administration and design of more complex tutoring programs for the residents in the hall. This program has been exceptionally successful and has helped struggling students master courses with which they were having problems.

## **ASSESSMENT**

One of the more difficult aspects of offering intensive academic programming within a residence hall is assessment. While obtaining student feedback immediately after an activity would be beneficial, presenting students with questionnaires as they leave a dinner or a program undermines the social and cultural environment that is part and parcel of the event. End-of-year questionnaires have been used for two years although their results have not been particularly useful in evaluating the hall programs more thoroughly. All honors students are required to complete an exit interview when they graduate from the honors college. Both the exit interview questionnaire, filled in before the interview, and notes from the interviews themselves show that the residence hall experience was an extremely important one to the students who lived in the hall during their first year. Students who for one reason or another did not live in the residence hall will frequently make comments that in retrospect they think they would have been more engaged with the university if they had lived in the residence hall.

## **PETS**

One of the advantages of having a home in the residence hall is that the leadership team is able to have pets, something that

would not normally be allowed in a university residence hall environment. Both the Kiblers and the Garbutts had dogs. The Kiblers had an eight-pound Shih-Tzu, and our dog, Huxley, was a placid eighty-pound mutt. They both provided a significant service to the students in the hall.

Quantifying the impact of having dogs in the hall is difficult, but anecdotal evidence strongly suggests that residents and their parents viewed the animals as a positive thing and that they even helped some students make the decision to attend WVU rather than another institution. We heard time and again that visiting the Honors Hall RFL apartment and meeting Huxley sealed the deal for families.

A good example of the impact of having pets occurs at the beginning of the semester. During the first week of the term, we will sit in the lobby for several hours each evening, usually with food such as hot dogs, smoothies, or homemade cookies, encouraging the students to stop by and meet and talk with us. Huxley usually accompanies us. Huxley will lie at Christine's feet, and the students will come over and pet him. Petting Huxley acts as an icebreaker for students who may then ask a question that they otherwise might not have been willing to ask. In fact, students have told us that being able to come over to play with Huxley made coming to talk to us when they needed information about something serious that much easier. We find that during that first week we probably provide more academic advice and counsel to the freshman class than at any other time including during advising. As students relax, they are willing to share their worries about their choice of major or about classes that they may be finding difficult during this first week, and we can help them through those processes.

At other times in the semester, students will come into the apartment to ask if they can pet Huxley. They will sit on the floor with the dog and just start talking, and slowly it becomes apparent that they have some problem in their life. Christine can be a sympathetic ear and in many cases a source of good advice and counsel.



## **LESSONS LEARNED FROM LIVING IN THE RESIDENCE HALL FOR FOUR YEARS**

The residential floors in Honors Hall are well designed and work extremely well. The ground floor, however, could benefit from a second programming space that need not be as large as the first, but the limitations of having only one large space in the building are obvious because of all of the programming and group events. The hall could also benefit from a greater number of storage areas, but this theme appears to be common in all buildings, including new homes. When the hall was first built, some discussion took place about increasing the number of floors; however, the projections for growth at that time were modest and did not justify the increased expense. Those very conservative growth projections were mistaken; incoming first-year honors students could easily fill at least one or two more floors.

Not all the activities or programs will be successful. What seems like an exciting program to the leadership team may sometimes fall flat with the students. For this reason, after the first year, a greater emphasis was placed on programs designed and run by students through the Hall Council; that adjustment significantly increased the success of the programs. But by the same token, just because a program does not run well the first time does not mean that it will not work another time. Each incoming class has its own personality, and events that appeal to students one year will not necessarily appeal to another group and vice versa. A good example is the Friday Night Board Games program. The first year it was held in the RFL apartment, and at best half a dozen students would attend each Friday night. This group was particularly interested in complex games like “The Settlers of Catan,” “Pandemic,” “Diplomacy,” and other strategy games. The next year, Board Game Night was incredibly popular, and we had to move it from the RFL apartment into the multipurpose room because so many people participated. While a group of students continued to play many of the hard-core strategy games, students also played a wide range of games from “Monopoly” to “Taboo” to “Quelf” and “Pokemon.” That no strong group of chess players has yet to emerge remains a surprise.

Another example of change from year to year would be the World Dance Club. This program was offered during the first year of Honors Hall by two of the RAs who were particularly interested in folk dance and swing dance. We purchased a portable dance floor for the multipurpose room because the World Dance Club was extremely popular. Several years later it was one of the few RA-run activities that drew only three or four attendees each time.

After the first year in the hall, much as we had enjoyed ourselves, we were both overwhelmed because we were at times quite literally working during all of our waking hours. We maintained a policy of keeping the apartment door open whenever one of us was home in order to be welcoming to students. We realized that we needed some time for ourselves. With this in mind, we carefully programmed time into each day when we close the apartment door and have time to ourselves. In addition, when possible, we try not to have RFL programs on Saturdays, thus giving us at least part of the week to ourselves.

Another important lesson was not to fall into the trap of generalizing about undergraduate students. West Virginia University has an undeserved reputation as a top party school; while it is true that our students know how to have a good time, our experience suggests that they are no better or worse than those students at many other institutions, including ones that claim to have stronger academic populations. Unfortunately, faculty and staff, who should know better, will sometimes buy into this image; thus it was almost an item of faith amongst Residence Life staff that one could not hold successful programs on Friday and Saturday nights. Just the opposite proved true; regularly run programs on Friday and Saturday nights, in fact, attracted students who wished to have an alternative to the more traditional student activities on those evenings. While on some occasions the number of students at these activities may be small, providing these opportunities for students who do not wish to go out to the venues in town and might otherwise simply stay in their rooms is important.

One unintended consequence of the success of the first-year program in Honors Hall has been a growing dissatisfaction among

the students concerning the level of programming for years two through four. While prior to opening Honors Hall, students were satisfied with the programs offered, they are now requesting a higher level of programming for these later years, and the design of more programs for the later years has become a priority of the WVU Honors College.

## **AN OUTSIDE PERSPECTIVE**

In late fall 2012, owing to the midyear resignation of their RFL, Keith unexpectedly became the faculty leader for Summit Hall, the residence hall adjacent to Honors Hall. This experience was important because we learned some significant lessons about the nature of different halls and their students. While Summit Hall does have honors students on its top floors, in many respects it is a normal residence hall; in fact, in the past it had earned a rather poor reputation. Contrary to the views of some colleagues and standard stereotypes, the honors students were not that different from the rest of the students in Summit Hall. In fact, the vast majority of the students in Summit Hall, just like the students in Honors Hall, were keen to get a good education, do well, and graduate in a timely manner. Relatively few students in Summit were disruptive and apparently cared little about their education. The higher level of judicial incidents occurring in Summit could, in the main, be attributed to this small group of bad apples. Unfortunately, for many people this problematic group defined the hall and its residents and dictated the types of programming being offered. The consequence was that the students who were interested in training and education were perhaps not getting the services they actually needed.

The other major lesson learned from the association with Summit Hall was that space can significantly impact the ability to provide quality programs. Summit is a much older hall than Honors Hall. While Summit offers suite-style residences to students, it does not have a good, large programming space. The only space that can be used for large programs is the cafeteria, which is not available until after closing time and then must be cleared of the tables and chairs. Without doubt, the cafeteria was a much less warm and

friendly environment than that provided by the multipurpose room in Honors Hall. Clearly students in Summit Hall would have liked to have some of the programs offered in Honors Hall, especially those that utilized the multipurpose room, but the lack of an equivalent space created a significant barrier to scheduling comparable activities in Summit Hall.

## **CONCLUSION**

One of the underlying intentions of creating the Honors Hall as a first-year residential experience was building a strong community of honors students who would go on, ultimately, to be active both as individuals and as a group in the life of West Virginia University. Given these are amongst the most able students attending WVU, the hope was that they would become leaders at the university. While honors students have always been involved in the institution, the Honors Hall experiment has produced a significant increase in the number of honors students taking leadership positions across the institution. The obvious change has been in the area of student government, which was traditionally dominated by students from the Greek system. Honors students had been part of student government, holding important posts before such as president. In 2013, however, the two major tickets running for student government were characterized as the Geeks and the Greeks. The outcome of the election was a landslide victory: the Geeks, with a ticket that was close to 100% honors students, swept the board. Both tickets for the 2014 elections were dominated by members of the honors college. This change in the student leadership of WVU has led to a different set of priorities being established by the student government: academic reputation and academic achievement. Certainly this shift in the composition of the Student Government Association is a direct result of the community building that is occurring in Honors Hall.

On an individual level, Honors Hall has had a significant impact on student success. Students who, as entering freshmen, were extremely shy and interacted poorly with their peers, developed through their time in Honors Hall. They became more social,

even becoming the leaders of student organizations, something that would have seemed inconceivable during their first semester. Particularly because of the increased ability, garnered through Honors Hall interactions, to recognize and support truly outstanding students early in their career, the already-excellent level of competitiveness of WVU students for prestigious external awards has increased. In 2013, the Honors College had its first Rhodes finalist in many years, and the number of students obtaining Fulbright scholarships significantly increased.

Residing in Honors Hall for the past five years has been a remarkable experience, allowing us to share the lives of our students. We would strongly encourage other academic families who have the opportunity to work closely in a living-learning environment to do so. As we have watched the students grow, we have also grown in understanding, compassion, and admiration for these young people at the beginning of their adult lives. Many senior academics and administrators in particular are asked what their legacy will be. For many, it is a particular piece of academic work or the development of an endowment to support the work of their particular unit. If asked this question before living in Honors Hall, we would have answered without hesitation: the establishment of the West Virginia University Honors College. Now, however, after quite clearly having a significant positive impact on the young men and women in Honors Hall, we would claim that they are our legacy to the future. We are inordinately proud of that legacy and will continue to be, even when we, like our students, must venture forth from Hogwarts.

## REFERENCE

- Garbutt, K. (2006). "Ah well! I am their leader; I really ought to follow them": Leading student leaders. *Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council*, 7(2): 45–48.

**APPENDIX 1****Program Events During 2012–2013 Academic Year**

<b>Event</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Responsible Individuals</b>
Student/Faculty Dinners	Once a week	RFL/LLCS
Book at Bedtime	Twice a week	RFL/LLCS
Friday Board Games Night	Once a week	RFL/LLCS
Cookies & Conversation with Prof	Once a month	RFL/LLCS
Women in STEM dinner with the provost	1	RFL/LLCS
RFL in the Lobby	3	RFL/LLCS
Friday Night Fun	Once a week	RHC
Saturday Night Fun	Once a week	RHC
Hall Council class	Once a week	RFL/RHC
Bolton Writing Workshop	10	LLCS/Keisha Kibler
Honors Book Club	12	LLCS/Dr. Claycomb
Banned Books Week Celebration	13	RFL/LLCS/RHC
Ice Cream Social	13	RFL/LLCS/RHC/RAs
Early move-in ice cream social	1	RFL/LLCS
4.0 celebration	1	RFL/LLCS/RHC
Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra concerts	3	LLCS

Div Music & Theatre performances	6	LLCS
Tutoring	Three times a week + individual hours	Dr. Leichter Krause
Floor programs	Once a month	RAs
Community Service Club	Once a week	RAs
Quidditch Club	Once a week	RAs
Photography Club	Once a week	RAs
Student Conduct Board	Once a week	RAs
Fitness Club	Once a week	RAs
Cooking Club	Every 2 weeks	RAs
Glee Club	Every 2 weeks	RAs
Games Club	Every 2 weeks	RAs
Craft Club	Every 2 weeks	RAs
World Dance Club	Every 2 weeks	RAs
Science Club	Every 2 weeks	RAs
Insanity Workout	Daily	RAs
Honors Student Association	Every 2 weeks	Honors Student Ambassador/RFL Oversight
Superbowl party	1	RHC

Off-Campus Housing presentation	1	RHC
Harry Potter Trivia Challenge	1	RA
Blood Drive	3	RHC/RAs
WELLWVU programs	15	WC/WELLWVU staff
Bike the Rail Trail	1	WC
Graduate Programs in Business & Economics	1	Dr. Claycomb
Amizade presentation	1	Dr. Claycomb
Summer Study Abroad programs presentation	1	Dr. Claycomb
Med School Reality v Grey's Anatomy Drama	1	Dr. Leichter Krause
Alumni Pharmacy panel	1	Dr. Leichter Krause
History Alive!	1	Dr. Leichter Krause
Operation ID	1	RA/University Police Dept
Alcohol program	1	RA/University Police Dept
Meet the Tutors	2	RHC
Peer-led workshops	20	Tutors w/ oversight Dr. Leichter Krause
One-time programs	56	Hall Council w/ oversight of RFL/ RHC/LLCS



## APPENDIX 2

### West Virginia University Honors Hall Vision and Mission Statement

#### *Vision*

The Honors Hall will provide a high-quality living-learning environment for academically talented students at West Virginia University. It will provide these students with intellectually challenging programs and encourage their personal development in service and leadership by providing them with the skills needed to fulfill their potential as leaders in the university community, and ultimately the state, the nation and the world.

#### *Mission Statement*

The program is committed to giving students a high-quality, enhanced intellectual experience.

The program is committed to the social and personal welfare of its students as well as to their intellectual development.

The program will provide an environment where individual and cultural differences are respected and valued.

The program provides an environment that promotes personal and professional integrity among its students.

The program fosters a strong sense of community in its members.

The program encourages, supports and expects its students to be active in service and to become leaders in the university community and beyond.

#### *Guiding Principles*

The program will promote its core values: personal and professional integrity, tolerance, academic excellence, service to the community, leadership, and a global perspective.

The program will be open to individual and cultural differences and create a living-learning environment that is conducive to the expression of multi-cultural values.

Profound intellectual experiences are not confined to the traditional classroom.

The program must be flexible and respond to the needs of its students; by extension a one-size-fits-all approach is inappropriate.

Programs developed initially for the Honors Hall should, where appropriate and resources permit, be extended to the entire university community.

CHAPTER 23

## Anomalies and Ambiguities of a Faculty-in-Residence

PAUL STROM

UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO, BOULDER

The idea of housing faculty with college students on a campus can certainly be traced back centuries to the college structures within universities such as the University of Paris, Oxford University, and Cambridge University. To be a faculty-in-residence at a modern university requires a conscious decision to live in an ambiguous and sometimes anomalous space that connects housing operations and academics. I occupy such a space, along with my wife and dog, a Golden Retriever, at the University of Colorado, Boulder.

Here is a most curious anomaly—that there exists a faculty residence at all within the domain of the Department of Housing. The Department of Housing is a business. Staff members keep careful accounts of costs and returns per square foot. A residence space for faculty, without rent for human occupants, without charges for utilities, and without a required meal plan, is a drain on the housing

business and contrary to a basic business plan. Thankfully, providing new spaces for faculty residences on campus fits somewhere in their calculations. According to the administrators that I have talked with in the Department of Housing, no structure or schedule exists for conversations between that unit and the academic side of the university on the matter of a shared vision of what higher education should look like here in the faculty apartment. The organizational lines merge somewhere, but such a connection does not exist at any level where faculty and students reside. The organizational lines connect only in the exosphere of administrative hierarchies. The money streams of housing do not mingle with the money streams of academics. Thus, having free space devoted to academics in the residence halls is anomalous indeed.

Although I serve as the director of the residential component of the honors program, I am still not clear who decides who is to live in this nice space my family occupies and for how long. The director of the honors program and one of the deans in the College of Arts and Sciences are involved in such decisions as well as several administrators in the Department of Housing, but no one (or maybe each one) claims ultimate authority. What in-residence faculty members are obligated to do and to whom they answer remain murky at best. No one seems to know and no one has, thankfully, asked for an accounting from me. Both the director of the honors program and the associate dean inquire occasionally about how it is going, but mostly they seem to be satisfying a curiosity rather than determining if I am meeting clear expectations. Colleagues in the College of Arts and Sciences cannot quite believe that a member of the faculty would choose to live in a residence hall and enjoy it. For their part, the Department of Housing requires a signed lease from us, but there is no mention of duties, no mention of the length of occupancy, no mention of utilities, and no regular financial obligations except for a lease for dog “guardians” in the faculty apartment, which requires a non-refundable payment of \$300 and then an additional \$30 a month pet rent: a most peculiar anomaly, especially in the otherwise liberal and pet-friendly city of Boulder.

As a faculty member in the College of Arts and Sciences, I continue to be inspired by the ideals of a liberal education described variously by many, but beautifully by John Henry Newman in the mid-nineteenth century. A liberal education, he observes, fosters “a habit of mind which lasts throughout life of which the attributes are freedom, equitableness, calmness, moderation, and wisdom” (as cited in Palfreyman, 2008). A formal classroom, 15 weeks of attendance, examinations, lectures, and grades are, perhaps, necessary elements to the acquisition of a good liberal education, but they are not sufficient. The residential honors program is committed to the corollary notions that kitchens, unscheduled conversations among the diverse residents, the sharing of pizza or ice cream, and the modeling of curiosity and imagination from peers are also essential to a liberal education. A further step, it can be argued, is the addition of in-residence faculty members who model the attributes of a liberal education, who encourage pursuit of a liberal education in informal as well as formal contexts, and who provide a gracious welcome to undergraduates into a genuine home on campus. The hope is that a residential space that was once a warehouse for high-achieving 17- and 18-year-old students becomes an integrated community of scholars that includes at least one adult scholar.

While Newman’s list of the attributes of a liberal education appear reasonable and desirable to the maintenance of a civil and secure community of young people, the element of “freedom” as an academic goal introduces, I believe, another ambiguity and an element of instability. The ideal of freedom requires, essentially, a reflective anarchy, a questioning of authority, and thoughtful challenges to accepted orthodoxies and structures. Faculty members who encourage freedom and adventurousness and who model such lifelong commitments become a wild card in a residence. Their behavior and influences are not entirely predictable even if they are civil. The precision of a Newtonian-style social structure gives way to social groupings more like the probability clouds of quantum mechanics when faculty promoting the ideals of a liberal education are placed in-residence. The hope is that faculty and students will,

together, and through experience, find creative ways to integrate living in a community and learning in that same community.

My Partner-in-Residence and I, along with the Dog-in-Residence, have hosted honors faculty meetings and departmental functions. We have hosted meetings of administrative staff. We have welcomed spontaneous gatherings of students that were enhanced with pizza or homemade desserts. We visit with student neighbors in the hallway. We have handed out candy to costumed residents in October, and our kitchen was used to prepare a Thanksgiving dinner for about 30 students. One of my favorite planned events is modeled after the *Café Scientifique*. We call it *Café Arete*, employing an important term from Aristotle meaning “excellence.” One of our honors faculty members makes a 15-minute presentation in our apartment on some area of his or her research. A dozen students are invited to attend and respond to the presentation over dessert. Faculty are happy to have another opportunity to become acquainted with students. The faculty also report their appreciation for the opportunity to articulate something essential in their life of the mind in just 15 minutes and in a context where grades are not given. Honors students, who have only known faculty in formal settings, are delighted to discover that their instructors are passionate and curious about many things and that they have histories and families. We have had talks about growing up in Ireland, the social life of bees, and climbing adventures in the Tetons. Recently, as one student was departing and thanking us, he remarked: “I have got to come to more of these.” One student connected with an anthropology professor after her talk and joined the professor’s research team. From my perspective, *Café Arete* celebrates the intellect, experiences, and curiosity of students as well as faculty. *Café Arete* highlights how some in our community have embraced lifelong habits of the mind that exhibit freedom as well as equitableness and wisdom. Several of my colleagues have declared to students, without the least shame, that they “fell in love” with history or anthropology when they were undergraduates because of the encouragement of a faculty mentor. An apartment within a residential academic community is a wonderful place for such transformative experiences—with chocolate cake.

No single blueprint exists for organizing structures and programs consistent with the ideals of a liberal education. I certainly do not have any such blueprint; I am making much of this up as I go along. Academic stakeholders operate in the realm of ambiguity. Important to this creative experiment is that I am consciously in dialog with my student neighbors about these complexities. Despite the ambiguities and anomalies, the inclusion of faculty-in-residence provides a wonderful opportunity to create a self-replicating community of learners who offer some hope of manifesting the loftiest ideals of human education. Such a community is an antidote to the disturbing trend at institutions of higher education to balkanize learning into narrowly defined academic disciplines insulated from the lived experiences of students. Inclusive residential academic communities are an opportunity to fracture the hierarchies of power and age-based segregation that are too often a part of the experience on university campuses. Genuine learning communities will be those that succeed in integrating, in an organic and self-conscious way, a wide diversity of lived experiences as well as educational ambitions into a residential context.

## REFERENCE

Palfreyman, D. (Ed.). (2008). *The Oxford tutorial: 'Thanks, you taught me how to think.'* (2nd ed., p. 6). Oxford, UK: Oxford Center for Higher Education Policy Studies.





# HOUSING HONORS

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PART IV:  
THE FUTURE OF  
HOUSING HONORS



## CHAPTER 24

# The Place to Be: Designing a City-Connected Honors Residence in Rotterdam

REMKO REMIJNSE  
HOGESCHOOL ROTTERDAM

**T**raditionally, university students in the Netherlands, even honors students, find accommodations on their own; they will rent a room in a house and live together with other students who have independently rented a room in that same building. The typical Dutch student residence is an old, centrally located house that will accommodate five to eight students. While these students would be complete strangers when they begin their time living together, they quickly become a cohesive community, deciding for themselves how their life in the space will be organized by setting up cooking schedules and other agreed-upon formats for using the communal space. The house itself is a dynamic entity in which the living room becomes the most important place; that is where the social activities take place. The students living in the house and their guests spend

little time alone in their private bedrooms. Therefore one of the main criteria for students looking for a student house is the quality of the social space. In that respect, Dutch student housing closely resembles student housing for honors students in the United States. The house is more than just a place to study; it is an opportunity to be part of a community of scholars. The main difference between a Dutch student house and U.S. honors housing is that honors housing is essentially defined as being occupied by honors students only. Living in honors housing opens the door to interacting with other honors students, participating in seminars and activities, and being actively involved in the honors program or honors college. The honors housing community provides a living-learning community for students where they can benefit from the attention their housemates give to academic excellence while maintaining a vibrant social life.

Because honors student housing is an emerging phenomenon in the Netherlands, a workshop was held to see what kind of residential space Dutch students would devise for themselves.\* One of its main goals was to create architectural space that would combine an active-learning environment with a strong social environment. Thus, on October 3, 2013, in the middle of the second International Honors Conference held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 23 architectural students from the Hogeschool Rotterdam (University of Applied Sciences in Rotterdam) attended a “Housing for Honors Students” workshop. The students participating in this one-day workshop were charged with developing concepts and models for an honors residence, a facility projected as being located at a riverside site in the city. The students—most of whom were just beginning their architectural study—met first with Linda Frost, who shared her research on the honors housing situation in the U.S. Then, under my guidance as their architect instructor, they developed their designs

\*The students participating in this workshop include Ela Akkoyun, Greg Amidjojo, Sewak Aramjan, Rick Bijlsma, Mathieu van den Bos, Nathanael Döri, Bart-Jan van der Gaag, Wim van Heeswijk, Maruli Heijman, Youri van den Heiligenberg, Michael van der Keur, Wessel Klootwijk, Clif Kuik, Riben Lewis, Emma de Nie, Mark van Os, Oscar Rosier, Mehran Samiyi, Thomas Slegtenhorst, Patrick Steenbergen, Abel Tschopp, Yusuf Tuncer, and Abel van Unen.

and spent a long night in the studio, building their models. The next day, they presented their projects to Frost and the celebrated Dutch architect Herman Hertzberger. After this architectural baptism by fire, the students spent the following weeks revising and refining their designs.

The efforts by these students were, in reality, more than an academic exercise: it was an opportunity to create Dutch honors housing by renovating two empty office buildings in downtown Rotterdam. The municipality of Rotterdam supported the possible transformation of these buildings into honors student housing but with the understanding that the post-war architecture of the buildings would be maintained. The location was ideal, providing an excellent connection with the downtown area via public transport, and in both shape and size, the buildings offered a great opportunity to be transformed into something that would not only benefit the honors students living there, but residents of the larger neighborhood as well. The students were given free rein with this project and were encouraged to develop creative proposals for the honors residential space and the living-learning community they wanted to create. Apart from the student rooms and the residence hall, each building had to have meeting spaces for studying, hosting guest speakers, relaxing, and gathering for social events.

Five main questions were posed of each design:

- Why would honors students want to live there?
- How is the honors program integrated in the design?
- What is the interaction between the building with the program and with the city?
- How is the program organized in a way that stimulates both study and social activities?
- How does the design respond to the existing structure and post-war architecture?

A six-week design studio gave the students the opportunity to work in groups of three and four on redesigning the ground floor of the building. The most interesting observation is that the students'

designs all included a public space on the ground floor where city life and student life could come together. Some designs proposed a student bar/restaurant run by the honors students but open to the public, creating a place within the residence where everyone was welcome. Other designs proposed space on the ground floor where companies and students could work together on innovative projects. Of course, placing a public or semi-public program on the ground floor turns the traditional gated student community into an open social and business environment. Students and city become more integrated, and the borders between different social classes become less rigid. Naturally, questions arose as to how to organize such a public space on the ground floor—whether students would be safe in that environment and who would be responsible for the space itself. The designs by the students attempted to respond to these and other interesting questions. A sample of their designs follows this essay and illustrates how they bring the honors students living in the space into real interaction with their block and neighborhood.

After the design studio ended, we presented the final projects to the municipality. The city leaders were enthusiastic but remained undecided whether they should renovate the pre-war apartment blocks or demolish them. In both cases, the understanding was that the site would be developed into student housing that would include honors and non-honors students.

In the end, city officials decided to build a new building in a place much less socially interactive than the initially proposed apartment block. Still, architectural students at the Hogeschool Rotterdam continued to explore the honors student housing project for two more years as a studio project. The conversation in Rotterdam about honors housing started with the students' vision, but it has continued, generating even more designs that stretch the boundaries of what honors housing can and may well be.

**ROTTERDAM STUDENT WORKSHOP DESIGNS FOR A  
RENOVATED HONORS RESIDENCE IN THE CITY**

**Workshop: Housing for Honors Students  
Rotterdam, October 3, 2013**



## Results Workshop

### NEEDS

Sleeping

Cooking (Dining Area))

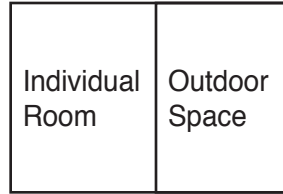
Workspace

Relax Space — — —

Garden

Outdoor Space

Bicycle Storage



Private Facilities for Individuals

Shared Space for Social Integration

#### Private

Sleeping

Studying

#### Shared

Cook

Study

Relax

Storage

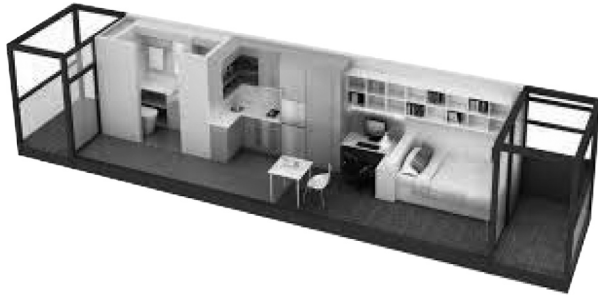
Outdoor Spaces

HONORS HOUSING

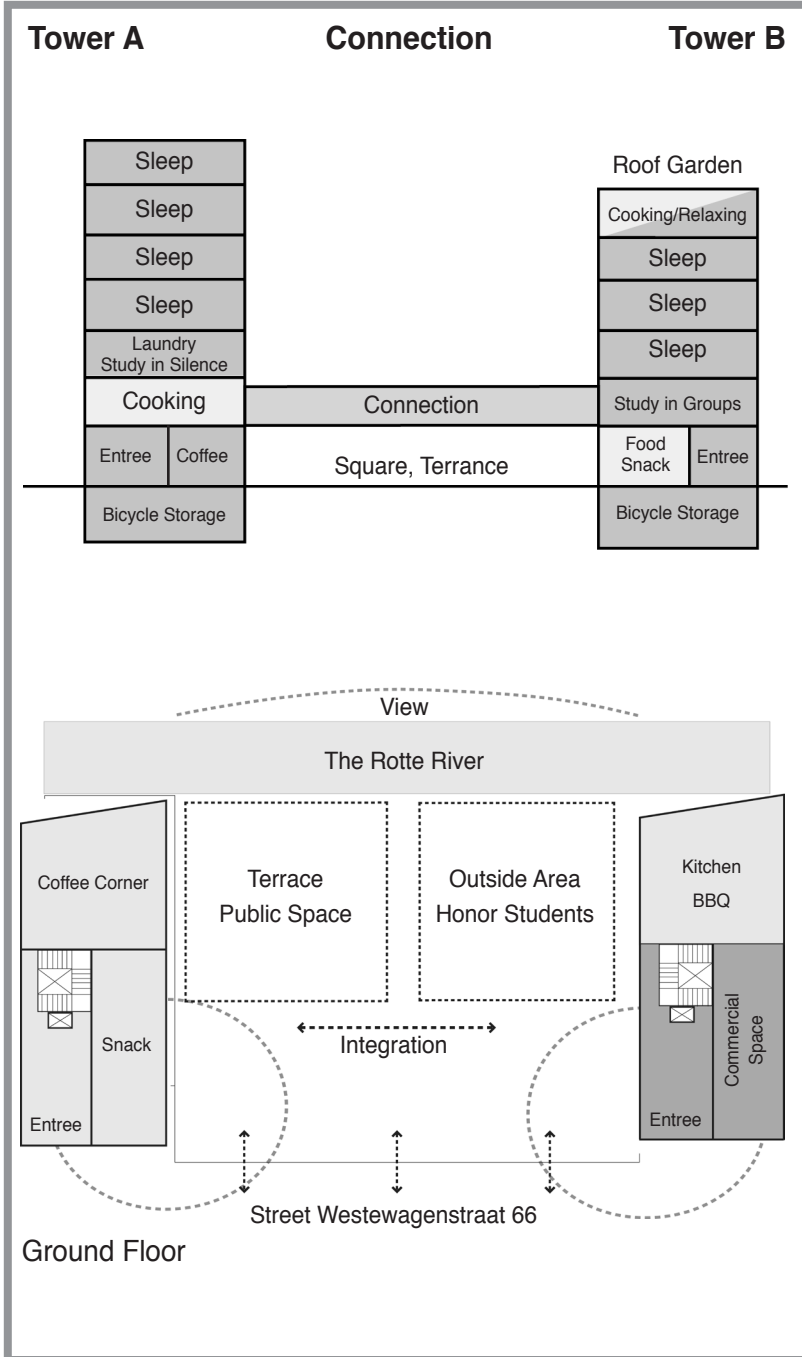


Studio Housing

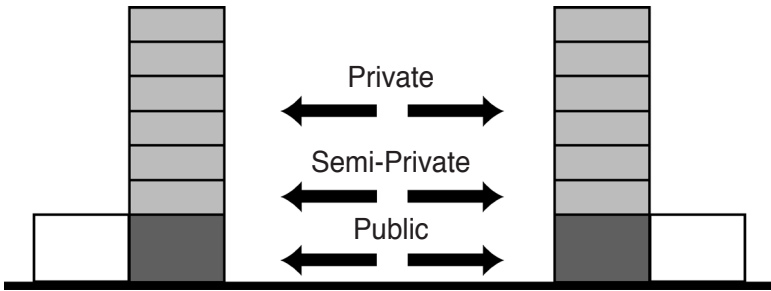
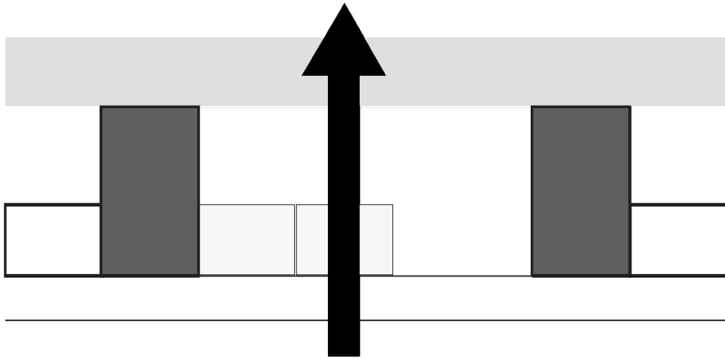
No Interaction



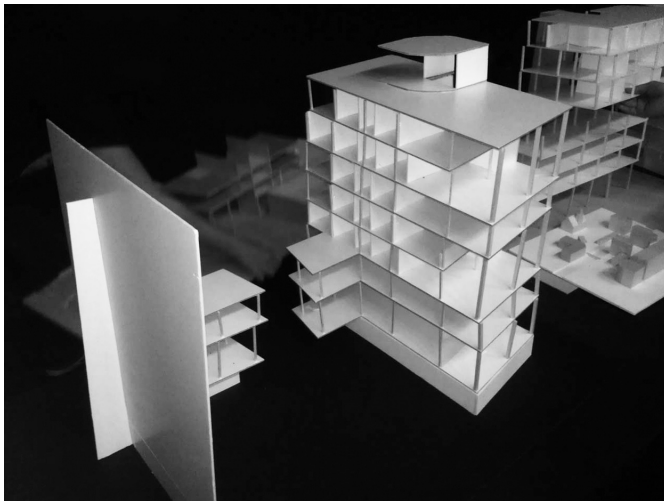
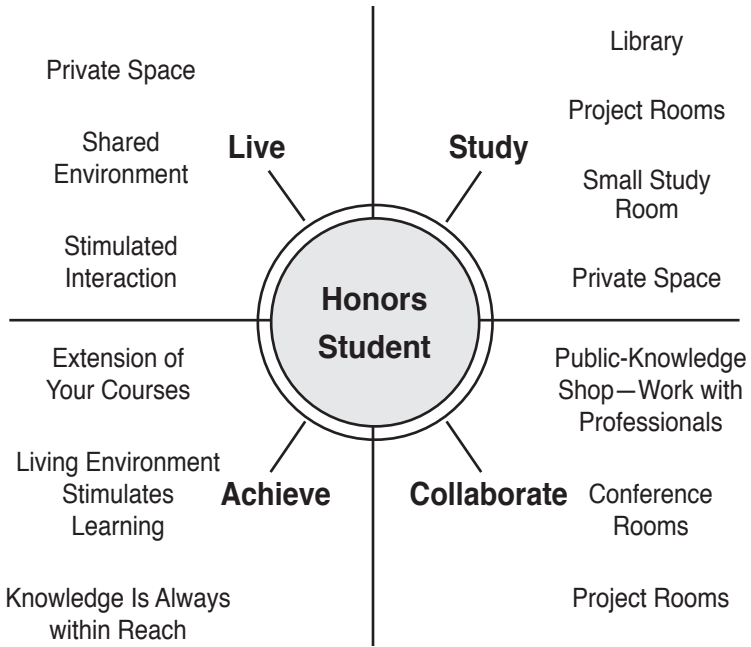
Depressed. Where are the other students?



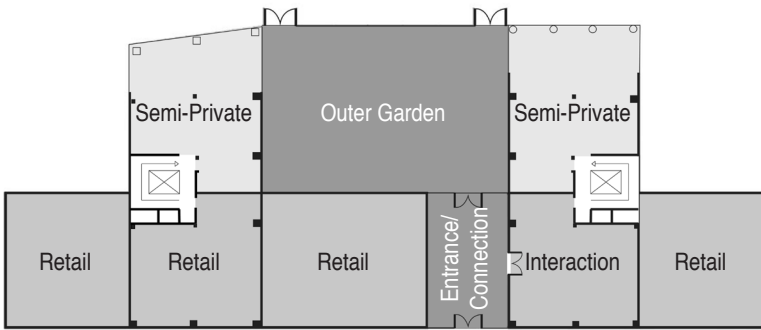
Concept



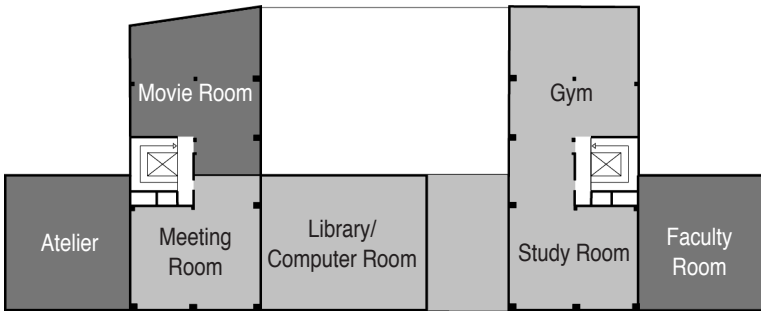
## Why Honors Students Should Live Here



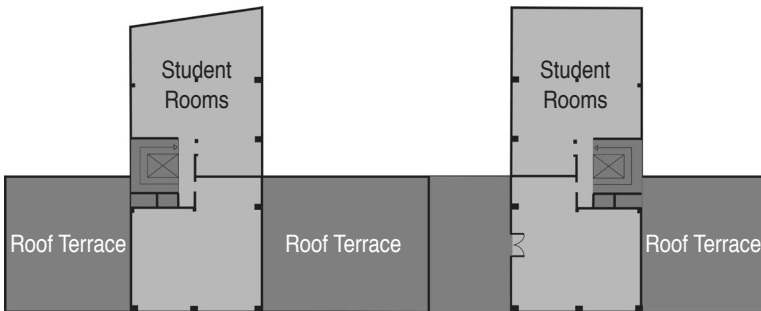
### Ground Floor



### First Floor



### Second Floor



# Impressions



# Results of Design Studio



**Concept**



**Assignment:**

To optimize the first two levels of both towers at the Westewagenstraat at the center of Rotterdam.

**Target:**

To get the Westewagenstraat back to its former glory by designing an explorative and adventurous oasis of small handcraft stores with space for cafes and restaurants.

**Target Group:**

Young urban professionals, shoppers, students.



Using the different programs to shift the facade, which creates a characteristic and more adventurous street image. Each program keeps its original facade, which makes them individual blocks. The concept bends the traditional shopping streets into a small urban safari.



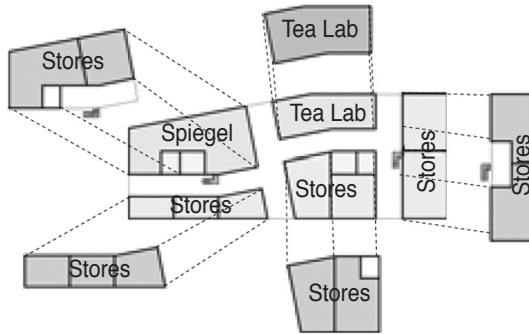
*Explorative—Adventurous—Characterizing*



Urban Scale Small and Narrow

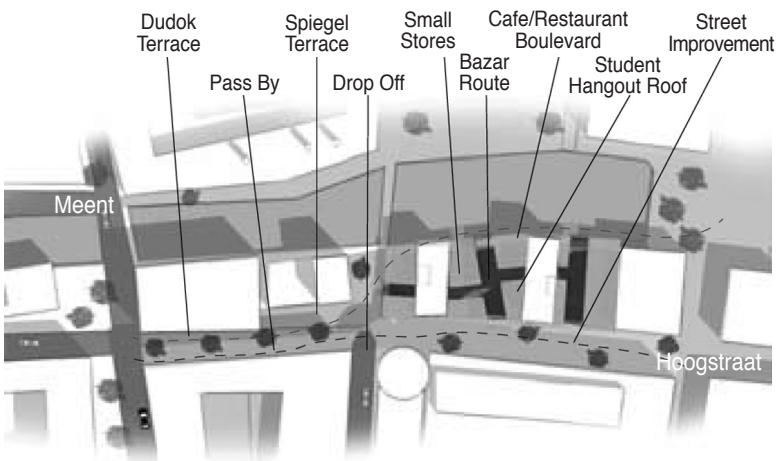
Large Scale Panoramic View

## Design



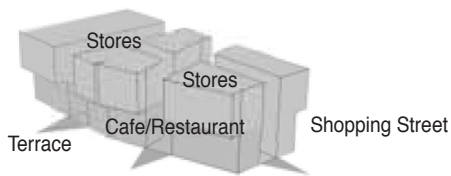
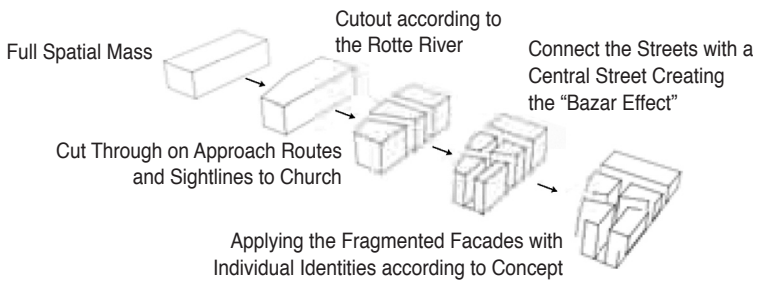
### Design Targets:

- Designing on a Small Scale
- First Levels Are Separated from the Towers
- First Levels' Facade Is in Contrast with the Towers
- Explorative and Adventurous Atmosphere
- Urban Scale Back to the Human Scale
- Creating a Contrast with Bigger Scales
- Connecting the Meent with the Hoogstraat
- Additional Program on the Existing Witte de Withstraat and Nieuwe Binnenweg





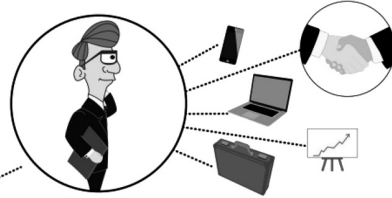
## Process



## Target Group



## Young Urban Professionals and Entrepreneurs



## Program

### Face-to-Face Business Networking



## Design Principles

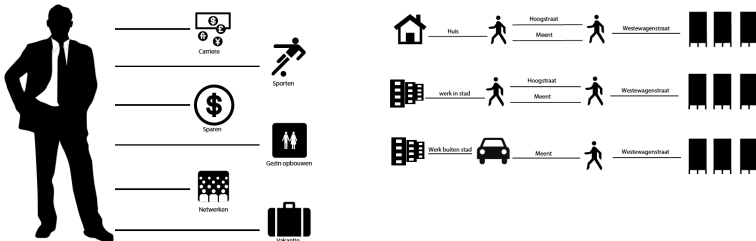
- Focus on the Target Group
- Encourage Them to Talk and Share
- Engage Beginners and Attract Experts
- Plan for Today's and Tomorrow's Business
- Create a Relaxed Atmosphere
- Flexibility in Exhibition Space
- Space for Gatherings
- Room for Food and Coffee
- Lounge Room
- Presentation Room
- Room for Training and Lessons
- Outside Semi-Private Space for Gatherings
- Entrance Visible from Surroundings



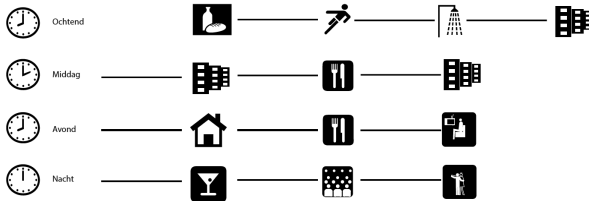
## Place 2 Be



### Target Group/Storyboard



Activiteiten gerangschikt per dagdeel



### Design Principles

- Connection Back to the City Center
- Internal Relation
- Internal-External Relation (Students' Building and Surroundings)
- Contrast
- Orientation of the New Plan (Light, Wind, View, etc.)
- Relationship with Water (Rotte)
- Green
- Adventurous Route
- Daring Configurations of the Masses
- Interaction between Target Groups
- New Identity to the Street



CHAPTER 25

We the Students:  
Surveying Spaces and Envisioning  
the Future

TATIANA CODY  
EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY

RACHAEL POE  
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE AT CHATTANOOGA

To apprehend the panoply of spaces that house honors on a national scale requires input from administrators and faculty. Nevertheless, one of the most important and often overlooked perspectives is that of honors students themselves. Admittedly, students are transient. After four or five years, most complete their undergraduate degrees, leaving their campuses, clubs, and honors programs behind after graduation. Despite their relatively brief time on campus, however, no one has more firsthand experience concerning housing honors students than honors students themselves, and some current honors students will certainly become honors

administrators and faculty in the future. In the fall of 2012, honors students were given the opportunity to respond to a three-question survey about housing. The survey collected the opinions of current honors students regarding what they liked or did not like about their current honors spaces and what they imagined honors structures and spaces might be in the future. The survey was distributed to the National Collegiate Honors Council listserv; approximately 300 students responded. The survey was not intended to gather statistically relevant data; its purpose was to add student voices to this ongoing conversation.

After first obtaining approval to disseminate this survey from the Institutional Review Board for the Study of Human Subjects at Eastern Kentucky University, we forwarded a link to the survey on SurveyMonkey to the NCHC listserv. Directors were asked to forward this link to their students, and the students were then asked to answer, providing as much detail and commentary as they wished, the following three questions:

- If there were one thing that you could change today about your current honors structures, what would it be? Budget should NOT be a factor in your response.
- What kind of spaces, structures, and buildings do you think honors programs and colleges will occupy thirty years from now, or roughly when your children might be in them?
- What spaces or structures, if any, do you think honors will occupy one hundred years from now?

The first question allowed students to candidly weigh in on the current state of their honors spaces. Responses varied widely. Many students desired larger spaces, both common shared space and space for student housing, while others called for the replacement of traditional dorm rooms with apartment-style suites. A few voiced a desire for greener living spaces. Some respondents demanded better access to computers, printers, and Wi-Fi. Many students noted that their honors programs inhabited the oldest buildings on campus and, in light of this, asked for renovation of the current spaces or construction of new spaces. The desire for honors

spaces that encourage community was a common thread. One student noted, "I would make the central commons larger. . . . This would give students from throughout the program the opportunity for more exposure to each other. From my experience, the best benefit of the program is interaction with other honors students." Along the same lines, another student observed, "It would be nice to have more space to relax and enjoy the company of fellow honors students." Respondents were divided, however, on the issue of separation: whether honors programs should house their students in strictly honors spaces or whether honors students and non-honors students should be housed together. Of those who addressed this issue, most argued that honors housing should exclude non-honors students. One student went so far as to say, "We need more spacious and better furnishings. We are the highest-achieving students at the university, and the administration should want us to be more comfortable so we stay." Another commented, "I would like a more modern space. We are the top group of the university's students, and we get the oldest building on campus. If they gave us any other building, we would make that building look twenty times better." These two responses represent the views of several other students; comments like these, however, convey a sense of entitlement and elitism that we feel honors programs should guard against.

Responses to the second question, which asked students to speculate about honors spaces and structures 30 years into the future, were also mixed. Some were pessimistic; one student, for example, drearily replied that the honors program will still inhabit "the smallest building on campus." Generally, students' responses to this question indicate that the buildings and structures of honors will be much the same in 30 years but more energy efficient and eco-friendly. Many students communicated a desire for their honors program to have full control of its own residence halls and buildings on campus, while some went a step further by imagining their honors program as a separate campus entirely. These respondents envisioned a space apart from non-honors students where, as one respondent imagined, honors students will "live in tightknit communities, cooking, learning, and doing everything together."

Another said, "I think honors colleges will have their own buildings on campus, completely separate from the campus structure." Not every student, however, went this far:

In all honesty, I prefer to have my classes integrated with the rest of the college community so that the honors program isn't set aside by the rest of the university, but rather integrated with the university. We are already set aside too much in my opinion.

Others imagined that honors students would live among non-honors students but they would enjoy specialized honors-only spaces such as science labs, greenhouses, and art or music studios.

Having students speculate about honors spaces 100 years into the future was the objective of the last question. When answering the previous two questions, a handful of students mentioned a desire for more environmentally conscious living within honors programs; evidently, most students did not feel that greener living would be feasible in the present day, or even in 30 years. When answering the final question, however, the students did imagine a future in which greener living would be a priority. Additionally, many respondents envisioned not just the decline of a physical honors program, but also of the collegiate system as it currently exists, arguing that most learning and communication will eventually take place entirely online. On the other hand, one student speculated:

I believe the honors program will be one of the few programs on college campuses to not have converted entirely to online/digital administration. I believe it will maintain a physical presence on campus to be easily accessible to the students and assist in ways that a computer or website cannot.

Again, some respondents maintained that honors programs should be separate from the rest of the university. One commented:

I think honors programs will be mostly phased out for more condensed and streamlined higher education, or they



will become completely separate entities from their original universities, essentially “public Ivy League schools” so they can specifically focus on developing more gifted students.

Of course, no one can definitively say what will happen to honors housing in 30 or 100 years, yet these honors students’ ideas reveal what is most important to them about their honors programs. Although respondents disagreed on several points, the overall trends in their answers are important to note: honors programs need to have more space, utilize better technology, and be more environmentally friendly. Perhaps these answers seem unimaginative and disappointing. After all, when asked to dream big, most students did not dare to dream bigger than greener living and faster Internet, both of which are currently feasible. The students made no mention of futuristic, cutting-edge technology, and few students envisioned architectural spaces dramatically different from those of the present day.

The goal of this survey was to allow students to envision the possibilities of ideal honors accommodations, but the students, by and large, failed to produce interesting or imaginative responses. One explanation for their lack of imagination is tunnel vision: honors students are frequently insulated within their honors program or honors college or consumed by their academic work. Conferences may be an important opportunity for students to observe what honors students from around the country are doing and the way other honors programs are run and how they are housed. Thus honors administrators and faculty should encourage their students to take advantage of the many perspectives offered at conferences. The student voice is important, but an informed student voice is even better. Regardless of how informed honors students are, however, for many the most important aspect of their honors program is the community it engenders. Structures have the ability to shape these communities. Every honors program should carefully consider its mission and vision when designing the spaces that house honors, for, ultimately, these spaces will affect the overall atmosphere of the program and define its future.



## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**LARRY ANDREWS** is Dean Emeritus of the Honors College and Professor Emeritus of English at Kent State University. His Rutgers PhD in Comparative Literature led to a 41-year academic career that included teaching in Poland and the USSR. He has published on Russian, French, and African American literature, as well as on honors history and fundraising.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS

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## ABOUT THE NCHC MONOGRAPH SERIES

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

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

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

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## NCHC Monographs & Journals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## NCHC Monographs & Journals

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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