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At the University of Toledo, a growing and vital University Honors Program assists this open admissions institution to attract and retain academically talented students. A dedicated space for honors, a separate interdisciplinary curriculum, and the opportunity to do research combine to attract honors students to the university.

Honors as a Recruiting Magnet

The mission of The University of Toledo (UT) is to provide students with a liberal education while preparing them to succeed in their personal and professional endeavors. The university is an open admissions institution with a fall 1997 enrollment of more than 20,000 students. Of that number, almost 17,000 are undergraduates, and just under 800 are members of the University Honors Program (UHP). At an open admissions institution, honors can serve the university's mission by attracting high-ability, high-achieving students such as National Merit, National Achievement, and National Hispanic Scholars who might otherwise not consider UT. In its recruitment literature, the program promises potential students that being part of honors at UT is the best of both worlds. They can be members of a small honors community, yet have the advantages associated with being at a large research university in an urban environment. The greatest challenge to the UHP is to nurture our honors students within our community and to prepare them to become future leaders of the larger community, whether in Toledo or elsewhere. Ideally, an honors program at an urban university will provide its students with the support, the opportunities, and the tools to thrive in such an environment.

History of the University of Toledo

The University of Toledo is one of America's city-founded universities. It was the dream of a newspaper editor, Jesup Wakeman Scott, who donated 160 acres

of land as an endowment to train the young people of Toledo. The institution was founded in 1872 as the Toledo University of Arts and Trades and began offering course work in painting and architectural drawing in an old downtown church in 1875. Three years later, however, the school ceased operation because of insufficient funds. In 1884, the city of Toledo received the remaining assets of the institution and reopened the school in downtown Toledo as the Manual Training School. This city school offered a three-year curriculum with an emphasis on academic and manual training to anyone thirteen years or older. Over the next four decades, the school moved away from the manual training aspect and expanded its curriculum by affiliating with other institutions and by creating its own baccalaureate colleges. In 1928 the city of Toledo passed a bond levy to pay for the construction of a new campus at the western end of the city limits, UT's present location.

By the end of the 1950s, funding the university had become a major problem for the city, as the institution consumed more than 12 percent of the city's budget. However, the city continued its support until 1967, when UT became a state-supported university. With state support in the last three decades, UT has greatly expanded its physical plant, e.g., providing additional on-campus housing for students, building a new Student Recreation Center, and creating new facilities for faculty and students in engineering, pharmacy, chemistry, and the life sciences, as well as the University Honors Program.

Honors at UT

History

An honors program has been in existence at UT since fall semester 1963, when thirty-three students were admitted into a university-wide program. The program began at that time in response to national concerns about the adequacy of higher education in the U.S. during the post-Sputnik era and to UT faculty concerns that outstanding students were not adequately challenged by the regular undergraduate curriculum. The university-wide nature of the program could not be sustained in the early 1970's, in part because of the low number of honors students from the professional colleges, and the program became part of the College of Arts and Sciences. It remained there until the 1987-88 academic year, when there was a renewed commitment from the institution's president and the professional colleges for a university-wide program.

When honors again became a university-wide program, a number of steps were taken to increase the academic rigor of the program. For example, an honors thesis, previously optional, was now required to graduate with honors, and the total number of honors hours needed to graduate with honors was also raised. Several years later, the Honors Readings Conference sequence (taken by first-year honors students in lieu of composition classes) was changed from Pass/No Credit to letter-graded courses. At the time of the change, UT operated under a quarter system, and students usually earned 15 hours of "Pass" in the core honors sequence; changing to letter grades gave students the opportunity to raise their overall GPA while also providing them with a

grade incentive for the work they were asked to complete in the Readings Conference sequence. Currently, students from all baccalaureate colleges (the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Business Administration, Education and Allied Professions, Engineering, Pharmacy, and University College) can graduate with a College Honors citation on their diplomas. Common requirements across college honors programs include the Honors Readings Conference sequence, a 3.3 cumulative GPA, an honors project or thesis, and honors credit for at least one-quarter of the course work required for graduation.

Enrollment in honors has increased dramatically in the last decade, from an incoming class of 137 first-year students in the fall of 1987 to 213 new students in the fall of 1997. The increase can be attributed to several factors. First, there was a very strong institutional commitment from UT to provide honors with a prominent space on campus. Prior to 1994, the program was housed in a small two-story former residential building, separated from the main campus by a four-lane street. By the fall of 1994 honors had moved into its own space, a 141,124 square foot, three-story brick structure, built with \$1,677,000 in state and local funds. The building contains a reception area, two conference rooms, six seminar rooms, faculty and advisor offices, a reading room, and a computer room with links to the university's mainframe and the Internet. Because of its proximity to the two newest residence halls, where honors students have priority for housing, the honors building helps create a community of honors students in a living-learning environment. Since the honors building opened, the three incoming honors classes have averaged 211 students. At approximately the same time as the honors building came on line, the College of Engineering made a major recruiting commitment to increase its share of honors students. In the last three years, the number of engineering honors students has doubled, and engineering honors students will comprise close to half the incoming class in the fall of 1998. The other professional colleges have also increased the number of students admitted into their college honors programs.

Organizational Structure

The director of the UHP reports to the Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs. The director also receives input and advice from the University Honors Council (UHC), consisting of UHP administrators and staff, College Honors Directors, and student representatives from each baccalaureate college as well as from the president of the honors student organization. The UHP provides overall leadership and coordination of the constituent college honors programs, but the administrative structure is a decentralized one requiring a high degree of cooperation and consensus among the constituent colleges for success. A decentralized approach worked fairly well while the program was still relatively small and while there was a consensus on issues such as the optimum university-wide number of honors students. However, as various college honors programs have grown, restricting the number of honors students by college has become an issue that has not yet been resolved. The decentralized approach continues to work well in most instances; however, the formal governance system needs to be clarified and agreed upon to resolve any future possible areas of disagreement.

Funding

Funds for the UHP staff are part of the university's base budget. However, support for the honors academic budget comes from an annual grant from the UT Foundation. The UT Foundation is a private, nonprofit organization that manages and distributes contributions to the institution. As the program has grown in recent years, the grants from the UT Foundation have also increased. These grants are the lifeblood of honors because honors relies heavily on other departments to teach its honors core of readings conferences, multicultural literatures, and interdisciplinary seminars. Most of the remaining money from the UT Foundation grant has been used to reimburse departments for faculty who have taught additional honors courses or honors sections of courses. There are also no UHP budget lines to support students' research and travel. The opportunity to engage in undergraduate research and, sometimes, to be first author of an article while an undergraduate, is a major recruiting point for potential UT honors students who are also heavily recruited by many other institutions. In some years, individual college or departmental funds have been used to send honors students to the National Conference on Undergraduate Research; however, when those discretionary funds are not available, the UHP has to apply for a separate foundation grant.

The Office of Admissions supports the recruitment of honors students, especially National Merit, National Achievement, and National Hispanic Scholars; but there is no designated budget for the recruitment (color brochures, mailings, visits) of honors students. Although the UT Foundation has always granted the honors requests for funds, not having its own budget line is a continuing potential threat to honors.

The lack of a permanent budget for honors is in part attributable to the history of the program. When honors moved from the College of Arts and Sciences back to university-wide status in the late 1980's, insufficient resources were available to accompany the move. Honors has argued for its own permanent, secure funding base in the interim, and such was the recommendation at each stage of the program's five-year review in the 1997-98 academic year. Unfortunately, the university currently does not have the resources available for such funding. However, the UHP received a single gift of \$1,050,000 in October 1997, and as a result of that donation, honors students will have additional support for activities such as attending conferences and participating in unpaid internships. The UHP will work with the UT Foundation to attract additional donors to honors and to refine its data base of honors alumni for future fund raising.

UT Honors Students

Admission of new students to the UHP is competitive and based on high school GPA, ACT and/or SAT scores, an essay, an extracurricular resume, and references. Students entering directly from high school with a 3.75 GPA and an ACT composite of 28 (SAT 1240) are encouraged to apply. Highly motivated students with a GPA of 3.5 and an ACT composite of 25 (SAT 1140) and strong supporting materials are also considered. Over the last five years, students entering directly from high school have a GPA of 3.82 and an ACT composite of 28. Transfer students are admitted based on

their undergraduate GPA, an essay, an extracurricular resume, and faculty recommendations. All admissions to the UHP are granted on a space-available basis. Most National Merit, National Achievement, and National Hispanic Scholars enrolled at the university are also members of the UHP.

More than half the students enrolled at UT in fall 1997 are residents of the metropolitan Toledo area; however, only about a quarter of honors students are from the area. The number of female students enrolled in honors is slightly higher than the 50 percent figure for the entire university. The UHP appears to be underrepresented in the areas of African Americans, Hispanics, Native Americans, and international students when compared to the student body at UT. International students are underrepresented in part because of the difficulties of the international recruiting process and in part because the honors admissions process is driven by GPAs and test scores. Honors has been cooperating with International Student Admissions to simplify the admissions process. Underrepresentation by minority students is also a serious problem. The Office of Admissions is working with the UHP to increase the diversity of honors students. For example, admissions contacts potential National Achievement and National Hispanic Scholars about UT's four-year, full-ride scholarship offer, and the UHP follows with information about honors. Using the admissions data base, the program also sends recruitment literature to minority students in a wider geographic area than usual for UT. In addition, admissions and honors have held a phone-a-thon to connect potential honors students with currently enrolled honors students.

The vast majority of honors students enter directly from high school; however, the number of transfer students applying to the UHP has increased over the last few years. As more students choose to attend community colleges for the first year(s) of their undergraduate experience, UT and honors become an option later. It is more difficult for those students to complete all honors requirements in a shorter time frame, especially if they have not taken any honors work at their previous institution. Some students respond eagerly to the challenge of completing the requirements for the college honors citation on their diplomas, while others select a departmental honors option that requires an honors project or thesis, usually at least a 3.3 cumulative GPA, and several honors courses in their major.

While honors enrollment has increased over the last several years due to the increasing number of engineering honors students, UT has experienced a decline in undergraduate enrollment. Some of the enrollment decrease can be explained by the smaller number of high school graduates and by the strength of the economy. Another factor is the enrollment growth at a new community college in the area. Honors is working with the University's Community and Technical College to develop a two-year honors program for its students and with University College to recruit nontraditional students who have completed one year of college course work and qualify for honors based on their undergraduate GPA. In addition, there will be a pilot program in fall 1998 for post-secondary option students (high school students who qualify for college courses). Five to ten students will be invited to apply for honors and, on a

space-available basis, to take honors courses during their last year in high school. The goal is to keep these high-ability high school students interested in honors and UT as they begin to narrow their college decisions for the subsequent fall. All these efforts are designed to refine the mix of honors students at UT.

The Honors Curriculum

Since the beginning of the program in 1963, honors students have taken the Readings conference sequence (HON 1010 and 1020) in their first year to provide a common intellectual experience across colleges. Readings Conference is a reading, writing, and discussion course that examines chronologically and thematically "Great Books" and formative ideas, primarily from the Western tradition. The texts to be covered each semester are selected by the faculty teaching the course, and while there has not been a consensus about all texts to be covered, each semester the faculty does agree on a core of texts. These small classes (16-18 students) are taught by experienced faculty members, chosen by the director in consultation with department chairs. Based on student evaluations of these courses, both at the time they take them and on the Exit Questionnaires they fill out before graduation, the Readings Conferences are frequently cited as among the best of their undergraduate experience.

Starting with fall 1997, honors students in all the baccalaureate colleges except education, engineering, and pharmacy are also required to take one of the Honors Multicultural Literatures courses, usually in their second year. The UHP developed the multicultural courses (HON 2020 Multicultural Literatures: The North American Experience and HON 2030 Multicultural Literatures: The Non-European World) to meet student needs and desires for core curriculum honors courses after their first year. Honors also offers a number of interdisciplinary honors seminars (HON 4950 and/or HON 4960) every semester. Two seminars are required for honors students in all the baccalaureate colleges except engineering and pharmacy. All students are also required to complete an honors project or thesis under the guidance of a faculty member if they wish to graduate with a college honors designation on their transcript.

In addition, the Department of Biology offers a two-semester fundamentals of life science sequence as honors, and the Department of Mathematics provides a four-semester honors calculus series. A number of other departments offer specialized upper-level honors courses for their majors. The core honors curriculum described above is also augmented by honors sections of other courses regularly offered by a variety of other departments, and students can contract for honors in these other regularly scheduled courses.

Relationship of UT and UHP

In the broadest sense, the educational mission of the university includes the provision of opportunities whereby each student has the opportunity to reach his or her maximum academic potential. Students are not a homogeneous group, and special populations require special opportunities, supports, or challenges. The mission of the

UHP is to help exceptionally able students achieve excellence in research and scholarship within an environment that fosters diversity and critical thinking. Ever since the beginning of the program in 1963, the emphasis has been on providing a challenging and nurturing environment for honors students. This goal is accomplished by a combination of smaller classes where the focus is on interactive learning, special advising, independent study and research under the guidance of faculty, and a curriculum that balances broad liberal learning with advanced disciplinary and professional preparation.

The UHP also meets more specific objectives of the university as articulated by the strategic plan such as recruiting students with stronger preparations including National Merit, National Achievement, and National Hispanic Scholars. The honors core curriculum stresses a liberal education and a common body of knowledge across diverse fields, another part of the university's mission. When the institution converted to semesters in fall 1997, the UHP expanded the university's offerings in the core curriculum Multicultural Studies area by developing two new courses in multicultural literatures. The chairman of the UT Board of Trustees provided an interesting perspective on how the university views its honors program at the honors building rededication ceremony in February 1998. He stressed that the UHP benefits the entire university community because it enhances the university's reputation, encourages individualized student research, raises academic standards, increases the university's retention and graduation rates, helps recruit and retain excellent faculty, enriches the academic experience, and creates close relationships between students and faculty.

Relationship to Metropolitan Toledo

In addition to a broad mission for all students, the university, as stated in the most recent UT catalog, is also dedicated to serving the urban region in which it is located with outreach initiatives, research projects, continuing education programs, and economic development projects. UT again focused on its urban mission in the early 1990's, and added branch campuses at a number of locations throughout the metropolitan area besides the downtown branch established in the mid-1980's. The university recently signed an agreement with local public and private schools to waive tuition fees for a master's degree for first-year teachers. The agreement could serve as a very effective recruiting tool for UT and the greater metropolitan area as first year teachers, usually the lowest paid, have a financial incentive to stay both at UT and in the Toledo area.

UT is also emphasizing how it serves the greater metropolitan region not only by graduating students who will become part of the work force but also by providing faculty members as consultants and partners in research and by making its facilities and equipment available for collaborative research and development projects ranging from a Humanities 2000 project to individual Centers for Bioengineering, Family Business, and Applied Pharmacology. Construction has also begun on a Lake Erie Soil and Water Research and Education Center at a nearby state park, and students in all baccalaureate colleges have opportunities for internships, field experiences, cooperative education experiences, or faculty-assisted research projects.

Some honors students have taken advantage of UT's urban setting. For example, honors students have performed their student teaching in the Toledo area, while others have worked at area firms and businesses as interns or as part of their cooperative education experience. A number of students have completed their field experiences at Toledo area hospitals while others have been involved with research projects. Honors students have also been involved with local and regional political campaigns and worked with both major political parties. Moreover, some honors students have used the metropolitan area as a basis for their honors theses, e.g., two students developed and piloted a high school women's studies curriculum at a Toledo private school, one student utilized the Toledo Zoo for her thesis, and another student conducted a survey project in a Toledo neighborhood. The honors student involvement with the urban area has been primarily facilitated by the university, not by the UHP. The university's reemphasis of its urban mission gives the UHP an opportunity to revise its mission statement to mesh even more closely with the University's mission.

Raising the Visibility of Honors

When the announcement was made at halftime of UT's Homecoming game in October 1997 that a single donor had given \$1,050,000 to honors, everyone took notice. That single gift, the largest in the program's history, also put UT's \$40 million capital campaign to raise funds for program development, laboratory equipment, scholarships, and campus beautification over the top. To honor the donor, the honors building was named Sullivan Hall in February 1998. Barring future gifts of that magnitude, it is now up to the UHP to make itself more visible in the community.

One way to reach out to the larger metropolitan community is through an honors lecture series given by leading national or international scholars who also excel in addressing a general audience and who are willing to discuss their topics in follow-up sessions with honors students. The UHP has attracted speakers, such as Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Carlos Fuentes, Susan Quinn, and Cornel West; however, such speakers are very expensive, even when the cost of bringing them to campus is shared by a number of units. For honors, the funding problem is exacerbated by not having a permanent budget line for speakers.

Periodically, the UHP has also sponsored Honors Colloquia on such topics as AIDS and Physician-Assisted Suicide. These colloquia are meant to bring together diverse opinions on a controversial topic of current interest. They are organized by honors students under the guidance of two UHP faculty members, and they are open to the university as a whole and also the larger community; however, student interest in producing such colloquia has waned over the last couple of years. Perhaps interest could be rekindled by soliciting potential topics from individual students or groups of students and by increasing the number of semester credit hours students earn when they sign up for the colloquia. In fall 1997, the UHP, the Dean of Students Office, and

the Office of Admissions sponsored a leadership day/research fair for Toledo-area high school students, but no funds are available to repeat the event this fall. However, admissions is strongly considering a campus visit day just for honors-eligible high school students in spring 1999. Such a campus visit program would allow our currently enrolled honors students to showcase their research projects while interacting with potential honors students and their parents.

There are also a number of ways to raise the visibility of the UHP within the university community. The UHP currently holds an Honors Banquet in the spring to recognize graduating honors students and their parents. With appropriate funding, the existing honors banquet could be expanded to an Honors Convocation, where some former honors graduate who is now distinguished in a career might speak. Honors has sponsored occasional Honors Alumni lectures; however, at an occasion such as an honors convocation, an honorary award could be conferred or some academic ceremony performed to emphasize the worth of honors work. Currently, faculty members teaching honors courses are not recognized collectively as "Honors Faculty" or as "Honors Professors." If those faculty members were constituted as an honors faculty, they could also be recognized at such an occasion.

Another approach to raising the profile of the UHP is to have honors students as a group more involved in the larger community. Several years ago the student honors organization was more visible in terms of service projects, both on campus and in the Toledo area. In the last couple of years, the organization has shifted its focus toward curricular matters and away from service activities and social events. During the fall 1998 orientation program for new students, the UHP will conduct a session for honors students interested in performing service activities. It is our hope that most of these students will participate in a follow-up service project scheduled later that same day and that they will continue to commit to service as an honors group. Having students involved in the metropolitan region initially should also help to focus their attention on the area's research opportunities in subsequent years.

Honors needs to make students more aware of what the metropolitan area can offer them. Many students come from small, rural communities and need some assistance in adjusting to life in an urban setting. Currently, honors students can attend Toledo Symphony Classics Series concerts for five dollars a ticket. The UHP and the student honors organization could cooperatively develop and sustain a program of regular cultural opportunities such as museum trips for special exhibitions, other musical performances, or special film series, perhaps in conjunction with the readings conferences, the multicultural literatures, and the interdisciplinary honors seminars.

Challenges

Prior to graduation each year, honors students are asked to complete brief exit questionnaires. Aside from providing the UHP with post-graduation plans and ad-

resses, the UHP also utilizes the questionnaires to assess our students' experience in honors. Their evaluations indicate six areas for improvement:

- providing more well-defined guidelines for the honors thesis in some disciplines;
- helping students link up with honors thesis mentors;
- offering additional Honors Seminars in the natural sciences and social sciences;
- providing more and well-publicized summer research opportunities;
- making community service opportunities available; and
- including commuter and nontraditional students in the honors community.

The honors thesis concerns vary college by college, sometimes major by major. The general honors thesis guidelines approved by the UHC should be available for students by fall 1998, and a database linking research areas to faculty mentors is being created. In response to the exit questionnaires, honors has individually contacted nonhumanities faculty to submit honors seminar proposals while also urging humanities faculty to link up with colleagues in other disciplines and colleges. Faculty members in the natural and social sciences could also be encouraged to work collaboratively in developing proposals. Honors can publicize summer research opportunities in different ways; however, there are no budget lines for honors research. Both the UHP and the honors student organization invite and encourage all honors students to participate in Honors Week events (college activities, talent show, and picnic), the Honors Holiday Gathering, and the Honors Banquet. Participating as an honors cohort in community service projects such as scheduled for the fall 1998 orientation program is another mechanism to bring students together in the honors community. To continue to encourage honors student participation throughout the academic year, the UHP could invite campus and community service organizations to make presentations in Sullivan Hall. The value of performing community service could be heightened in students' eyes if honors faculty and staff joined students in such projects. If there is a very strong student response to community service opportunities, the UHP could investigate the possibility of incorporating a community service component as part of the requirement to graduate with the college honors citation on the diploma.

In addition to the student concerns listed above, there are other challenges facing honors, e.g., class size for honors courses, recruiting and retaining an honors faculty, possibly becoming an honors college in response to the increase in enrollment over the last decade, and adapting to enrollment fluctuations in the constituent colleges. One hallmark of honors programs is the ability to offer small classes for honors students. This year, honors traded a modest increase (from 15 to 18 students) in the maximum class size in honors core courses in return for a more favorable workload calculation under the Ohio Board of Regents funding model. Consequently, there is a greater likelihood that faculty will be released to teach core honors courses. Recruiting and retaining faculty for honors courses could also be enhanced by the creation and recog-

dition of an honors faculty, as mentioned previously. Although there is an inherent reward in teaching and mentoring honors students, there is also a need to recognize those faculty members who have demonstrated their commitment to and enthusiasm for honors teaching and advising.

Honors has been asked to contemplate the change from an honors program to an honors college. Converting to an honors college would increase the visibility of honors, but there is also a danger inherent to making such a change, e.g., honors could become more susceptible to budget cuts as a college. Becoming an honors college could help counter the perception that the UHP is only an arts and sciences honors program, a perception with historical basis. At this time, most students who graduate with college honors are from the college of arts and sciences; however, these students joined the UHP when arts and sciences students constituted more than half the honors population. However, current enrollment projections for fall 1998 indicate that almost half the incoming honors students will be enrolled in the College of Engineering.

Conclusion

The dramatic increase in enrollment of honors students over the last decade provides additional challenges and opportunities. Assuming that the faculty resources are available to teach honors core courses and honors sections and that the research needs of honors students can be met, the total honors enrollment should reach 1,000 students by the fall of 2000. As the program continues to attract an ever larger number of high-ability, high-achieving students to The University of Toledo, it will be increasingly important to maintain as much as possible the small college feeling of community that has been the tradition of honors at UT. Academically, students will balance the depth of advanced disciplinary and professional preparation with the breadth of an interdisciplinary honors core curriculum. Outside the classroom and laboratory, honors students will need opportunities to continue their interactions and intellectual exchanges and to become engaged in an honors community where they can develop and nurture friendships. As the program continues to grow, the options available to students must also expand, and honors must encourage students to take advantage of those options. How honors students, faculty, and staff interact as members of a community does matter, but more important is that they are engaged participants in the honors community and that they continue to experience what the UHP promises students in its recruitment literature, the best of both worlds.

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