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Strategic Plan for the Honors College at Marshall University, 2023

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Strategic Plan

The Honors College at Marshall University, 2023-2028

The Honors College helps distinguish Marshall University as the special institution it is—one that is accessible, affordable, and familiar for many of our students, but also one that supports students looking to be challenged and as closely mentored as they would be if they attended a private and far more costly university.

THE HONORS COLLEGE AT MARSHALL UNIVERSITY
Adventures in Learning

MARSHALL
HONORS COLLEGE

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Executive Summary

In today's Honors College at Marshall University, outstanding undergraduates from each of the university's *degree-granting* colleges participate in curricular and co-curricular opportunities designed to help them explore varied areas of interest, work collaboratively across differences, and develop as creative problem solvers with global perspectives who possess sought-after social and intellectual skills. As an essential part of a public university, it is the responsibility of the Honors College to help bring together students to live and work together from diverse backgrounds who variously identify, believe, and behave differently and hold wide-ranging interests. We know that broadly defined and realized diversity on campus provides the greatest potential for transformative educational opportunities that allow students to learn deeply about themselves and others while becoming effective and empathetic citizens of the world who are well-positioned to imagine and help shape the kind of world in which they want to live.

Beginning with a consideration of our broader institutional and communal contexts and informed by wide-ranging internal and external data collection and analysis, this strategic plan sets overarching priorities and defined goals that together are intended to deepen community connections, expand recruitment efforts, support greater access and inclusion while increasing retention, develop a more engaging, flexible, and valuable curriculum, and through securing greater material and human resources, to raise the college's ability to serve as an equal partner in the provision of service to other units on campus. The Honors College will continue to conduct substantive forms of assessment that document the extent and nature of student impact and demonstrate the enduring value of honors education. We will continue to engage in institutional dialogue with various partners on and off campus to maintain healthy, mutually beneficial relationships while remaining institutionally well-positioned to contribute to our common good. Finally, we will regularly engage in the evaluation of allocated resources. Our overarching goal is to build an even more successful future for the college that aligns most productively with institutional priorities. The Honors College sets the following strategic priorities during the next five years:

- **Strategic Priority 01: Strengthen and Expand Relationships & Collaborative Partnerships.** We aim to cultivate a common mission with other colleges and support units at Marshall as well as cultivate mutual understanding and shared opportunities with current and future community partners.
- **Strategic Priority 02: Enhance the College's Strength and Value Proposition through Inclusive Excellence.** We aim to prioritize inclusive excellence and interculturalism while effectively employing strategic enrollment management practices that identify, recruit, enroll, support, and graduate a mission-affirming diversity of students.
- **Strategic Priority 03: Develop Distinct, Robust, and Flexible Curricular & Co-Curricular Offerings for Honors Students.** We are redefining the meaning and purpose of honors education at Marshall University while aggressively developing and expanding experiential learning opportunities as a source of institutional and pedagogical strength and curricular flexibility.
- **Strategic Priority 04: Reinforce the Honors College's Resources and Institutional Position**. We aim to establish the Honors College sustainably within a responsibility-centered or decentralized model for the university budget while also assuring that the college has appropriate levels of curricular oversight in courses that are honors-designated and developing the college's capacity to serve all our stakeholders through adequate staffing.

*This is **Version 01** of the Strategic Plan for 2023, produced on 07 June 2023.*

Introduction

Background

Building on a history of honors education at Marshall University that began in 1962—a year after Marshall College was granted university status—the Honors College was founded on an honors program and the achievements of many different contributors over nearly sixty years. Such a shift is common practice as public universities have invested more heavily in honors education over the past twenty years. When the college welcomed its inaugural class of 150 first-year students in the fall semester of 2010, Marshall University had at last committed to elevating honors education at the university together with programs such as the Society of Yeager Scholars and, eventually, a long-needed Office of National Scholarships. The Honors College works to maintain a student body of approximately 500 ambitious and accomplished students who pursue a shared honors curriculum that both stands apart from and complements their university and major requirements. Since its beginning, the Honors College at Marshall University has collaborated with a range of institutional partners to serve the entire Marshall community as a role model for innovative programming, high-impact educational practices in the context of interdisciplinary coursework, and curricular and co-curricular learning.

College Profile

Academic Programs

The Honors College does not have its own academic programs as it is not a degree-granting college. Rather, we serve high-achieving students from across the entire university who are pursuing one or more undergraduate degrees in other colleges by enhancing their academic and social experiences at Marshall. The college has a 24-credit-hour curriculum that all students in the college must complete in order to graduate with University Honors through the Honors College. We continue to work to make the curriculum both more relevant and flexible (as suggested in the strategic priorities outlined in this document). An overview prepared for university advisors of the current curriculum (as of Fall 2023) can be viewed as Appendix 01. While Honors College does not have academic departments, we do house two distinct offices within the college that serve the entire university. These are the offices of National Scholarships and a Director of the Society of Yeager Scholars. The latter office overseas a distinct academic program for student members of the Society of Yeager Scholars who are also members of the Honors College.

Staff

The Honors College is currently administered by the Dean who oversees a staff of four consisting of the Office Administrator, the Honors Academic Advisor, the Assistant Dean and Director of the Society of Yeager Scholars, and the Program Manager of the Office of National Scholarships who while situated in the college's organization chart, has primary duties outside the day-to-day operations of the college. With all current positions filled in Spring 2023, the college conducted an internal review to determine FTE (full-time equivalent) commitment to the day-to-day operation of the college. Out of five employees within the college, there are only three FTEs working full-time for the college—as can be seen in the organizational chart in Appendix 02. Our understaffing is a principal reason that one of the goals in our Strategic Priority 04 is to achieve approval and hire into a new position a Program Manager of Student Engagement and Community Outreach.

Faculty

The Honors College at Marshall University does not have faculty tenure lines or contingent faculty assignments. The college relies on departments from all other colleges cooperating to provide courses that are honors-designated with a registration pre-requisite of "admitted honors college" and contribute to the required curriculum for Honors students. In the 2021-2022 academic year, we directly staffed, and coordinated with other units to staff, a total of 10 upper-division Honors seminars, 5 lower-division Honors seminars, 4 Yeager Scholar seminars, 2 Honors FYS courses, and 27 departmental honors-

designated courses (H courses, e.g., ANT201H), many of which can be applied to General Education Core I and II requirements for Honors students. Funding for adjunct faculty and tenured/tenure-track overloads for courses taught in the Honors College (HON courses, e.g., HON 480) is currently centralized through Academic Affairs.

Accreditations

While we do not have accreditations in academic programs, the Honors College is guided by the professional best practices of both the National Collegiate Honors Council and the National Association of Fellowship Advisors, of which we are a member institution.

Points of Pride and Distinctiveness

- Borrowing from the testimonial of an outstanding faculty member who has long taught for the college, the Honors College helps distinguish Marshall University as the special institution it is—one that is accessible, affordable, and familiar for many of our students, but also one that supports students looking to be pushed, to be challenged, to be as closely mentored as they would be if they attended a private and far more costly university.
- The Honors College is home to the Society of Yeager Scholars. The Yeager Scholarship is a highly competitive merit-based undergraduate scholarship at the university and the means for a select group of Honors students to participate in the most prestigious academic and leadership program at Marshall. Funding for the Society of Yeager Scholars comes primarily from private donations. An endowment in excess of $12 million supports the Society and is administered by the Marshall University Foundation. The Yeager program has been in existence for 35 years, with 278 students graduating across 32 classes. Currently, there are 31 students in the program.
    - The Society of Yeager Scholars will be developing a **complementary strategic plan** as a distinct part of the Honors College with a history that predates it. The Society's strategic plan will emerge from the following priorities:

        1. Expand recruitment efforts.
        2. Increase diversity across the program.
        3. Connect to the past to prepare a bright future by increasing efforts to keep alumni and past board members and donors engaged.
        4. Prepare to market the program in a world where tuition does not exist.

- In a scientific survey of incoming Honors students conducted in Fall 2021, with a response rate of 76%, more than 50% of respondents said that becoming a student in the Honors College was either an "extremely" or "very" important factor in their decision to attend Marshall University. This supports a key rationale for the college's role in the university as an essential player in the recruitment of outstanding students.
- The Honors College continues to demonstrate its vital role as a kind of "third space," that is, a social and conceptual crossroads within the university where students and faculty can come together without many traditional disciplinary and institutional constraints—something that allows the college to serve as a hub for curricular and co-curricular innovations that benefit the entire institution.
- The annual Elizabeth Gibson Drinko Honors Convocation conducted by the Honors College provides an inspiring, campus-wide celebration of exceptional undergraduate student achievement—the only event of its kind to date. The ceremony is not only a means to publicly recognize graduating students that complete a distinct curriculum of honors coursework in addition to their major programs. It is also a way to provide a wide variety of students, at all points in their course of study, special recognition, and commendation for clearly and effectively demonstrated excellence in academic achievement, research, and service. The event provides

faculty from across the university a valued opportunity to formally and publicly share achievements made by their outstanding undergraduate students.

- Located within the Honors College, but serving the entire university and its alumni, the Office of National Scholarships has broadened and deepened a vigorous culture of scholarship on campus since 2015 that has literally put Marshall University on the global map of prestigious student scholarships, fellowships, awards, and grants.

Financial Resources

The college has three funding sources for operational and other, variously restricted, uses. In addition, the college receives indirect funding support through centralized payment of overloads (including adjunct pay). Not having these expenses in the annual budget of an honors college is a typical institutional arrangement for a "support" or "service" unit—including those informed by Responsibility Centered Management (RCM) budget models. This is discussed in detail in Strategic Priority 04.

Funding Source	2021-2022 Fiscal Year Totals
State	$31,556.00 [1]
MU Foundation	$86,544.00 [2]
MURC	$27,237.00 [3]

The Strategic Planning Process

The process of strategic planning in the Honors College, culminating in the final draft of this report, began organically and informally during a period of transition in the college's leadership in September 2021, which unfolded within a broader context of change in higher education, generally, and specifically at Marshall as new leaders began serving at all levels of the university—most notably in the offices of President and Provost during the 2021-2022 academic year. The strategic plan presented in this document was born of early efforts of then Interim Dean to engage in an inwardly and outwardly focused process of institutional examination that included input from various stakeholders, including students (both current and prospective), student families, faculty teaching Honors courses, and alumni, that were gathered both formally, in scientific surveys, as well as informally through a multitude of encounters between these

[1] Fiscal year operational resources as budgeted services and supplies. This amount does not include direct centralized personnel costs, internet and cellphone stipends, fringe benefits, and a single graduate assistant position. The total for these costs was approximately $400,000 in the 2023-2024 academic year. Mid-year, the budget increased by $60,000 (plus fringe benefits) with the creation of an Assistant Dean position. The Assistant Dean currently serves as the Director of the Society of Yeager Scholars. This position replaced a former 12-month appointment, tenured faculty Associate Dean position that was frozen going into Fall 2021 and then eliminated upon creation of the Assistant Dean position at the end of Fall 2022.

[2] These are Foundation funds categorized as *operational* and available as financial resources to the college. The college has several additional funds in the Foundation that are restricted to use for student scholarships and awards as well as funds that are further restricted for support for only the Society of Yeager Scholars and that generally cannot be used for operations of the college. Operational funds included in the total are themselves restricted to specific, limited uses as stipulated in original donor agreements. The college currently has approximately $35,000 in a fund that can be considered for its "general" operational use. However, this fund is one of the only from which we can *discretionally* support current students with few restrictions. Nearly half of our Foundation funds are legacy, restricted in use, and without endowment.

[3] This balance forward is from previous allocation/s from the Office of the President. These funds have not been replenished by that office for at least the last five years. This legacy fund is the most *unrestricted* financial resource to which we have access.

various stakeholder groups and college staff in a variety of contexts ranging from student recruitment events, student advising sessions, and classroom visits with faculty.

Additional input to the review process came from internal analyses that included previous program assessments, including a thorough analysis conducted at a time when Marshall had only an honors program.[4] Internal review was supplemented by external analyses, including a benchmark study of other honors colleges and programs that focused on Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) peer institutions and important state and regional peers. This benchmark study extended to comparison with best practice guidelines established by the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) most recently formulated in their "Shared Principles and Practices" document (2022) as well as the NCHC's "Program Review Instrument."[5]

Shifting from what was essentially an organic planning process to a goals-based strategic planning approach, the results of these different inputs were categorized and summarized. When held against the background of the institutional, local, and regional contexts within which both the Honors College and our students must find their way, these summaries were articulated into overarching priorities along with defined goals and specific strategies calculated to fulfill the promises of those priorities most effectively through policies and practices that are consistent with our vision, in keeping with our mission, and true to our values. These took increasingly refined shape as conversations continued into the 2022-2023 academic year.

The Promise of Honors Education

Defining Honors Education

The National Collegiate Honors Council is a distinctive educational organization founded in 1956 and designed to support and promote undergraduate honors education. NCHC has nearly 900 member institutions—including Marshall University—that directly impact over 330,000 honors students in the United States. According to the NCHC, an honors college is an academic unit on a collegiate campus

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4 While there is no formal or informal assessment available of the Honors Program at the time of its transition to a college in 2009, the former honors program commissioned a thorough review by Dr. Montserrat Miller, which was released ten years earlier (1998). When comparing the program to others, Miller found that while it had many of the characteristics exhibited by the country's most successful programs, it fell short by lacking a defined mission, a "specific faculty," a clear definition of an honors student, and concrete criteria for selecting honors courses. Since its inception, the college has established a defining mission for our work (though arguably only recently) and established a clear curriculum for students. There is still work to be done in defining both honors faculty and students in meaningful ways that help create a community of scholars that advance our mission. Interestingly, one of Miller's findings was that faculty teaching in honors held that offering exceptionally challenging courses to bright and motivated students was the most important goal of the program whereas honors students believed that creating a sense of community among high achieving students and promoting a positive learning culture should be its primary goal. In important ways, this divergence of opinion continues, and our Strategic Priorities are meant to productively address it. Further, Miller recommended that the program aim to recruit students who excelled in the university setting *despite* not having requisite high school performance and standardized test scores. Speaking of non-traditional students, in particular, Miller suggested that they be "heavily recruited" given that they are often "powerfully motivated, under-recognized, and capable of contributing enormously" to discussions while "raising the bar for our very best traditional students" by bringing greater diversity of perspectives and experience. We are now finally and fully addressing these concerns. The goals outlined under Strategic Priority 03 include policy positions and processes that should reach both these populations of students, make honors education more accessible to them, and simultaneously provide opportunities for their productive contribution to the culture of honors education.

5 The NCHC's instrument allows for assessment of an honors college or program's achievements in different domains along a continuum from "undeveloped" to "mature" in nature. Significantly, in consideration of item 1.3 under the section "Honors Mission, Strategic Plan, and Assessment," at the start of our journey toward reimagining the Honors College, the college would be ranked "undeveloped" in the category of strategic planning as no such plan had been conducted and documents describing a plan were unavailable (National Collegiate Honors Council).

responsible for "devising and delivering in-class and extracurricular academic experiences that provide a *distinctive* learning environment for *selected* students" (NCHC 2013; emphasis added). Further, NCHC states that an honors college provides opportunities for

> measurably broader, deeper, and more complex learning-centered and learner-directed experiences for its students than are available elsewhere in the institution. These opportunities are appropriately tailored to fit the institution's culture and mission and frequently occur within a close community of students and faculty. In most cases, the honors community is composed of carefully selected teachers and students who form a cross- or multi-disciplinary cohort dedicated to achieving exceptional learning and personal standards.

Importantly, the NCHC's definition brings to our attention two essential elements to explore in the process of strategic planning. Specifically, an honors college must make essential decisions about what makes it distinct within a larger university environment and how those distinctions, which we will generally understand as constituting the particular experiences of students in the college, are achieved—at least in part—through *selective* membership achieved through a particular admissions process. In the same document, NCHC also enumerates several "modes of honors learning" that are intended to complement and supplement the definition of honors education—providing broad outlines for points of distinction in the approach of honors education. These so-called modes can be seen manifest in different ways in the curricular elements of this strategic plan. These are neither ranked nor mutually exclusive.

1. Research and Creative Scholarship (Learning in Depth)
2. Breadth and Enduring Questions (Inter- or Multi-disciplinary Learning)
3. Service Learning and Scholarship (Community Engagement)
4. Experiential Learning
5. Learning Communities

Honors Education at Marshall University

The act of strategic planning is intended to determine how best to position the Honors College to realize the value proposition established in our *Strategic Vision* by exploring the defining elements of this vision as inscribed in our *Mission Statement* and understanding why we believe in the importance of our vision and mission by clearly articulating our *Core Values* and establishing expectations in our *Student Learning Outcomes*.

Strategic Vision

The Honors College at Marshall University will sustain a vibrant, wide-ranging academic community that crosses disciplinary and institutional boundaries where diverse students, faculty, and others can achieve personal excellence together within an environment that is simultaneously challenging and supportive.

Mission Statement

The Honors College at Marshall University provides an environment for innovative teaching and learning within an interdisciplinary curriculum motivated by creative, critical inquiry and respect for multiple thoughts, experiences, and identities. The Honors College collaborates with university and public partners to foster inclusive academic excellence in a diverse and supportive community of scholars dedicated to becoming socially conscious, responsible leaders and lifelong learners engaged in acquiring and applying knowledge for the greater good.

Core Values

The Honors College adopts the Marshall Creed, seen in the next section, as its core values.

Student Learning Outcomes

The Honors College collaborates with various partners on and off campus to provide the curricular and cocurricular experiences that strengthen student progress towards these intended learning outcomes.

Through sections of honors-designated, departmental courses offered to honors students in the required General Education curriculum at Marshall as well as through unique honors courses offered by the college itself, the Honors College strives for the following learning outcomes, which purposefully build on and complement the university's Baccalaureate Degree Profile. These outcomes are not mutually exclusive. They should be understood as intertwined—with connections that are both conceptual and practical. A table showing the intended alignment of these student learning outcomes with the Marshall University Baccalaureate Degree Profile and courses in the honors curriculum is available as Appendix 03. Students in the Honors College will:

- make connections while adapting and applying skills and learning among varied disciplines, domains of thinking, experiences, and situations.
- outline divergent solutions to a problem, develop and explore potentially controversial proposals, and synthesize ideas or expertise to generate original plans and approaches.
- evaluate the effectiveness of their own work, reflect on strengths and weaknesses of their knowledge and skills in defined areas, and devise ways to make improvements.
- produce cohesive oral, written, and visual communications capable of connecting effectively with specific audiences.
- appraise how cultural beliefs and practices affect inter-group communication, how specific approaches to global issues may affect communities differently, and how varying economic, religious, social, or geographical interests can result in conflict.
- demonstrate principles of ethical citizenship and socially responsible leadership through collaborative partnerships.
- evaluate how academic theories and public policy inform one another to support civic well-being.

Contextual Considerations for Strategic Planning

Our work as a college to outline a strategic plan must necessarily be conducted with an understanding of the nested contexts within which we are situated as well as the varied imperatives suggested by a full consideration of these contexts. This section presents relevant aspects of these contexts. First among them is the institutional context provided by the university of which the Honors College is an essential part and then those in the region that shape overall conditions and particular imperatives to which the university as a whole must respond.

Institutional Context

The *Strategic Vision* document of Marshall University, released in December 2020, provides plainly articulated statements—excerpted below—that help guide our work and frame the strategic imperatives of the Honors College in such a way as to enhance their ability to meaningfully advance those of the university (Marshall University 2020). In short, our first goal in the process of defining the college's own strategic priorities is to find opportunities for deliberate alignment with the priorities and goals of Marshall University.

Strategic Vision

Position Marshall University to reshape the higher education experience in order to attain the highest possible levels of achievement for students, academics, research, outreach, and the institution.

Mission Statement

Marshall University is a public comprehensive university with a rich history as one of the oldest institutions of higher learning in West Virginia. Founded in 1837 and named after Chief Justice John Marshall, definer of the Constitution, Marshall University advances the public good through innovative, accredited educational programs. Marshall University's mission, inspired by our *Vision* and *Creed*, includes a commitment to:

- Offer a wide range of high quality, affordable, and accessible undergraduate, graduate, and professional education that prepares students to think, learn, work, and live in an evolving global society.
- Create opportunities and experiences to foster understanding and appreciation of the rich diversity of thought and culture.
- Maintain a dynamic intellectual, artistic, and cultural life by promoting and supporting research and creative activities by undergraduates, graduates, and faculty.
- Contribute to the quality of life of the community, region, and beyond through applied research, economic development, health care, and cultural enrichment.
- Cultivate the development of an inclusive, just, and equitable community.

Creed (Core Values)

We the students, faculty, and staff of Marshall University, pledge to pursue the development of our intellects and the expansion of knowledge, and to devote ourselves to defending individual rights and exercising civic responsibility. We strive to exemplify in our own lives the core values of independence, initiative, achievement, ethical integrity, and commitment to community through association and service. As Marshall University, we form a community that promotes educational goals and that allows individuals maximum opportunity to pursue those goals. At Marshall, we are:

- An *Educational Community* in which all members work together to promote and strengthen teaching and learning.
- An *Open Community* uncompromisingly protecting freedom of thought, belief, and expression.
- A *Civil Community* treating all individuals and groups with consideration, decency, and respect, and expressing disagreements in rational ways.
- A *Responsible Community* accepting obligations and following behavioral guidelines designed to support the common good.
- A *Safe Community* respecting each other's rights, privacy, and property.
- A *Well Community* respecting and promoting physical and emotional health.
- An *Ethical Community* reflecting honesty, integrity, and fairness in both academic and extracurricular activities.
- A *Pluralistic Community* celebrating and learning from our diversity.
- A *Socially Conscious Community* acting as citizens of the world and seeking to contribute to the betterment of people and their environments.
- A *Judicious Community* remaining alert to the threats posed by hatred, intolerance and other injustices and ever prepared to correct them.

Student Learning Outcomes

Marshall University is committed to providing students with opportunities to become reflective critical, creative, and ethical thinkers who possess the knowledge and skills to be successful in global society of the 21st Century. All students who complete a baccalaureate degree at Marshall University should be able to demonstrate the following competencies:

- Students will develop cohesive oral, written, and visual communications tailored to specific audiences.
- Students will outline multiple divergent solutions to a problem, develop and explore risky or controversial ideas, and synthesize ideas/expertise to generate innovations.
- Students will determine the origins of core beliefs and ethical principles, evaluate the ethical basis of professional rules and standards of conduct, evaluate how academic theories and public policy inform one another to support civic well-being, and analyze complex ethical problems to address competing interests.

- Students will revise their search strategies and employ appropriate research tools, integrate relevant information from reliable sources, question and evaluate the complexity of the information environment, and use information in an ethical manner.
- Students will make connections and transfer skills and learning among varied disciplines, domains of thinking, experiences, and situations.
- Students will evaluate generalizations about cultural groups, analyze how cultural beliefs might affect communication across cultures, evaluate how specific approaches to global issues will affect multiple cultural communities, and untangle competing economic, religious, social, or geographical interests of cultural groups in conflict.
- Students will formulate focused questions and hypotheses, evaluate existing knowledge, collect, and analyze data, and draw justifiable conclusions.
- Students will evaluate the effectiveness of their project plan or strategy to determine the degree of their improvement in knowledge and skills.
- Students will analyze real-world problems quantitatively, formulate plausible estimates, assess the validity of visual representations of quantitative information, and differentiate valid from questionable statistical conclusions.

Regional and State Contexts

Higher Learning Commission

The Higher Learning Commission (HLC) is an independent corporation founded in 1895 as one of six regional institutional accreditors in the United States. HLC accredits degree-granting post-secondary educational institutions in the United States, including Marshall University. The HLC's mission is to "advance the common good through quality assurance of higher education as the leader in equitable, transformative and trusted accreditation in the service of students and member institutions" (National Collegiate Honors Council 2013).

Marshall University's Quality Initiative for our next HLC accreditation focuses our attention on the university's goal to become more flexible, stronger, and inclusive through recruitment, admission, support, and retention of an increasingly diverse student population. As a central part of our accreditation process, the university is embarking on the project of "Building a Stronger and More Inclusive Marshall Community." Although preparations began in the 2021-2022 academic year, with the Honors College serving as a full partner in this process, the initiative went public with focused community projects in Fall 2022. An array of projects, intended to promote a strong and inclusive community at Marshall, will engage the campus throughout the coming three years of the initiative and beyond. To help focus the campus community and assist campus organizations with event planning, the initiative includes defined themes over the next three academic years. The Quality Initiative focuses on four goals that are intended to help us achieve the goal of a stronger and more inclusive university: Increasing access to the university; preparing students to live and work in a global/diverse society; promoting civil discourse; and promoting learning through outreach to the community and engagement in high impact practices. A basic summary of the Honors College's contributions to the HLC Quality Initiative is available on our Inclusive Excellence page.

Southern Regional Educational Board

The nation's first regional interstate compact for education, the Southern Regional Educational Board (SREB) was created in 1948 by governors and legislators of southern states who recognized a link between education and economic vitality. SREB provides data and works with states to improve public education at all levels and aims to help policymakers make informed decisions through data and recommendations.

In a recent report to its member states, SREB found that although nearly half of the nation's population growth over a ten-year period ending in 2030 is expected to take place within the 16 SREB states as a

whole—an increase of almost 17 million people—West Virginia's population is projected to *decrease* by four percent or approximately 64,800 people. Related to this apparent trend, enrollment within degree granting programs in West Virginia during the period 2014 and 2019 (even before the pandemic) decreased for both men and women at 10 percent and five percent, respectively. With fewer students enrolling in college, SREB recognizes that postsecondary institutions face a challenge of helping young people succeed, particularly from populations that have lower graduation rates—including, particularly, historically underserved student populations such as Black, Hispanic, rural, and first-generation students. Further, at public four-year colleges, the SREB region's six-year graduation rates for Hispanic and white students in the 2013 cohort were *below* those of their national counterparts. Among its nationally deficient peers, graduation rates for Black, Hispanic, and white students at West Virginia's four-year colleges were below SREB averages (Southern Regional Education Board 2021). For those in higher education, among other things, these facts demand that we are very thoughtful about our enrollment management priorities and processes—something that we take to heart in our Strategic Priority 02.

West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission

West Virginia's four-year public higher education system includes 12 campuses that, like Marshall University, offer a high-quality education at an affordable cost. Together with these institutions and the state's community and technical colleges, the Higher Education Policy Commission (HEPC) develops and oversees a public policy agenda for West Virginia's four-year colleges and universities and works with them to accomplish their missions. As a source of support for institutions and students, the Commission's work includes academic affairs, administrative services, finance and facilities, financial aid, health sciences, human resources, legal services, policy and planning, science and research, and student affairs.

Importantly, the HEPC has set as a collective goal for state institutions of higher education to equip fully 60 percent of the Mountain State's workforce with a formal credential beyond high school by 2030—nearly doubling the percentage of working-age West Virginians with a postsecondary education from ten years earlier (West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission 2022). This is clearly an "all hands on deck" call to action for *everyone* working in higher education within the state that we are taking seriously in the Honors College, which while not a degree-granting college, is an essential support unit to those that do within the larger university.

Strategic Priorities

Beginning with consideration of our broader institutional and communal contexts and informed by our internal and external data collection and analysis, this plan sets overarching priorities and defined goals that together are intended to deepen community connections, expand recruitment efforts, support greater access and inclusion while increasing retention, develop a more engaging, flexible, and valuable curriculum, and through securing greater material and human resources, to raise the Honors College's ability to serve as an equal partner in the provision of service to other units on campus. The Honors College at Marshall University intends to continue to engage in substantive forms of assessment that document the extent and nature of student impact and demonstrate the enduring value of honors education. We will continue to engage in institutional dialogue with various partners on and off campus in order to maintain healthy, mutually beneficial relationships while remaining institutionally well-positioned to contribute to our common good. Finally, we will regularly engage in evaluation of allocated resources. Our overarching goal is to build an even more successful future for the college that aligns most productively with institutional priorities.

Given the nature of today's economy, which demands significantly shortened planning cycles, we see this strategic plan as a dynamic document to be periodically reviewed and modified in ways that allow for the greatest possible alignment with evolving imperatives that the university, the college, and our students must face. As acknowledged by businesses at the forefront of responding to an increasingly complex and uncertain world, we must allow for emergent strategies to arise spontaneously. Essentially, we intend to benefit from having a strategic plan that encourages us to continually learn through our response to solicited and unsolicited feedback, collaborate with others, and resiliently adapt to changing and potentially unforeseen circumstances.

The following list of strategic priorities is organized to provide the reader with what we hope will be the fullest understanding of the interrelated nature of each item. No specific "weight" has been assigned to the priorities listed as we believe that, given their interdependence, none are necessarily primary for fulfilling our vision and achieving our mission. That said, we must acknowledge that if any concern is foundational to all others in some essential way, it is the quality of our relationships as a college, which constitutes the focus of Strategic Priority 01.

Strategic Priority 01: Strengthen and Expand Relationships & Collaborative Partnerships

An essential strategic priority of the college must be to do things that strengthen cross-college and cross-disciplinary connections where the Honors College serves as a crossroads. We want to provide a space where people from all over the university can come together to share ideas outside of the customary confines of institutional structure and disciplinary foci that may limit people's ability to see a bigger picture and the opportunities for productive collaboration. Arguably, the Honors College's greatest strength is our position of being "betwixt and between" all other colleges. We are necessarily a collaborator that can flexibly offer unique opportunities to both students and faculty in rapid response to changing circumstances and emergent needs. At the same time, our unique status as fundamentally *liminal* can be challenging to the sustainability of the college's institutional position. We exist not only as a productive place of perpetual transition and transformation for those that pass through the college, but also one that never takes the form of a complete college—akin to all other colleges. Specifically, without our own faculty, we exist largely outside the means through which other colleges function with relative autonomy and, importantly, generate college-based revenue—something that leaves the college heavily dependent on both the goodwill of all other colleges to provide faculty in-load for both departmental honors-designated (-H) courses and HON courses and centralized funding through Academic Affairs to staff HON courses through paid adjuncts and faculty overloads. This liminal state is truly valuable, but it is also fraught and must be thoughtfully managed to maximize shared benefit and minimize individual risk to the college or our partners. This particular concern is addressed in Strategic Priority 04.

Goal 01|01: Cultivate a Common Mission with Colleges and Support Units at Marshall

The college serves the entire university as we have majors in all academic programs. We depend on having collaborative partnerships with every college at Marshall. That is our most valuable resource—these partnerships. Without healthy relationships of mutual understanding and support, the multitude of different units at Marshall cannot achieve our individual missions and will not deliver on our promises to students. Essentially, this goal is a recognition that we are all in it together and should do whatever we can to strengthen our collective welfare, not just our own individual position. This goal aligns with those in the final strategic priority to secure a sustainable position for the college within what we expect will be a fundamentally decentralized budget model at the university. Essentially, as a unit that is not primarily revenue generating, but rather service and support oriented, the Honors College must continually provide meaningful, demonstrable value. The strategies outlined under this goal are intended to do this in meaningful, cost-effective ways.

Strategy 01*: Meaningfully Share the Honors College's Resources and Capacities with Other Units.*

1. Continue to develop the Honors Faculty Fellow program which had its inaugural year in 2022-2023.
    a. Provide an opportunity for professional development and demonstrated achievement for faculty from all colleges that can elevate the standing of their respective programs and advance individual faculty efforts toward tenure and promotion.
    b. Conduct the program with an emphasis on creating diverse cohorts of faculty from across the university who are focused on shared thematic elements that align with college and university priorities, e.g., the HLC Quality Initiative at the center of our current accreditation cycle.
    c. With current monies in an un-endowed MU Foundation fund, seek sustainability through securing contributions to a new endowed fund for the program—potentially with a naming opportunity.
2. Strengthen collaborations with the Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL).
    a. Continue work with CTL to develop distinct yet consistent delivery of enhanced honors section/s of First Year Seminar (FYS100H) using design-thinking approaches that also help clearly establish community among Honors students, for whom this may be their

first direct connection to the college through a core requirement of our curriculum. Currently, we are collaborating with both CTL and the iCenter to fully incorporate a design thinking approach in FYS100H that could become a model for other applications, potentially in all FYS100 sections.

   b. With our allied mission of cultivating innovative pedagogy, we will develop formal avenues for faculty development (such as Faculty Learning Communities) in partnership with CTL leading to opportunities to schedule pioneering courses in the Honors College, which has the greatest flexibility on campus to serve as an incubator for such courses.
      i. This may include developing training for a form of certification akin to those for Critical Thinking or Writing Across the Curriculum for instruction in honors-designated course at Marshall.
   c. Continue to contribute as a college to the annual iPED Conference, New Faculty Orientation, and TRACE Tuesday, which are sponsored by CTL.

3. Continue to encourage and assist staff of the Honors College to become involved in supporting initiatives and taking on roles that contribute to the welfare of the university as a whole, e.g., teaching UNI 100. Additionally, build capacity among our staff by seeing that they avail themselves of opportunities for professional development, e.g., through the John Marshall Leadership Academy.
4. Cultivate a sense of shared purpose and ambassadorship among faculty and students in the Honors College Curriculum and Policy Committee as well as among faculty teaching in honors.
5. Create a Works in Progress Series. At one time, the Department of Sociology and Anthropology conducted such a series, which was student-led, faculty mentored. It was highly successful and held as a model for what might be done at a college-wide (COLA), or even university, level. Such a series would enable faculty and students to receive feedback on ongoing work and provide everyone an opportunity to learn from each other. The logistics of conducting the series would be a service of the college to the university that could provide valuable, resume-building experiential learning opportunities to honors students and expand our role as a meeting place at the crossroads of the university.
6. Strengthen the outreach efforts of the Office of National Scholarships (ONS), based in the Honors College, to recruit the greatest possible diversity of students, by all measures, to compete for scholarships, fellowships, and grants.
   a. Empower the ONS to build on its capacity to serve undergraduate students so that it can reach not only increasing numbers of graduate students but also faculty. Faculty are currently not served and must often navigate complicated application and interview processes with various agencies (including the Institute for International Education) without support.
   b. Effectively publicize the fact that work of the ONS and other support offered through the Honors College—including institutional scholarships, fellowships, and grants exclusive to the college— is creating more opportunities for majors in a multitude of programs to achieve outstanding results in their research and creativity that reflect well on these programs while also supporting faculty who work with these students.
   c. Develop practices to utilize customer relationship management (CRM) platforms for organizing ongoing contact with student and faculty applicants as well as evaluate procedures and outcomes.
7. Further develop the Elizabeth Gibson Drinko Honors Convocation with the Drinko Academy as a robust campus-wide, celebratory event of academic excellence that serves the interests of all colleges and their outstanding students.
8. Serve as a host to visiting scholars. Following from our experience hosting a Fulbright Faculty Development grantee from the University of St. Petersburg in Fall 2022, we can further establish the Honors College as a diverse and energetic crossroads where scholars from across the world can connect, exchange ideas, and have meaningful impact in their personal and academic work

and lives. This role could make such scholars available to any college without those colleges having the burden of making arrangements. That can be another service of the college to others.

Goal 01|02: Cultivate Mutual Understanding and Shared Opportunities with Community Partners

The Honors College is committed to broadening and enhancing experiential learning—and career opportunities expanded through this effort—for Honors graduates through partnerships and collaborations in the broader community outside Marshall while expanding our ability to meet both student and college funding and other resource needs. This goal upholds our aim to be a principal channel for connecting outstanding talent on campus with resources off campus in ways that simultaneously reduce talent acquisition costs for employers and fuel the twin engines of social and economic development in the region. In the end, this is a larger form of "retention" in that we want outstanding, accomplished graduates to find meaningful, remunerative work in the region and to contribute to our common good. We are committed to being a positive change agent for our city, state, and region.

Strategy 01: Strengthen Relationships with Honors College Alumni

1. Develop systematic means (including through expanding our initiative to conduct exit surveys of graduating Honors students) to identify and contact Honors alumni with the goal of building lasting relationships, creating opportunities for alum mentors to current Honors students, broadening internship opportunities for current Honors students, increasing alumni donations to college endowments, and holding alumni-focused events virtually and on campus.
    a. Develop practices to utilize customer relationship management (CRM) platforms for organizing ongoing contact with both alumni and current students as well as evaluate our overall strategic enrollment management procedures and outcomes.
    b. Create an MU Honors College Alumni group on LinkedIn.
    c. Set up an Advisory Council of college alumni and friends as an important resource to the college that serves, among other things, as a "sounding board" for the development of initiatives that are well-tuned to emergent social and economic conditions.

Strategy 02: Strategically Coordinate with Local Employers and Organizations for Mutual Benefit

1. Continue conversations with the Robert C. Byrd Institute with the target of developing formal opportunities for Honors students to use the Maker Vault space downtown. This would broaden experiential learning opportunities for our students through which they can experiment, develop, and learn through self-led projects and group workshops that can put them in touch with potential employers.
2. Reach out to a variety of different local and regional businesses to make them aware of the caliber of students in the college and our interest in developing productive relationships that simultaneously provide our students opportunities, e.g., through internships, exposure to potential employers, and career development, and a "pool" of students from which these businesses can recruit both interns and employees.

Strategy 03: Improve Knowledge and Understanding of the Honors College and its Mission in the Broader Community

1. Celebrate and make highly visible Honors students who are making a difference within the communities of which we are a part.
    a. Develop the means to easily document (including by students themselves) and track student achievements by the college. One initiative taking shape, for example, is to tie the application for one of the college's larger, one-time scholarships for current students to a mechanism for seamless, detailed reporting and documentation of these accomplishments. Current initiatives by the college to utilize a CRM platform and to offer co-curricular transcripts can aid in this effort.

b. Continue to develop mechanisms for enhanced communication through our college newsletter, website, Marshall Digital Scholar collection, and social media accounts. Specifically, we must manage and leverage leading and emerging digital media that can expand our footprint by offering links to geographically dispersed programs and communities.
c. Strengthen relationship with Marshall Communications to maximize opportunities to publicize the achievements of our students and educate the community regarding the opportunities to join the mission of honors education.
d. Strive for greater national and international exposure in ways that simultaneously enable our students to develop an understanding of the global community and its complexities.

Strategic Priority 02: Enhance the College's Strength and Value Proposition through Inclusive Excellence

The Honors College affirms the commitment of Marshall University to inclusive excellence through creating an increasingly diverse community of students, faculty, and staff by all measures. In particular, it is a priority of the Honors College to recruit, enroll, and retain outstanding citizen-scholars from different backgrounds—particularly individuals from populations that have been historically underrepresented in honors education. Further, because we know that different forms of structural inequalities negatively affect students of historically underrepresented groups, our initiatives aim not only to address these inequalities in our policies and practices but also reduce bias, increase understanding of forms of discrimination, and affirm the complex identities of our students, faculty, and staff.

This strategic priority has been informed, in part, by research conducted for a 2020 report to the Honors College on inclusive excellence by then Associate Dean, Dr. Brian A. Hoey, that has been included for reference in its entirety as Appendix 04.[6] Additionally, we have drawn on insights offered by an "Anthology on Racism, the Black Experience, and Privilege" produced by the Marshall University Society of Black Scholars (2022) in collaboration with the Office of Intercultural Affairs to inform our understanding of the lived experience of Black students at Marshall.

Goal 02|01: Prioritize Inclusive Excellence and Interculturalism

Fostering a diverse and inclusive community that encourages inter-cultural dialogue and understanding is *crucial* to the fulfillment of our mission to help students develop holistically, freely explore their social and intellectual interests, and lead with integrity.

Strategy 01: Ensure Our Mission Guides All of Our Decision Making

1. The college must ensure that our updated vision and mission statements, as well as student learning outcomes, which emphasize the centrality of diversity and inclusion, inform all that we do in the strategic planning process—most especially strategic enrollment management decisions, which are addressed in Goal 2 below.

Strategy 02: Develop a Meaningful, Compelling, and Consistent Brand Identity Informed by Our Mission of Inclusive Excellence

1. As we shift to greater outreach to a broad variety of audiences, we need to consider how best to powerfully convey who we are as a college and what being a part of honors education at Marshall University means for those who choose to participate.
2. Continue to work with the Office of Residential Life to develop a coherent identity and sense of shared purpose for the Honors House living and learning community. The Honors House is meant to provide a physical and social space for experiential and collaborative learning opportunities for its residents that create purposeful links between academic, residential, and social components of their college experience. Our vision for the Honors College is to sustain a vibrant academic community that crosses disciplinary and institutional boundaries where students, faculty, and others can achieve inclusive excellence together within an environment that is simultaneously challenging and supportive. In the Honors College and Honors House, we have framed this vision as a shared journey that entails individual and collective exploration and discovery, i.e., "Adventures in Learning." This theme is highlighted in a newly designed emblem for the college using the distinctive, Marshall University brand color palate. We have also updated the logo for the Honors House so that it echoes these elements as it calls on all members to "Reach New Heights Together." These efforts are consistent with our push to redefine honors education at Marshall University in terms of shared purpose

[6] An accompanying report by Hoey on "Illustrative Examples of Honors Admissions Practices" is included as Appendix 05.

and collective mission rather than individual perks. The emblem and logo referenced here are included in Appendix 05.

a. The proposed position of a Program Manager of Student Engagement and Community Outreach (Strategic Priority 04, Goal 04/03, Strategy 01) would play an essential role here.

Strategy 03: Collaborate with Diverse Community Partners Committed to Interculturalism

Develop enduring and productive relationships with university partners such as the Office of Intercultural and Student Affairs and several different intercultural student organizations to effectively collaborate on shared elements of our missions to create a culture of inclusive excellence on campus.

Goal 02|02: Effectively Employ Strategic Enrollment Management Practices

The Honors College is committed to developing a diverse, mission-affirming student body for the college and university. We will build a culture and environment that supports students, starting from our various marketing, recruitment, admissions, and financial assistance efforts through our essential work to improve retention in the college. Strategic enrollment management planning will be at the center of the college's efforts to identify, recruit, enroll, retain, and graduate students who are both committed to and capable of significant contributions to achieving the college's mission and goals while also serving the efforts of the university as a whole to improve fiscal sustainability through growth in student enrollment and improved retention through commitment to student success. We believe that by prioritizing student success, we will see greater retention and graduation rates in the college.[7]

Three *competencies* most frequently show evidence in the literature of supporting student persistence and success in college. These are a sense of belonging, a growth mindset, and commitment to their education as an expression of personal goals and values. Our efforts across the board and reflected particularly in the area of strategic enrollment management, will seek to support our admitted students to develop these competencies. Specifically, we recognize that a sense of belonging—particularly with students from underrepresented populations and first-generation college students—is essential for students to feel that they "fit" in college (particularly as Honors students given stereotypical characterizations of what that means) and can become well-adjusted and effectively integrated socially. Further, a growth mindset is essential for students to recognize that their knowledge and understanding (i.e., their "intelligence") is not

[7] In looking at available data that shed light on reasons why students might willfully leave or are dismissed from the college such that they do not complete the required curriculum and graduate with University Honors, we can make some general observations. The primary reason that we see attrition (i.e., non-retention) of students in the college during the first year is due to students not maintaining the required overall GPA of 3.30. We can speculate that students eligible on the basis of a 3.5 high school GPA and, in the primary pathway to admission, a standardized test score above our thresholds (26 ACT or 1230 SAT), may struggle their transition to college. Presumably, many goals outlined in this plan would help support these students substantively in that transition, but it may also be that we want to look at GPA as a basis for dismissal during the first year. Beyond that transitional first year, the required HON 200 seminar in our curriculum, which is only offered in the spring semester under the original rationale of providing a singular, cohort-based experience in the second year, serves as a kind of "watershed" for students. Students who do not complete HON 200 at the end of their second year are dismissed. It appears that the course serves as an obstacle for some students given that they are expected to take it in a specific semester. Faced with needing to register for the course, it also seems to serve as a moment of reckoning when students confront their first singularly Honors course—that does not otherwise serve a clear purpose other than to keep them in the college—and might decide (in a presumed cost-benefit analysis) that they would rather opt out of the college. For those students who complete HON 200, we see less attrition. We interpret this as an apparent separation in our population on either side of that watershed where, once beyond that point, students remaining are more clearly committed to completing our curriculum and graduating with University Honors. That said, for all of their desire to complete the curriculum, at this point we do see that what has historically been two required HON 480 seminars can become obstacles for Juniors and Seniors of *certain* program (such as Nursing), in particular, who at that level in their major programs have many required hours of practicum, for example. It is a question of "fitting" these courses into their schedules. So, for these students, it is at least partly an issue of curricular flexibility.

fixed but rather malleable and open to meaningful, significant development through engagement in a broad array of different encounters in college. Finally, we feel it is important that the college assist students by providing, through appropriate curricular and co-curricular experiences, opportunities for our students to reflect on personal goals and values and find alignment between them and well-articulated expectations of their future achievement and individually desired outcomes.[8]

The Honors College's enrollment management efforts will focus on access, excellence, and success, rather than simply growing enrollment numerically. That said, we expect that focusing on opportunities for a diversity of students to find individual fit with and purpose through the mission of honors education, as well as by providing additional pathways for admission (beyond our historical dependence on "skimming" techniques that rely solely on quantitative thresholds of eligibility based on GPA and standardized test scores), will increase the number of students enrolled and retained each year.[9] The Honors College will seek to enroll students who may not meet these former standards but are clearly motivated, curious, and creative and for whom admission to the Honors College would be a truly transformative opportunity.

Ultimately, there is a minimal number of students that must be maintained so that honors courses are consistently at the expected/required enrollment and so that, in particular, departments who provide them do not hesitate to continue doing so. By the end of the 2022-2023 academic year, we were very likely approaching that minimum level with approximately 400 students. There is an ideal number above this minimum where we would have an appropriate number of students to encourage a wider range of course offerings (either by number of sections or through new courses) by academic departments in other colleges. This is likely at least 100-150 more students than we had in the college in Spring 2023—a figure of approximately 500-550 students, which would put the population of honors students at approximately seven percent of the current total undergraduate population at Marshall University, solidly in line with NCHC guidelines.[10] As will be discussed in Strategic Priority 03, increasing curricular flexibility for students through increasing our co-curricular experiential learning opportunities in both the short and long term can open up avenues for completion of credit-hour requirements in the Honors College without the college's dependence on what may continue to be (at least) short-term limited willingness by different academic departments to offer honors-designated courses without reasonable assurance of some measure of "payback," or at least reduced risk.[11] Finally, going forward we need to balance our enrollment

[8] See Herman and Hilton (2017) for a discussion of the importance of this alignment for student success.

[9] Although our expanded outreach and holistic admissions pathway were both "soft openings" in the 2021-2022 academic year, we saw a 14% increase in our incoming first-year student population for Fall 2022 when compared with Fall 2021.

[10] The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) considers a fully developed honors college to be one that has control over honors recruitment and admissions, including the appropriate size of its incoming classes. The NCHC recommends a total honors college enrollment of between 5-8% of the total undergraduate student population (2017) A selective sample culled by the Honors College of SREB peers in surrounding states finds an average honors student population of just under 3% of the undergraduate student population. At Marshall University, this figure is 6% of the total—twice as much as SREB peers but comfortably within the amount for NCHC best practices. An outlier among universities is West Virginia University whose honors college is at least 15% of its total undergraduate population. Notably, it has substantial material and human resources to match this exceptional size—including 12 employees and at least 14 student workers. At present, Marshall's Honors College has five employees, though our FTEs are approximately three committed to the day-to-day operations of the college.

[11] Anecdotally, but suggestively, during the lead up to the Fall 2022 semester, the Interim Dean received a call from a dean who inquired if the Honors College would be willing to pay for all or some of the adjunct salary of an instructor teaching a section of a departmental, honors-designated course given that this course was being taught for the benefit of students in the Honors College. Apparently, given budgetary constraints facing this dean and with a shift already occurring away from centralized funding for adjuncts, this Dean was hard pressed to pay for an adjunct professor in his own college who appears to be teaching (in the context of the current budgetary climate) for another college. The Honors College currently does not have such funds to provide—at least not sustainably.

objectives against available resources (as total number of available honors courses as well as the staff and funds available in the college to service students and faculty in honors) while recognizing that we should be able to justify greater investment in these resources through increased and sustained enrollment.

Since prioritizing strategic enrollment management focuses attention on the totality of student experience from recruitment through graduation and beyond (as we've suggested elsewhere) through maintaining strong relationships with our alumni, it is necessarily informed by and informs multiple other goals across different strategic priorities. The college's integrated and data-driven approach to planning that employs ongoing institutional and situational assessments (e.g., student satisfaction surveys, enrollment trends, service area demographic and competitor developments, and resource constraints) will purposefully connect strategic enrollment management goals to all other efforts.

Strategy 01: Continue to Expand Data Collection and Assessment Efforts of the College

Building on the work begun in the 2021-2022 academic year, we will continue to improve and enlarge our outreach to collect essential data and to assess this effectively so as to inform our work in all areas. This includes employing available tools such as Qualtrics for administering and interpreting scientific surveys. As an additional justification for expanded data collection, not only does this allow us to make more informed decisions, but also offers stakeholders a valuable (and valued) opportunity to shape what matters most to them. This is an essential element of our relationship building and maintenance when paired with significant, meaningful, and visible action to address what is revealed in the data.

1. Surveys will be given to incoming, continuing, and graduating students as during the past year—learning from our previous experience to improve our efforts.
2. Additionally, in the 2022-2023 academic year, we will expand to include our alum.
3. Surveys will be given to faculty teaching in honors.
4. Surveys will be expanded to include targeted outreach to departmental chairs and the deans of other colleges—upon whom the college depends—to better understand their thoughts and concerns when it comes to supporting the Honors College.

Strategy 02: Create and Maintain Relationships with Regional High Schools and Prospective Students

1. Continue to develop the strong relationship built over the past two years with the Honors Program at Huntington High School that includes hosting their summative "Passion Project" presentations at the end of the school year on the Marshall campus.
2. Build further relationships with secondary schools in the region (e.g., with guidance counselors and directors of honors programs) and, particularly, focus on those schools with highly aspirational students from historically underrepresented populations.
    a. This relationship building could begin with regular mailings of the student-produced *Honors Oracle* newsletter together with informational updates from the college concerning admissions policies, opportunities within honors education at Marshall, and "success stories" of Honors students from a variety of backgrounds—especially those that would highlight the accessibility of transformative experiences available in the college to a more diverse population of students than is currently understood.
3. Assure that we continue to have a close working relationship with enrollment counselors in the Office of Admissions at Marshall, who can help in our efforts to identify and recruit students generally and, specifically, in identified populations who are underrepresented in the college. This includes continuing and strengthening efforts to educate our recruiters through annual informational meetings in the Fall and in ongoing communication with recruiters in the field.
4. Explore the possibility of developing summer honors "bridge" programs for juniors and/or senior high school students that could help create a path for outstanding (but potentially also at risk) incoming college students to Marshall and the Honors College, particularly for those students who might be either from underrepresented populations and/or first generation and could benefit

from the opportunity to establish a college identity and skills prior to beginning their degree programs.

a. In collaboration with the other units (especially in student support services), an honors bridge program could offer academic courses and social experiences that together build community as well as a strong early academic record that includes earned credit hours towards completion of Honors requirements, general education requirements, and/or academic degree programs.
b. A bridge program could have the added benefit of generating revenue for the university and college—though clearly money would have to be secured and spent to enable such a program in the first place.
c. The proposed position of a Program Manager of Student Engagement and Community Outreach (Strategic Priority 04, Goal 04/03, Strategy 01) would play an essential role making a bridge program work.
d. To support our strategic priority of inclusive excellence, measures should be taken to reduce participation costs through scholarships for tuition as well as housing and meals (if applicable), and perhaps stipends that could help cover opportunity costs of missing summer employment for a period of time—something that could be a significant barrier for those students who we most want to reach from families with low socioeconomic status. Addressing this particular concern could be a viable avenue for developing donor relationships through the MU Foundation to support the initiative.

Strategy 03: Design Opportunities in Recruitment, Admissions and Orientation Processes to Create Engaging, Personal Connections

1. Ensure that our marketing and messaging (in all forms and media) improves opportunities for a diversity of students to see themselves, whoever they are, finding a personally meaningful fit with the mission of honors education—including through thoughtfully inclusive, representative images and language.
2. Improve efforts implemented in the past year such as targeted physical mailings, follow-up email messages to acceptances of the Honors College Invitation, and individualized congratulation messages for students admitted through the Holistic Review Pathway that recognizes their unique accomplishments and potential to contribute to and succeed in the mission of honors education at Marshall.
3. Further existing efforts through approaches such as calling campaigns, live chats, and digital open houses.
4. Continue to work with the Office of Student Financial Assistance and the Marshall University Foundation to effectively develop all possible forms of merit- and need-based assistance to support both incoming and continuing students. Currently, there is a strong bias for incoming, first-year students in donor agreements in available Foundation funds. We have very little funds available for continuing students and (as noted elsewhere) will work to improve that situation. However, with the funds that we have earmarked for first-year students, we can further the efforts that we began last year to take the mystery out of the allocation of these funds. Previously, the process was utterly opaque with students being unaware of the availability of these funds essentially until they received them. There was no effort to recruit or to use the application process as a means to begin building relationships between the applicants (whether the are successful or not) and the college and university. We must continue to build on what we accomplished last year—as evident our new Scholarships page on the college's website—to

improve our use of available recruitment tools like our Foundation funds for student scholarships.[12]

5. Work to further improve our onboarding processes to foster a deeper sense of belonging for admitted Honors students—especially during key touch points such as Orientation sessions, Week of Welcome, and move-in for the Honors House residence halls. Every time students with the university and the Honors College, there's an opportunity to strengthen (or undermine) our relationship. We want to make sure that we are doing all that we can to make that relationship meaningful, personal, and mutually rewarding. The aforementioned potential bridge program would go a long way to build that relationship with both the college and the university as a whole.

Strategy 04: Participate in Recruitment and Enrollment Efforts that Increase Representation

1. Recruit, admit, and retain a student population that is at least as diverse as (and ideally exceeds) the university as whole with respect to such markers of difference as socially recognized race, ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status.
2. Continue to develop the Holistic Review admissions pathway that has allowed for selective enrollment beyond strictly using GPA and standardized test scores that has dramatically broadened the number of students eligible to apply. While our numbers in the first year were relatively small given that this pathway was essentially offered as a "soft-opening" with virtually no announcements as to its availability, out of the twelve who have applied (all but one of whom were admitted), four identified as other than white, which is a significantly higher proportion than those who accept admission by invitation.
    a. The application used in this holistic admissions pathway can be further improved to document and measure self-identified categories of diversity as well as indicators of curiosity and intellectual risk taking. Our purpose is to first identify, then honor and foster, demonstrated individual capacities for creativity, courage, and collaboration in promising undergraduates through recognizing and valuing important differences in student background, self-perception, and demographics.
3. Support the recruitment of diverse faculty and staff. While the Honors College does not participate directly in the hiring of faculty, in particular, we can help recruit through providing awareness of the opportunities for faculty of diverse backgrounds to rewardingly participate in honors education at Marshall University.

Strategy 05: Foster Student Well-being and Belonging for Greater Success and Enhanced Retention

1. Wellness can be thought of as having the capacity to live a healthy and fulfilling life as well as a state of being physically, mentally, emotionally, and socially fit. Wellness creates the foundation for creative and productive learning. With this understanding, we must continue to work with Student Affairs and other units to assure adequate and appropriate counseling services for Honors students. Going into the 2020-2021 academic year, the college worked with Student Affairs and the MU Counseling Center to provide funding for a dedicated counselor. The service commenced in March 2021. By the fall of 2021, nearly 100 Honor students were being served. This is fully 20 percent of the student population of the college. Honors students seeking counseling have an average of 10 sessions with a counselor. According to the client-concerns intake, these students have suffered anxiety, depression, sleep issues, loneliness, perfectionism, and self-esteem issues. Further, according to the Counseling Center, the majority of these Honors students have had an especially difficult time with their transition from high school to college relating to their difficulty adjusting to the particular challenges of a college workload and their resulting grades. Many of these high achieving students are not used to the rigors of this kind of coursework and, having

[12] In our aforementioned survey of incoming and continuing Honors students conducted in Fall 2021 (with response rates of 76% and 60% respectively) fully 81% of respondents placed the ability to compete for merit-based scholarships through the Honors College in the top five of opportunities offered by the college, with 35% making it their number one.

previously found that in high school things came quickly and easy for them, they now struggle and receive grades that negatively impact their self-esteem and cause significant emotional stress. Contrary to popular opinions that abound—even at Marshall—Honors students cannot be expected to "simply take care of themselves" because they are understood to have a history of good grades and test scores. Our experience here provides further evidence in support of a bridge program as a means to begin building supportive relationships with participating students who can, in turn, be supportive to the rest of their incoming peers who come to the college without the benefit of such a transition.

2. To ensure that completion of University Honors through the Honors College can be a reality for all graduating Marshall students, we must remove financial, sociocultural, and various structural barriers to student success (including certain current institutional policies). In short, it will take additional resources (and at least enhanced collaboration with other support units) to recruit, retain, and provide assistance to Honors students across an increasing spectrum of backgrounds and experiences. To the extent that data is available and reliable, numbers of students from underrepresented populations within the college are not broadly reflective of the general student population at Marshall. We seek to create a welcoming environment that extends opportunities to all high-achieving students. We believe this creates a rich foundation from which innovation, leadership, and cultural awareness can grow.
3. Improve the college's retention and graduation rates from current levels, which suffer from unacceptably high levels of dismissal and attrition (See fn. 7 for some insight). We recognize that the task of building an accessible and inclusive Honors College requires both a broader pool of students who might benefit from honors education at Marshall *as well as* support structures to help a plurality of students thrive and succeed. Therefore, as we commit to extending our reach and accessibility, we must also work to create a solid, accessible framework within honors programming focused on life skills and developing social capital that level the playing field for student success by various measures (from academic to social and emotional) and assess the impact of these changes—particularly for students from underrepresented and variously marginalized groups.
4. Finalize the partnership agreement between the newly formed Office of Undergraduate Advising and the Honors College in the context of the larger restructuring of academic advising at Marshall University. The Honors College Academic Advisor will, for the first time, report to both the Dean of the Honors College and the Director of Undergraduate Academic Advising. Through greater coordination and professional development, this arrangement will ensure undergraduate student satisfaction, progress, and success.
5. Continue to work with the office of Housing and Residence Life to establish strong relationships with Residential Advisors in the Honors House living and learning community and to collaborate with them to develop honors programming in the residential halls that can help provide opportunities for community building as well as individualized support for Honors students living on campus. This is in keeping with our understanding that students who develop meaningful relationships at the university, such as through their participatory membership in the honors college community, and a strong sense of belonging are much more likely to stay enrolled and enjoy academic success than those who do not.
    a. The proposed position of a Program Manager of Student Engagement and Community Outreach (Strategic Priority 04, Goal 04/03, Strategy 01) would play an essential role here.
6. Following on the previous point, we must identify and reach out to commuter students in the Honors College who have more limited opportunities to participate in social elements of membership in the college or to receive the kinds of support to which residential and local students have relatively easy access. We have to find out what they need that will help them feel a greater sense of belonging and have the ability to succeed as Honors students.

7. Develop the new collaborative, experiential learning course HON 300 (Honors Peer Mentoring) as a training ground for peer mentors who can play an essential role in our efforts to improve student well-being and success.
8. Develop an Honors College Ambassador Program that represents inclusive excellence. Potentially as a team project within the context of the HON 300 course (which was developed as part of the early work going into development of this Strategic Plan) during the 2023-2024 academic year. Enlist and train broadly diverse Honors students to assist with recruiting activities such as meeting and variously communicating with prospective students, leading honors-specific campus tours, and reviewing Holistic Review pathway applications for admission. The Ambassadors can also assist with retention efforts, such as through serving as supportive peers to current students, e.g., by cultivating a sense of belonging in greater engagement with co-curricular activities. Essentially, programs such as college ambassadors can help to create highly visible, inclusive representation that can encourage students who may not see themselves as a "fit" with honors education to feel that they can (and do) belong.

Strategy 06: Extend Honors Admission Pathways to Current and Transfer Students

1. Recruit current and transfer students at Marshall to join the Honors College, which are student populations that the college has historically neglected. We have now put in place opportunities for admission to current and transfer students through extending both Admission by Invitation (based on traditional measures for eligibility) and Holistic Review pathways. Our commitment to developing inclusive excellence is exemplified by these newest pathways to University Honors. The Honors College recognizes that there are highly talented students at Marshall who have the potential to contribute significantly to the college but were either unaware of the opportunity prior to matriculation or did not have the opportunity to realize their potential until after arriving at the university.
2. Work directly with other units that support students from underrepresented populations, which is no doubt a productive collaborative enterprise that the college has heretofore neglected. We now must take action to earnestly work in partnership with other units who serve students from underrepresented populations, including Intercultural Affairs.
3. Explore the possibility of developing different honors "tracks" (see, for example, Appendix 04) in order to provide a greater likelihood that students at different points of entry to honor education have the ability to complete requirements and achieve meaningful distinction. Among those honors colleges working to create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable community of scholars, several (including those among our SREB peers) have developed a second track (in addition to what might be considered primary in terms of enrollment numbers consisting of admitted first-year students) that consists of a two-fold path for students joining the college as continuing students (with one or more semesters completed) and transfer students to be first admitted to honors and then to complete a distinct and separate set of curricular requirements.

Strategy 07: Leverage the Power of Existing and Future Funding to Expand Opportunities for Inclusive Excellence

1. Continue to work with the MU Foundation to update, when possible, agreements for funds that permit appropriate and more flexible use to support the college and its students in our mission of inclusive excellence.
2. Work with the Foundation to expand sources of funding through recruitment of potential donors to support specific goals, e.g., as stated elsewhere to support such things as a bridge program for incoming students during the summer between high school and college.
3. Continue to revive and further develop named scholar programs in the Honors College that have languished, including the Hodges Scholars and Hedrick Scholars (the latter of which has an endowed fund that recently received a final, substantial disbursement from the Hedrick estate). We admitted our first students in Fall 2022 through a competitive application process that

provided many opportunities for students to share a holistic vision of themselves and out of which we expect a cohort of citizen-scholars who will have a shared commitment to mutual support and advancement of the college's mission. Fundamentally, these programs will, of course, offer opportunities for enhancing our recruitment efforts, but they are also an important opportunity to manifest a high profile vision for inclusive excellence.

Strategic Priority 03: Develop Distinct, Robust, and Flexible Curricular & Co-Curricular Offerings for Honors Students

Over the past year, the Honors College begun recalibrating the meaning of honors education from one defined in terms of bestowed *privileges* for "smart" students to one where diverse citizen-scholars, who have demonstrated passion and potential to contribute to our mission, have access to the curricular and co-curricular experiences that will develop personal, academic, and leadership skills that enable them to contribute significantly to improving both their own lives and those around them. The goals of this strategic priority are essential to this recalibration to a focus on *outcomes* and the opportunities that emerge from the individual and collective effort of striving to achieve them.

Goal 03|01: Redefine the Meaning and Purpose of Honors Education at Marshall University

While honors education has been associated historically with high academic achievement, at Marshall University we believe that it must be understood as more than individual rewards for educational aptitude—simply the "perks" of admission to the college. While membership definitely provides valuable opportunities, our mission for honors education demands that those who are a part of the college utilize the benefits they've been given to engage in individual and shared work that is *honorable*. We believe this requires thinking about how robust scholarly inquiry can lead to thoughtful leadership and meaningful service to a common good in the communities of which we are a part.

Strategy 01: Ensure That Communications with Prospective and Current Students Highlight Expectations

1. Essentially, our shift entails moving away from enumerating extrinsic benefits of membership in the college to emphasizing intrinsic benefits and articulating clear expectations for students in terms of the transformative potential of personal growth and development through the collective pursuit of the mission of honors education.

Goal 03|02: Develop and Expand Experiential Learning Opportunities as a Source of Strength and Flexibility

While there is much to learn in the context of the traditional classroom, we believe that opportunities to learn while doing outside the classroom enhances creative and critical inquiry and elevates respect for others. Through experiential learning, students find ways to readily connect and apply formal education to real world conditions in the communities of which they are a part. Over the past year, we have begun rapidly reworking and expanding a variety of different types of experiential learning opportunities for Honors students at Marshall University. While many of these opportunities are institutionally provided, we must also allow for the fact that others should develop organically through a student's needs and their own creativity. The Honors College supports both paths to providing experiential learning for Honors students. Ultimately, we want our students to be actively engaged in their learning and to seek out challenges that allow them essential social interaction and self-reflection.

Importantly, our strategies in this area align purposefully with our efforts to provide more and better forms of academic and social support for a greater diversity of students while offering more flexibility in approaches that students can take to complete honors requirements in ways that accommodate differences in needs—whether they be personal, program, and/or career planning related in nature.

Strategy 01: Continue to Develop and Expand Collaborative Learning in the Curriculum with Student-Led, Peer- and Faculty-Mentored Courses

The Honors College believes providing opportunities for student-organized and led courses are based in a fundamental need for collaborative work that contributes to the welfare of particular communities. These are not faculty taught instructional courses–though each has a Faculty Mentor to provide guidance and support. Rather, they are an institutional means for students to earn academic credit for experiential learning in the context of productive work conducted on behalf of the college, its students, and the communities of which we are a part. Students will be advised by the college to obtain permission to enroll

before registration. In addition to two pre-existing courses (HON 484 and HON 488), which provide Honors students collaborative learning opportunities to produce a college newspaper and run a student organization and are be refined to best align with our emergent goals in this area, we are continue to develop and expand new opportunities for our students:

1. Honors Peer Mentoring (HON 300). We continue to establish an experiential learning course to provide peer advisor and leadership training so that students can work with college staff to provide various student support services, including advising and a variety of community building events such as field trips and other co-curricular educational opportunities. The course will mirror elements of the John Marshall Leadership Academy's approach while using design thinking to productively address the needs of Honors students. In general, we expect that this course will be taken by students following our HON 200 Second Year Seminar in Leadership, Ethics, and Civic Engagement. Based on our experience in Fall 2022, when the course was first taught, we are refining the course and will offer it regularly.
2. TedxMarshallU Honors Internship (HON 483). The TEDxMarshallU Honors Internship is a continually evolving opportunity to participate on a student-organized and faculty-mentored organizing/planning team for the TEDxMarshallU event. Students apply for and be assigned different roles necessary for the successful planning, organization, promotion, and execution of a TEDxMarshallU event during the academic year. These roles include executive producer, event manager, curation coordinator, sponsorships, budgets, and purchasing manager, designer, communications, editorial, and marketing director, and video and production lead.
    a. Through creating a personal portfolio of their experiences to pass to the next organizing team, students will have the opportunity to reflect on how the internship experience applies to their personal career development. For the 2022-2023 academic year, the TEDxMarshallU event supported the HLC Quality Initiative "Complexities of Identity" in keeping with our commitments to inclusive excellence previously discussed.
3. The Brad D. Smith Business Incubator. Continue to work with the Lewis College of Business to develop and co-brand the incubator. Currently, most students in the incubator are in the Honors College. Additionally, the FYS100H course that being taught by Dr. Ben Eng has been serving as a feeder for the incubator.

Strategy 02: Continue to Develop, Expand and Support Co-Curricular Experiential Learning Opportunities

1. Develop an Honors ePortfolio as a digital collection that Honors students curate to communicate and contextualize their curricular and co-curricular experiences and the skills that they have learned through their engagement in them. Through the use of various "artifacts" as well as guided reflective writing that encourages metacognition, students choose what counts as evidence of their experiential learning beyond the classroom. We believe that there is intrinsic value in the work entailed not only in the experiences being archived, but in the connections and insights that can be gained in collecting them and articulating their significance. This work can shape a students' sense of self while demonstrating inwardly and outwardly their personal growth while highlighting specific areas of strength as they learn the essential skill of being able to tell their story in compelling ways. Rather than a "one off" for Honors students to satisfy requirements for the college, we see this portfolio as a way for students begin drafting essential documents and presentations of self for their academic and/or professional careers such as a personal statement as well as a place to develop their résumé and potential archive important academic documents. The Honors College's ePortfolio program would provide students with the resources they need to collect and organize materials that showcase their participation in the mission of honors education (and generally) at Marshall University.
    a. Establish clear expectations for students for completion of the Honors ePortfolio, which may initially be offered as an option for students to substitute for an approved element of the

honors curriculum through demonstrating alignment with the learning outcomes for the college. Determine a minimum number of areas and number of experiences or hours in each area, including community engagement activities and participation in university events. While these two areas are, perhaps, predictable, we could also see including categories such as active participation in the Honors House or applying for a national competitive scholarship, fellowship, or grant.

   b. Explore establishing a standard platform for creation of the ePortfolio (including licensing existing programs) and developing a training/mentoring process for incoming students so that they can begin to develop their portfolios. We are currently exploring the use of HerdLink, built on the Anthology platform, given our existing institutional license and its familiarity with students.
   c. Ultimately, the college would like to use the Honors ePortfolio as a way to assure that all students have the flexibility to genuinely earn honors credit at Marshall towards completion of the require honors curriculum without having to request various "waivers" of credit that we now must offer—for example, to students who have earned such a large number of credits through dual credit and/or advanced placement courses in high school that they have essentially lost opportunities to earn honors credits while also completing General Education requirements at Marshall as transferred credits have satisfied these requirements.

2. Commit to working even more closely and effectively with the LEAD Center in the mission to create a vibrant co-curricular experience at Marshall through incorporation of outside the classroom programming, mentorship, educational activities, community engagement opportunities, and leadership development.
3. Commit to working with the Marshall University Community-Based Learning (CBL) Program, whose allied mission is to combine academic theory with community engagement to enhance student learning by offering hands-on experience outside of the classroom by supporting collaborations among faculty, students, and community partners that connect learning objectives to public service and civic engagement.
   a. Consider developing a CBL certificate and/or micro-credential in the Honors College and establishing a way for this to enhance curricular flexibility and opportunities for students to earn honors recognition, potentially through providing a distinct "track," especially for students who may join the college after their first year.
4. Commit to working even more closely and effectively with Housing and Residence Life (HRL) to align the work they are doing in the residence halls with our redefined mission. As noted previously, we have envisioned the Honors House as providing opportunities for student residents to create purposeful links between academic, residential, and social components of their college experience. This is learning while living together as a community of students with shared interest in inclusive excellence. Honors House living can be found in the First Year Residence Halls (for first-year students) as well as Willis Hall. In addition to living in the Honors House, Honors students can apply to HRL to serve as Resident Assistants in the House. Residents of Honors House can also get involved in different student leadership programs coordinated through the HRL.
5. Continue to work with the HLC Quality Initiative effort to develop a Diversity Living and Learning Community in the residence halls. Marshall University recognizes that each student's educational experience is richer when it occurs in an environment that celebrates diversity. The Honors College will continue to support and promote this initiative which creates a unique opportunity for students interested in learning more about the benefits of diversity and inclusion, with its emphasis on providing leadership to advance inclusive excellence on campus and in the community through our first diversity themed living/learning community (DLLC) at Marshall University.
6. Continue to promote the opportunity for students to apply to serve for one year on the Honors College Curriculum and Policy Committee as a unique opportunity to get engaged in the "behind

the scenes" work of running a college—something that has value for the student involved and for helping spread greater awareness of the practical matters that shape the experiences of students.

7. Work with the Honors College Student Association to expand awareness of opportunities for productive engagement in and through active participation in the association by all Honors students for a sense of belonging and as an avenue for leadership experience.

Strategy 03: Develop and Support Opportunities for International Engagement and Development of Inter-Cultural Competence by Honors Students

The Honors College encourages students to consider studying abroad as a way of encouraging creative, critical inquiry and respect for a multiplicity of thoughts, experiences, and identities. Study abroad aids students in becoming socially conscious, responsible leaders and lifelong learners who are actively engaged in the acquisition and application of knowledge for a greater good.

1. In recognition of the value of study abroad experience, the Honors College will waive up to 6 of the required General Honors credit hours for study abroad experiences for which the student receives academic credit through Marshall. To receive a waiver of 3 honors credits, students must earn a minimum of 3 transfer credits and the study abroad experience must have a duration of at least 3 weeks. A total of 6 credits of waived honors credit can be awarded for a semester abroad with full-time enrollment of 12 credits or more. Students must request the waiver by submitting a Study Abroad Honors Credit Waiver Petition form.
2. While we will accept waivers of credit for any study abroad experience that meets our basic requirements, we plan to develop and support specific college-sponsored opportunities for Honors students to learn through the experience of international study courses designed according to the principles of honors education and informed directly by our vision, mission, and student learning outcomes.
    e. Continue to develop a close and effective partnership with the Office of Study Abroad.
    f. As with a proposed summer "bridge" program for incoming Honors students, an Honors study abroad program could have the added benefit of generating revenue for the college and university—though clearly funds would have to be secured and spent to enable such a program in the first place.
    g. Additionally, to support our strategic priority of inclusive excellence, measures should be taken to reduce participation costs through scholarships for tuition, travel, housing, and meals. Addressing this particular concern could be a viable avenue for developing donor relationships through the MU Foundation to support the initiative.
3. Seek partnership with one or more international universities to enhance mutual opportunities for our students to travel, learn, and earn academic credit. We will continue to work with the Assistant Provost for Global Education on all our initiatives.
4. An essential element of our mission as a college is to develop a respect among all those engaged in our work for a multiplicity of thoughts, experiences, and identities while they become more socially conscious and responsible leaders. As enumerated in our student learning outcomes, honors students are expected to develop an awareness of cultures other than their own—as may be accomplished not only through their studies but also by way of travel and other experiences while a student in the college. While most efforts have been focused on cultural awareness internationally, we need to recognize that there are many distinct cultural groups in North America that are well outside the awareness and experience of many students. Especially given practical limitations on international travel stemming from cost and/or restrictions due to ongoing uncertainties related to a global pandemic, developing formal opportunities in North America to pursue inter-cultural competency in our students makes good sense.

Strategy 04: Support Creation of Opportunities to Earn Departmental Honors

Support the creation of Departmental Honors in all majors interested in developing especially robust scholarly and creative experiential learning opportunities in their programs. We envision, for example,

significantly more ambitious pathways to completion of the required capstone that could entail creation of committee to oversee a researched thesis project. There are currently two majors in the College of Liberal Arts that have developed Departmental Honors pathways in consultation with the Honors College. The college is prepared to accept such defined Departmental Honors credits toward completion of the honors curriculum for students in good standing with the college who are in these majors.

Strategy 05: Develop Options and Procedures for Online Honors Courses and Students

Historically, online courses have been considered inferior compared to face-to-face courses as a means of delivering "honors-worthy" experiences to students by honors colleges and programs. There has been a strong bias for intimate, seminar-style encounters that are face-to-face and rely heavily on robust discussion. For many of the reasons that individual courses, as well as entire degree programs, are being offered increasingly online, it is time for the Honors College to consider *officially approving* online honors courses at Marshall University. At least some departmental honors-designated courses (e.g., ENG 200H) are being offered online regularly at this point—a practice that began during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Although there has been a clear bias against online delivery of Honors courses by the Honors College, there is no stated prohibition against it in our Handbook, which details our major policy positions. And, until the pandemic, stated or unstated, this bias appears to have generally guarded against the provision of departmentally offered, honors-designated courses. The only reference to online delivery (and this is a remnant of the original policies of the college when it opened in 2010) states that for so-called "Honors Options," wherein a student develops a contract with the instructor of a non-honors course to do work that is considered "honors worthy" for Honors credit accepted in the college, that "Online and summer school courses are not eligible for h-options."

Among the issues we have considered are the fact that many students find it difficult to find General Honors courses that fit their schedule. That is, those courses that are part of the General Education curriculum and that also compose half of all credits in the Honors Curriculum that students must earn to graduate with University Honors through the Honors College. There are a limited number of such courses that are mostly offered through COLA. Students with difficult schedules, such as those in CECS, are especially challenged. Students who commute and may, thus, be on campus for limited periods on given days (when they can arrange their schedule for these focused visits) are similarly challenged finding Honors courses that fit their schedule. These are potentially contributing factors to reduced retention in the college among certain populations Finally, students on branch campus currently have no options for Honors coursework unless these are offered online, or they commute to the Huntington campus. In fact, we currently must discourage students from joining the Honors College if they cannot come to the Huntington campus before the end of their second year, when they must take HON 200 as a required seminar and the "gateway" course to the upper-level courses of the curriculum, which consists of two sections of HON 480. Students enrolled at branch campuses may be accepted into the college, but unfortunately are often dismissed per current policy when they do not meet curricular requirements—typically after their first year—even if they might at this point (as some have intended) become full-time on the Huntington campus in their second year.

1. Officially recognize the provision of online departmental honors-designated courses and in so doing have in place some form of review or expectation of "best practices" for delivery. Faculty teaching online are already expected to have had Quality Matters training in accordance with HEPC guidelines and all courses must meet the criteria of Quality Matters and undergo assessment by the university. These expectations were suspended during prohibition of face-to-face courses during the acute phase of the pandemic but should be in place going forward. We will need to have additional expectations particular to Honors education to be applied to the development and delivery of online Honors courses. At present, however, the Honors College has

no meaningful oversight of how departmental honors-designated courses are delivered in any form.

   a. Best practices suggest synchronous delivery, but this would diminish the flexibility offered by asynchronous delivery methods. We should permit both.
   b. We should put in place some general limits on scheduling online Honors courses. For example, in instances where a department offers more than one section of a course in Honors, have not more than half of these sections offered online. As suggested by Honors College student surveys, roughly half of students are at least somewhat opposed, or at best ambivalent, about online Honors courses. Specifically, among incoming students, 50 percent agreed that online courses could deliver the experience that they expected for an honors course. For continuing students, 62 percent agreed. Online courses should not replace face-to-face honors courses. Rather, they should be a side-by-side alternative.

2. Explore the possibility of allowing students in online-only baccalaureate programs to be Honors students that have the opportunity to engage as fully as possible with the college and graduate with University Honors through the Honors College. While there is currently no policy prohibiting online-only undergraduates from joining the college, there is currently no practical way for these students to complete our required curriculum.

Strategic Priority 04: Reinforce the Honors College's Resources and Institutional Position

Goal 04|01: Establish the Honors College Sustainably within a Responsibility-Centered Model for the University Budget

The Honors College must be prepared to navigate a revised institutional budget model and funding landscape at Marshall University—one that will be informed by responsibility centered budget (RCM) models. Unlike the central administration management (CAM) budgeting model in higher education, an RCM approach decentralizes management decisions and processes through dividing the university into a number of units, most of which are responsible for generating their own income and managing their own budgets based on locally earned revenue. Thus, the approach places principal authority for budget decisions within these units and allows decision makers there to see their share of overhead expenses through greater transparency in the university's budget as a whole. Among other things, implementation of the RCM budget model is justified as serving to encourage academic officers and others in each responsible unit to innovate in order to increase revenue and reduce costs in their areas. The motivation for such innovation is understood as emerging from the opportunity for members of each responsible unit to directly benefit from greater financial resources accumulated for priority uses determined by decisions made locally, within their units, to strengthen their own programs and responsibly plan for the future.

RCM budgets typically consider units such as honors colleges, libraries, university colleges, and graduate studies as academic or central "support units," even while they may generate revenue, given that these units typically do not have the capacity to generate the level of revenue necessary for them to be treated as fully responsible resource centers. At the same time, these units do provide indisputable university-wide support through direct services and overall benefits that contribute to fulfilling the university's mission. Accordingly, honors colleges and other such support units are understood as deserving funding, generally via allocations through Academic Affairs through what might be characterized as a central, community supported allocation.

Colleges and schools, such as COHP or COLA at Marshall, are generally considered "revenue units" or "responsibility centers" because they generate significant tuition and fees relative to their expenses and can be expected to have the fullest possible responsibility for their own budgets. The costs associated with funding central university support operations may be distributed across these revenue units according to a set of metrics, related to the functions of each support unit, as a way to distribute cost. Generally speaking, an assessment fee goes back to a central unit, such as Academic Affairs, at the university. This fee covers expenses for operations such as utilities and building maintenance as well as the services of support units. The fee assigned to each school may be based on formulas that, for example, consider such inputs as total credit hours, tenure-track faculty FTE, other academics, staff FTE, and net direct expenses.

It should be noted that Strategies 01 and 02 below relate to our Strategic Priority 01, which emphasized the quality of our relationships as a college with our different university and community partners. As stated here, however, they emphasize how such efforts are essential to reinforcing our position in the institution where we are dependent on the willingness and ability of other units to support and contribute to our mission. Other strategies outlined in Strategic Initiative 04 are directed to envisioning the ability of the college to have some measure of greater autonomy and an internal capacity to meet its goals and to be a fuller and more effective partner to other units, which is (again) an essential element of our efforts to improve our relationships across campus and the larger community.

Strategy 01: Assure that Student Credit Hours are Properly Credited to Responsible Units

1. Given that courses with the HON prefix are exclusive to the Honors College, it may appear at first glance that these courses should be credited to the college. However, as the college generally depends on tenured and tenure-track faculty from responsibility centers (i.e., other colleges) to teach these courses, we must assure that Student Credit Hours (SCHs) per Full-Time Equivalent

(FTE) are properly credited to those units. This is essential to maintain the willingness of other colleges to share faculty without fear of loss of these SCHs in any final reckoning. Revenue generated in this manner must be transparently allocated back to the responsible unit for the instructor-of-record generating the tuition revenue in an Honors course being offered for academic credit.

a. Additionally, the college faces challenges given the fact that standards and pedagogical best practices for honors education generally require smaller, seminar-style classes. Thus, enrollment in these courses generates fewer SCHs per FTE than courses that instructors might otherwise be teaching if they were not teaching in the Honors College. We may need to find a way to offset this difference at least partially—e.g., by counting individual students at a 1.5 rate as has been done with Writing Intensive courses at Marshall, which require lower enrollment caps for similar reasons as honors. Otherwise, we will face continued or even increased resistance by academic departments to share faculty given demands of "bottom line" reckoning.

Strategy 02: Determine Appropriate Allocation of Student Credit Hours for Unaffiliated Instructors

If the instructor-of-record is not from a responsibility center (e.g., they are a staff member from an academic or student support unit) revenues may be allocated back to responsibility centers based upon their proportion of total revenues. In the current manner of providing compensation in these instances (as overload/adjunct pay) through Academic Affairs at Marshall (e.g., for HON 200), the Honors College has not directly contributed revenue in order for a course to be taught. In instances where the college might pay for these instructors out of allocated or other funds, it might make sense for SCHs to be retained by the college—though, these would be highly limited.

Strategy 03: Consider Possible Avenues for Revenue Generation in the College

Ultimately, in order for the Honors College to have the greater responsibility and flexibility to realize many of the goals outlined here in support of our stated priorities, we may need to generate our own revenue. Just as a centralized budget model limits the ability of responsibility units to effectively support and fund their strategic initiatives, so too such a model may severely limit the ability of support units like the college to effectively realize their plans.

1. As previously enumerated, there are at least two possible avenues for revenue generation through provided services through the Honors College that are also closely aligned with other priorities. Specifically, the college could develop a high school to college honors residential "bridge" program in the summer. Additionally, the college could develop honors study abroad programs, which could take place in either/both the regular academic year or/and summer.
2. The Honors College must assertively engage with potential donors through the MU Foundation to secure ongoing donations and, in particular, established of endowed funds for operational expenses and specific initiatives, including our proposed revenue generating services such as the bridge and study abroad programs. This could include naming opportunities—including for the college as a whole.

Goal 04|02: Assure that the Honors College has Appropriate Levels of Curricular Oversight

As noted by the university's Office of Assessment and Quality Initiatives, Marshall has a culture of assessment that is firmly rooted in the University's mission and that grew, initially, from both faculty and administration concern for institutional quality and accountability. The process of assessment, founded on program-level curricular oversight, provides all levels of the university with information regarding effectiveness in achieving expected outcomes. Currently, more than half of the Honors College's curriculum, i.e., all departmental honors-designated courses and, at least until this year, FYS100H, is provisioned with very little or even no input whatsoever expected from the college. Ultimately, it is not possible to for the Honors College to be accountable for student achievement of its learning outcomes without greater input into the delivery of those courses, which are provided exclusively to students in the

college in partial fulfillment of the college's required curriculum—even where they also serve other requirements (e.g., General Education Core I and Core II).

Strategy 01: Empower the Honors College to be a Full Partner in the Provision of Departmental Honors Courses

1. When the college began annual surveys among our continuing students two years ago, we found that there was dissatisfaction with many of these courses. Frankly, some instructors fail to follow best practices for honors education. The college needs a measure of guiding oversight of courses that exclusively serve those students who are admitted to the Honors College (i.e., that have this pre-requisite), which at present we cannot be said to have. We have no established expectation for oversight or a process to review pedagogical practice or course content in departmental honors-designated courses, have no say in who teaches these courses, and are only occasionally consulted regarding scheduling. This makes it very difficult for us to assure consistent quality of experience for Honors students and, ultimately, for the college to conduct meaningful assessment of college-based student learning outcomes.[13]
2. Although greater oversight makes sense to the college to assure that we have the necessary alignments with our vision, mission, and particularly our student learning outcomes, this will need to come with an outreach plan that combines education and, potentially, training for faculty—who (even if currently teaching in departmental honors-designated) may in fact know little about the college, specifically, and the principles of honors education, generally—and various kinds of ongoing support and recognition for their contributions. We see the plan unfolding along the following basic set of steps:
    a. Solicit public support by Academic Affairs for the notion that teaching for the Honors College is a mark of distinction and honor bestowed on exceptional faculty. It should be understood that, in terms of Promotion and Tenure, teaching for the Honors College is an outstanding act of service to the university as a whole. Given the need to meet exceptional standards of honors education, it is also (certainly during the preparation period) a form of faculty development.
    b. We will need an unambiguous assertion from Academic Affairs that teaching for the Honors College will not hurt a department's "bottom line" regarding Full-Time Equivalents of instruction (FTEs) per Student Credit Hours (SCHs). Despite previous assurances from Institutional Research, department chairs have not been inclined to believe those assurances. The turn toward reduced loads as part of a university initiative to provide more opportunities for research and publication among faculty will only exacerbate the trend—especially given the fact that Reassigned Time for faculty (reducing teaching load) is generally arranged so that faculty are relieved from teaching lower-division introductory courses, which serve General Education (not their upper-division major courses).
    c. We need a requirement that all departmental, honors-designated courses include contributions (as will need to be enumerated in the syllabus) to the Honors College's student learning outcomes (SLOs). A course's particular honors SLOs can be determined through collaboration between the department and the college. Our SLOs are themselves derived from the MU Baccalaureate Degree profile, so they are already essential across all courses at Marshall in different ways.
    d. A "syllabus template" (built up from the current template for the university) that includes required information regarding honors education at Marshall University.

[13] According to the "Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College" wherein the National Collegiate Honors Council identifies the best practices common to successful and fully developed honors colleges, those colleges that are fully developed should exercise "increased coordination and control of departmental honors where the college has emerged out of a decentralized system" (2017).

e. Published, university-wide best practices—if not requirements—for provisioning honors-designated departmental courses. There is a very general (non-codified) expectation that honors-designated, departmental courses should be capped at a level below non-honors sections so that the experience can be more engaging and, generally, more seminar-like (at least where that is practically possible given disciplinary differences). This cap also helps attract faculty. However, departments can do effectively do whatever they want without any consideration for what the college might want or need.
f. Access by the Dean of the Honors College to the course evaluations of all departmental, honors-designated courses. This is a necessary and reasonable request given the centrality of these courses to the curriculum of the college, for quality control, and given the fact that the courses exist to serve students of the college.
g. Creation of a cadre of instructors who are certified as "Honors Faculty." Some instructors consider themselves "Honors faculty," but there are no established criteria for adopting that moniker, and there is no formal process for achieving it. We envision a process akin to what is done at Marshall in support of General Education with either Critical Thinking (CT) designated courses, for which faculty teaching the course must be "CT certified," or with Writing Intensive (WI) designated courses, for which faculty teaching the course must be Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) certified. The Honors College currently does not have the resources for something as extensive as WAC, but the process used for CT certification could be an easier first-step model to move forward.
h. Develop an Honors Faculty Handbook as a resource for faculty teaching in honors and as another means to help convey important messages to faculty not only about expectations that college must have for delivery of courses in its curriculum but also as a means to help develop a better understanding of opportunities for faculty to develop professionally through an active relationship with the Honors College. The Handbook can be built up from our current Contributing to Honors Education handout.

Goal 04|03: Develop the Honors College's Capacity to Serve Others through Adequate Staffing

After establishing itself in the years immediately following its founding in 2010, the Honors College has gradually lost staff positions through budget trimming by the university. At one time, the college had a dean, two associate deans (one dedicated to the Yeager Program and another who, among other things, developed the curricular and co-curricular programs that sustained the college), two administrative assistants, an advisor, a program manager (of the Office of National Scholarships), and a development position. We are now at a staffing level that is one-half this high water mark. With all current positions filled in Spring 2023, the college conducted an internal review to determine FTE (full-time equivalent) commitment to the day-to-day operation of the college. Out of five employees within the college, there are only **three FTEs working full-time for the college**—as can be seen in the organizational chart in Appendix 02.

That we can continue to deliver the basics is a testament to the hard work of the college's current staff. However, to achieve the goals outlined in this Strategic Plan, we will need additional help—beyond what we might recruit by relying yet again on borrowed, volunteer labor from among the faculty and students of other colleges. At present, the Honors College has four employees supporting the college full-time. These consist of a dean, an (interim) assistant dean who serves primarily (and necessarily) as coordinator of the Yeager Program, an advisor, and an administrative assistant. In addition, we have the program manager position of the ONS, who directly supports the college on a contractual part-time, ad hoc basis among their principal duties. If we remain at this level of staffing, we will be unable to fully realize our potential as a college as outlined in this strategic plan. There is at least one position that is critically needed to begin our journey. As we begin to see results and to grow in number and impact, we can envision other support positions.

Strategy 01: Hire a Program Manager of Student Engagement and Community Outreach

As should be clear from the preceding elements of our strategic plan, we are prioritizing a range of initiatives that variously contribute to the quality of student life and, in particular, broadening and strengthening experiential learning opportunities—particularly those that could be characterized as "co-curricular." In addition, we are fundamentally expanding our outreach efforts to an array of stakeholders, including not only our students at all levels as well as our alumni, but also local and regional businesses and other potential community partners. If we are to be successful at achieving even a portion of our vision to expand the range of opportunities for as well as the positive impact of our students in the communities of which we are a part, we will need someone committed to the effort full-time.

- The Dean developed a job description for this position and proposed it to Academic Affairs through the Strategic Hiring Committee in March 2023.
- Seek to fill the position with an outstanding hire before the beginning of the 2023-2024 academic year, which would allow an incoming person to prepare for the next academic year over the summer.

Appendices

This section includes several supplements to the Strategic Plan that are referenced at various points within the plan. While not essential to understanding the plan, they can be consulted as needed for additional insight.

The Honors College Curriculum

Our curriculum requires **24 credits** equally divided across two distinct areas. *As many as 15 credits can be earned through fulfilling requirements in other areas, e.g., General Education and those of your major college.*

Core Honors

A total of **12** credits, as seen below.

Lower Division Seminars

[6 credits in two required seminars]

- **FYS 100H** – First-Year Seminar
- **HON 200** – Second-Year Seminar in *Leadership, Ethics & Civic Engagement*
  > HON 200 is offered in the **spring** semester only. Must be taken by the end of your second year.

Upper Division Seminars & Experiential

[6 credits in some accepted combination]

You must **reserve a seat** and **obtain permission** to register for the courses below during Honors Advising. All students must complete at least ONE section of HON 480 and may "substitute" 3 credits of HON 300 ***or*** HON 483 for a total of 6 credits.

- **HON 480 –** Special Topics Honors Seminar **[At least 1 section of HON 480 required]**
  > Taken during your third and/or fourth year after HON 200 is completed. Topics change each semester. See our website for details each semester.
- **HON 300** – Honors Peer Mentoring
- **HON 483** – TEDxMarshallU Internship
  > Requires two consecutive semesters for a total of 3 credits. *Requires internship application to Faculty Mentor.*

General Honors

A total of **12** credits in any combination of the following.

Departmental Honors-Designated Courses [H]

- Offered by departments to honors students (General Education courses, e.g., ANT 201**H)**. See a list of honors-designated sections: https://www.marshall.edu/honors/courses/.

Additional Sections of HON 300, HON 480, or HON 483

- Additional sections of these courses are counted as "General Honors" when not applied for upper-division credits (at left).

Other Experiential Learning Courses and Co-Curricular Opportunities

These options require permission and/or form submission. *No more than 6 credits waived for any reason* (e.g., Study Abroad or AP/DC)

- **HON 484** – The Honors Oracle News (student-led reporting)
- **HON 488** – Steering Committee of the Honors College Student Association (student-led, SGA-recognized organization)
- **Study Abroad** -- May be substituted for up to 6 General Honors credits by contract with the Honors College. See our ***Forms*** page for details: https://www.marshall.edu/honors/forms/
- **H-Options** – Arranged through a contract with a Faculty Mentor to enhance a non-Honors course. See the ***Forms*** page for details. *Not generally recommended. Must seek permission in advance to submit a proposal and have a proposal approved by the Dean.*

College Credit Waiver for Incoming First-Year Students:

- Appeal to have 3-6 hours of General Honors credits **waived** if you have earned at least 15 hours of AP or DC college credit in high school. The form is on our website's ***Forms*** page.

SATISFACTORY PROGRESS

- Attend a **First Year Check-In** appointment during your first semester in the Honors College and remain enrolled full-time in a bachelor's degree program at Marshall.
- Earn at least an overall **3.00 GPA** in your first semester here. Good standing will be 3.30 after.
- Complete **at least SIX honors credits** in your first academic year. SIX credits are an **absolute minimum.** It *is best to earn 15-18 honors credits in your first two years* (e.g., via FYS 100H, HON 200, and most General Honors).
- Register for and successfully complete **HON200 by the spring of your 2nd year**. In exceptional circumstances, students may submit an Exception Request to the Honors College Dean to take it in your 3rd year
- After first year, complete **at least 3 honors credits each year** until completing the Honors College Curriculum

GOOD STANDING

- You must **maintain an overall GPA of 3.30 or higher**. Students below this GPA will be given **one semester** of Honors College Probation. Those who return their GPA to 3.30 or higher at that semester's end will be reinstated to Good Standing in the Honors College. Failure to do so will result in dismissal from the college.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Know Where to Go:

- Participating in the Honors College means you are a member of at least two different colleges at Marshall. Keep these things in mind when thinking about what that means for you:
  - You have at least two different advisors. Your primary advisor is the Academic Advisor in your degree-granting college. You also have an Honors Advisor who will see you regarding completing the Honors College's required curriculum. For your degree-granting college's policy regarding a specific issue, you should see the Academic Advisor in your college to ensure you get accurate information.
  - The Honors College is not a *"degree-granting"* college. We add value to your degree earned in another college. The college that houses your primary major will handle your degree completion, **so general policy questions, course substitutions, etc., must be addressed by that college**.
  - If you need a Dean's signature on a form, you will only need the Honors College Dean's signature **if the form has to do with a course that begins with HON or you are asking for some sort of exception to an Honors College policy** (e.g., H-Options, approval of a credit waiver for Study Abroad, etc.).

DegreeWorks:

- Be sure to familiarize yourself with your **DegreeWorks.** A separate "block" (or section) of your DegreeWorks for your Honors College requirements exists. It will help you monitor what you have done and what you still need to do to complete your Honors College requirements. If you have questions about what you see in the Honors College section of your Degree Works, please let us know so we can follow up as needed. The academic advisor for your major college should ***NOT*** change the Honors College block.

Financial Assistance:

- Although when you were admitted to the Honors College, you were given the **Honors College Scholarship**, you must remain an active student in the Honors College to continue receiving it.
  - Student Financial Assistance handles all aspects of administering and renewing the scholarship. It is **not** possible to leave or be dismissed from the Honors College and remain eligible for the Honors College Scholarship. It **is** possible to lose your Honors College Scholarship (e.g., through failure to take at least 30 total credits at MU in an academic year) and still be a member of the Honors College and receive all other benefits.

Honors College
Organizational Chart

We serve all other colleges as an institutional support unit providing valuable curricular and co-curricular experiences and opportunities to both students and faculty from departments across the university. The **Society of Yeager Scholars** predates the college as distinct program and population of students now housed in the college.

Brian A. Hoey

Dean

90% Honors College
10% Society of Yeager Scholars

Leads strategic planning, finances and budgeting, faculty and staff development, and facilities management. Reports to Provost & Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs as a full-time administrator with recurring duties for functions within the college and between the college and its institutional partners, including the **Society for Yeager Scholars.**

Heather Brooks

Academic Advisor

100% Honors College

Provides advising (one-to-one, group, and online) to students in the college focused on course selection, schedule planning, program policies and curricular requirements. Contributes to enrollment management and student success practices through effective collection, analysis, and reporting of data to help develop strategies that improve outcomes.

Jami Smith

Office Administrator

80% Honors College
20% Society of Yeager Scholars

Manages day-to-day financial responsibilities of college and, with the Director, the **Society of Yeager Scholars** (SYS), through purchase requests, requisitions, expense reimbursements, travel requests, processing non-payroll cost transfers, inter-unit transactions, and check request transactions for vendors. Also makes all necessary arrangements for travel in the college and the **SYS**, including fund requisitions, and independently perform follow-up and recordkeeping.

Cara Bailey

Director of Society of Yeager Scholars
Assistant Dean

25% Honors College
75% Society of Yeager Scholars

Honors College: Shares in advising honors students during First Year Check-In and Honors Advising; mentoring of HCSA Steering Committee and the Honors Oracle Student Newsletter. **Society of Yeager Scholars**: Day-to-day administration of the program--including current students, potential students, board, alumni, donors, etc.

Heather Smith

Program Manager, Office of National Scholarships

10% Honors College
90% University-wide

Collaborates with multiple units, including the offices of Career Education, Financial Aid, Study Abroad, Registrar, and the Lead Center, as well as individual academic departments to promote cross-campus participation in the recruitment and mentoring of candidates for national competitive scholarships, awards, and grants.

Appendix 03: Honors College Student Learning Outcome Alignments

MU Baccalaureate Degree Profile – Institutional SLOs	Redefined Honors College SLOs (2020)	Identifiable/Existing Alignments to Honors Course-Level SLOs
○ **Creative Thinking:** Students will outline multiple divergent solutions to a problem, develop and explore risky or controversial ideas, and synthesize ideas/expertise to generate ideas.	○ outline multiple divergent solutions to a problem, develop and explore risky or controversial ideas, and synthesize ideas/expertise to generate original ideas and approaches.	○ HON 300 (for some students) ○ HON 480 Seminars
○ **Integrative Thinking:** Students will make connections and transfer skills and learning among varied disciplines, domains of thinking, experiences, and situations.	○ make connections and transfer skills and learning among varied disciplines, domains of thinking, experiences, and situations.	○ General Education, Core I, FYS100H ○ General Education, Core I, CT courses (various) ○ HON 300 (for some students) ○ HON 480 Seminars
○ **Metacognitive Thinking:** Students will evaluate the effectiveness of a project plan or strategy to determine the degree of their improvement in knowledge and skills.	○ evaluate the effectiveness of their own project plans or strategies, reflect on strengths and weakness of their knowledge and skills in defined areas, and devise ways to make improvements.	○ General Education, Core I, FYS100H ○ General Education, Core I, CT courses (various) ○ HON 200 ○ HON 300 (for some students) ○ HON 480 Seminars
○ **Communication Fluency**: Students will develop cohesive oral, written, and visual communications tailored to specific audiences.	○ produce cohesive oral, written, and visual communications capable of connecting effectively with specific audiences.	○ General Education, Core II, Composition ○ General Education, Core II, Communications ○ General Education, Core II, Fine Arts ○ Writing Intensive Courses ○ HON 200 ○ HON 300 (for some students) ○ HON 480 Seminars
○ **Intercultural Thinking:** Students will evaluate generalizations about cultural groups, analyze how cultural beliefs might affect communication across cultures, evaluate how specific approaches to global issues will affect multiple cultural communities, and untangle competing economic, religious, social, or geographical interests of cultural groups in conflict.	○ appraise how generalizations about cultural groups and other beliefs and practices might affect inter-group communication, how specific approaches to global issues may affect different cultural communities, and how varying economic, religious, social, or geographical interests can result in competition and conflict.	○ General Education, Core II, Social Science ○ Multicultural/International Courses ○ HON 200 ○ Connects most directly with inclusive excellence elements of the mission.
○ **Ethical and Civic Thinking:** Students will determine the origins of core beliefs and ethical principles, evaluate the ethical basis of professional rules and standards of conduct, evaluate how academic theories and public policy inform one another to support civic wellbeing, and analyze complex ethical problems to address competing interests.	○ evaluate how academic theories and public policy inform one another to support civic well-being.	○ HON 200 ○ HON 300 (for some students)
	○ demonstrate principles of ethical citizenship and socially responsible leadership through collaborative partnerships	○ HON 200 ○ For some students: HON 300; HON 484; and/or HON 488

Appendix 04: Inclusive Excellence in Honors Education

A Report to the Honors College of Marshall University

Brian A. Hoey, PhD, Associate Dean
Honors College of Marshall University
Submitted to the Honors College Dean, 24 July 2020

Introduction

At least at this point in what must be considered a thoughtful process of reflective inquiry, dialog, and action, this document is the product of an individual. For that reason, and in recognition of the mandates of the writer's discipline of anthropology, which has long grappled with how to address such issues as identity, representation and authority, the ideas in this text will be delivered in the first person—when appropriate.[14] As I have conducted the research upon which the discussion here is based and made choices as to how to parse that material, meaningfully present it, and ultimately provide some coherent analysis through which others might consider their own positions as well as potential courses of action, it will be me speaking professionally with an explicit acknowledgement of my positionality, as a person, to the material and, of course, the topics at hand. With that in mind, let me begin with a bit of background to my work here.

As I began in administration at the Honors College in mid-2018, I started reading about how other honors college and program administrators have addressed the charge of "elitism" that is sometimes levelled at their institutional practices and the ideas (if not always the ideals) on which they are based. Looking back on that preliminary inquiry, I see how the questions that it raised for me are salient for the historical moment in which we find ourselves today. No doubt given where I am positioned as a middle-class, white male, I felt little urgency at the time of my early inquiry into the potential validity of charges of elitism against the practice (if not the stated mission) of post-secondary honors education. Since then and in light of what I have learned upon broadening and deepening my inquiry, I have become convinced that "business as usual" in honors education generally, and at Marshall particularly, is not a viable option.

Historical Context of Honors Education

Although honors education in the United States may trace its ideological and methodological roots to certain European educational models with their own long histories, attempts to emulate elements of these practices began under a coherent banner in the late-nineteenth century and later experienced periods of rapid growth in the 1920s and, again, during widespread post-WWII institutional expansion in higher education lasting through the 1950s and 60s. It was, in fact, an influx of American scholars returning from training in Europe during the first half of the twentieth century that accelerated the trend to create distinct "honors" educational experiences. The reliance today within honors upon such standards as the seminar and more intimate, personalized, and active instruction akin to tutorial methods, generally, is a legacy of these relatively proximate European roots.

The "honors project" now encompasses most attempts at differentiated instruction intended for students deemed higher-achieving or "gifted" in institutions of higher education and coincides historically with a movement to provide for such students at the pre-collegiate level (Rinn 2006). Joy Pehlke (2003) notes that honors developed—as is true of educational programs for students deemed gifted generally—in much the same way as "remedial" programs. In both, there is explicit recognition that different students have different needs and that certain groups of students have broadly shared needs that may be atypical of the majority of the student body. Speaking to his experience in honors at Radford University, Earl Brown

[14] For an in-depth discussion of contemporary anthropological approaches to race, please consider exploring a project sponsored by the American Anthropological Association titled "Understanding Race" and available at https://www.understandingrace.org/.

refers to honors as "alternative education" where emphasis is not (as may be widely thought outside of honors) on "acceleration and quantity of work required but on depth and *kind* of work" (1990, 15; emphasis added).

In her historical analysis of honors education, Anne Rinn (2006) suggests that it was during the post-WW II period of dramatic institutional expansion and explosive enrollment that those in higher education were confronted with what they took as a challenge to provide for the needs of those students appearing to them as both willing and able to take on greater educational challenges than the majority of their peers. For many in what may be recognized as an honors "movement," addressing these needs was a way of promising that these manifestly talented and self-motivated students would not be limited in ability to reach their fullest intellectual potential within a system purposefully geared to the average student.

As the early movement's de facto leader, Frank Aydelotte brought pedagogical models observed from his experience as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University to his post as president of Swarthmore in the 1920s where an influential honors program was started and, in his zeal, contributed most impactfully to solidifying arguments both for and against honors education. For Aydelotte (1944, 28), creating honors education was a simple matter of providing for a neglected but specially deserving category of student—the seemingly most talented—by "breaking the academic lock step" that characterized what he described as typical college instruction in order to provide more challenging opportunities for these "abler" students For critics who question the selectivity at the base of honors education—both then and now—it is a simple matter of elitism.

Honors Education's Development Since its Origins

Speaking to the charge of elitism, Norm Weiner (2009) asserts that while the ideals of honors were first imported from Europe into the context of an already selective United States college population serving children of the upper socioeconomic class in the first-half of the twentieth century, honors has moved almost entirely into the context of public universities. Today no ivy league school has a university-wide honors program. This is to suggest, that at least in some significant respects, the basic practice of honors education—now in much different institutional contexts with substantially different student populations—has changed since its origins. For many of the students now choosing to participate in honors programs, this participation is at least partly motivated by a personal and/or familial commitment to social mobility and comes with recognition that opportunities afforded in honors education improve their credentials (Jones 2017). These personal concerns are entirely consistent with the broad mandate for public higher education. Honors programs at such institutions have served as a comparatively cost-effective means for underserved students, generally, including first-generation students from all manner of ethnic and socioeconomic background, to gain the demonstrable benefits of pedagogies typical of elite, private colleges, and universities.

At the same time and well outside of that mandate, there are institutional motivations to develop honors programs in order to attract and retain students considered more intellectually motivated and whom might otherwise be expected to go to more prestigious colleges and universities in the absence of such programs. As noted by Pehlke (2003, 28; emphasis added) "by drawing a solid core of high-achieving students, [public colleges and universities] hope to improve their standing with the public and with state lawmakers, as well as to raise the academic bar for *all* their students."

Writing of another highly influential and more contemporary leader in honors education, Finnie Coleman (2017, 325) describes Edward Funkhouser's recognition, as head of Texas A&M's honors program beginning in the mid-1990s, of the potential for a more thoroughly modern and progressive mission for honors education whereby honors programs actively serve to foster excellence well outside their limited population of students through "shaping campus climate, driving community relations; and fostering diversity, equity, and inclusion for faculty, staff and students across campus, not just in honors." Speaking of the experience of West Virginia University, President E. Gordan Gee has asserted the value of honors

programs in the context of the public university where students in honors have access to the kinds of educational experiences that they would otherwise be unable to afford at elite, private colleges. Gee's assertion, however, goes beyond the individual benefits provided to honors students that I suggested earlier.

According to Gee (2015, 179; emphasis added), "When we bring more honors students to our campus, we are raising the level of discussion in every classroom, not just honors classes. When we have more students who know how to balance working smart and playing smart, we are helping teach *all* our students how to work and play smarter. When we have more students engaged in going first in the classroom, we create an environment where more are encouraged to go out into the world with boldness and confidence." Such a present-day assertion—that honors is valuable in that it confers benefits well beyond any institutionally imposed limits to direct access to honors education—is consistent with Funkhouser's own assertion that it is the responsibility of higher education administration to provide honors programs so that they can "model the ideal education and champion innovative pedagogical practices so that how faculty members taught in honors could be emulated across the academic enterprise" (Coleman 2017, 325). In this way, the success of an honors program might be measured not simply by how well it served its own students, but also in how well it elevates the educational experience for a much broader selection of students—should it be possible to clearly determine that outcome.

Considering the shifted context and consequent mission of honors education since Aydelotte's time, generally, and with assertions as to broad-based benefits, particularly, the barest charges of elitism may be at least somewhat blunted. At the same time, Amberly Dziesinski (2017, 83; emphasis added) and her co-authors suggest that while it is true that because honors programs at most public universities "recruit students who come from relatively less privileged backgrounds compared to students who attend more elite schools, it is easy to forget that within the same institution, the honors students are *still more likely to come from backgrounds of relative privilege compared to their non-honors peers*."

Privilege in Honors?

It appears that some measure of "privilege" as a descriptor is likely to adhere to honors. Speaking as an honors administrator at the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, David Jones has found that it is all the more important that "With limited resources being the norm, we in honors must be prepared to explain why our programs do not reinforce a system of privilege and elitism within our institutions" (Jones 2017, p. 67). At his university, this entails not only demonstrating the impact of their program well outside of honors through well-collected and analyzed data, but also "actively communicating to interested audiences that pedagogical innovations within our honors program can be piloted in a supportive context and adapted elsewhere on campus over time … [and that these initiatives] can include inclusive and culturally relevant pedagogy, as well as other pedagogical methods that foster student equity" (ibid.).

In other words, what one could and probably should say is that honors education must not be an upgrade to "flying first class" from the economy class of public education such that those upgraded students are entitled to special treatment—including such perks as priority registration, easier access to advising, and better dorms—merely because they scored above an arbitrary threshold on standardized tests that an increasing number of critics consider of doubtful equity and value (cf. Knudson 2011). There is no benefit conferred on the many coach passengers by those who fly in comfort up front and behind the curtain for having actual legroom as well as free drinks.

It might be understandable how we could end up at such a point of entitlement. In the determined effort of public universities and colleges to secure greater "prestige" by luring top-of-class high school students with outstanding scores who might otherwise attend a prominent private institution, honors programs have been offered as a means for these students to obtain some comparable level of academic challenge and more engaging encounters with both course material and faculty. At the same time, such programs are often marketed in terms that are easily comparable to something like concierge treatment in health care.

And, it is a fact that for the majority of these programs, such hands-on treatment is effectively reserved for the most privileged among students at any institution.

Writing in an oft-cited article in the *Chronicle for Higher Education*, Kevin Knudson (2011) emphasizes to his readers, as well as prospective students to his own honors program at the University of Florida, that honors must be seen *first* as a significant but enriching *challenge* for students and not taken as a reward for a previous job well-done. Further, Knudson holds that honors at the university level must be seen as necessarily entailing a "culture of engagement" that pushes boundaries and improves the educational experience for all. That, at least, might avoid a tendency for at least some number of honors students to simply fulfill basic requirements and enjoy perks of membership. All well and good, Pehlke (2003, 27; emphasis added) might say, but "If we in the academy are to believe that honors programs produce the honorable benefits they claim to, a closer look may be in order. I fear that the *questions of access and privilege call the underlying crux of 'honor' into question*. If institutions of higher education are serious about challenging the trends of social inequalities at the doors of the academy, then the doors of honors should be open as well." With that tough assertion, let us turn to the basic question of access on which so much of any debate turns.

Selectivity and Access

Honors programs selectively draw on and directly serve a segment of the student body who are recognized in what are held as some meaningful way as "higher-achieving" than the majority of their peers. As pointed out by Rew Godow (1990, 64), "Many seem to believe that elitism and selectivity are the same thing, and so they find it difficult to figure out how to be against elitism and still introduce some selectivity into honors programs. The result … is some confusing talk which makes a lot of people who, in their desire to be against elitism, sound as if they also think that selectivity is a bad thing." For Godow—and I think for nearly all honors administrators—it is both possible and necessary to distinguish between a state of elitism, as something pernicious and undemocratic, and compelling arguments for some form of selectivity. Among those who recognize that students both willing and able to take on additional educational challenges beyond those pursued by most students—perhaps with appropriate support, in some cases—should be given special opportunities to pursue them, there appears unanimous agreement that selectivity, in some form, is both an essential and appropriate starting point to first recognizing and then serving these students. So, what to make of the practice of selecting?

Assuming that honors education will continue to serve some smaller population of students—a subset of a much larger body of students within a larger institution—who have been somehow identified as either "deserving" or "needing" special attention in their education, then how should selection of these students be conducted?[15] It is without exaggeration to say that this question is central to every debate concerning

[15] I will note here that as a faculty member, in particular, I feel strongly that the benefits afforded honors students such as smaller, more intimate, and often particularly innovative classes and individualized faculty mentoring should serve as illustrations of the kinds of opportunities and experiences we should strive to create for all students. As has already been suggested, there are varying forms of what could be described as "spillover" benefit accrued outside of honors. Some of this is presumably achieved through particular experiences of students that inform edifying actions and interactions throughout the university as when a faculty member develops an innovative honors seminar and then uses what they learn to shape what they then do in their regular coursework. This spillover is certainly not the same as making all that we recognize as beneficial to honors students and faculty a standard for an entire university. Frankly, given the trends in higher education and the budgetary constraints that most public colleges and universities like Marshall now face—all the more substantial given revenue shortfalls precipitated by the coronavirus pandemic—it is exceedingly unlikely that anything like the changes required to achieve such as situation will be supported. Nearly every indicator suggests precisely the opposite—we are moving away from practices that were once much closer to that standard. This leaves honors education within larger universities ever more exposed as something of an elite (or at least selective) holdout that may look more like some kind of an institutional "attic" in which to relegate past (even if once highly regarded) practice than as a center of contemporary innovation capable of

how to address questions of inclusive excellence. For now, I will simply look at some basics. Later, as I explore possible courses of action, there will be much more discussion of the issues that relate to particular practices of admission to honors programs. Returning first to Godow, we can take note that some thirty years ago, honors administrators were questioning what was then—and what continues to be—a heavy reliance on standardized test scores and grade point averages as ways of admitting students. In this, Godow asserted that "If our principles dictate, as I think they must, that we not arbitrarily exclude people, then our practices must coincide" (1990, 8).

Among the first points made in nearly all reviews of admission practices in honors is that quantitative measures do not always provide a means of finding the most promising and capable students given that for some significant number of students, their particular achievements, abilities, and potential are not well captured by grades and test scores. In their thoughtful article attempting inclusive excellence in honors at the University of Maryland at Baltimore, Simon Stacey and Jodi Kelber-Kaye (2018) point out that, while there continues to be some dissent on the issue, there is convincing evidence that what they describe as "underrepresented minority" students and African-Americans, in particular, are put at a disadvantage by reliance on standardized tests in admissions.[16] To continue to rely on quantitative measures primarily or even exclusively is to, de facto, accept that this is not only a reliable measure of past achievement and future potential but also that it is fair to all.

Openness to Critical Review

The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), which provides honors educators and administrators with a professional organization through which they can share experiences and seek guidance, was founded in 1966—in the midst of an era of widespread civil rights protests and groundbreaking legislation. Nearly thirty years later, the NCHC defined the basic characteristics of what they described as a "fully developed" honors program as a rough measure—if not a standard—of appropriate practice. On the issues at hand today, this document, which emphasizes the need for such valuable things as experiential education, community service, and a curriculum that constitutes some 20-25 percent of a student's coursework, fails to meaningfully tackle issues of diversity, inclusion, or equity. Given the social justice milieu into which the organization was born, that is especially disappointing. The only update since 1994 has been, in 2008, to add the characteristic of providing priority registration to honors students. Despite the fact that this document offers little perspective on the topic at hand—unless by omission—it does offer the following as Item 14: "The fully-developed Honors Program must be *open to continuous and critical review and be prepared to change to maintain its distinctive position* of offering distinguished education to the best students in the institution" (National Collegiate Honors Council 1994; emphasis added). For now, I will not address what it might mean to identify the "best" students. Rather, I will use the highlighted portion of this item from the NCHC to point to a need for critical review and change to make honors education the best that it can be.

Reflecting on how the multitude of changes wrought on college campuses in the wake of the coronavirus have affected honors education, such as at Columbia College where he directs the program, John Zubizarreta refers to one specific matter—long one for which there has been great resistance in honors—that may now be considered anew. We are collectively, in honors and higher education generally, compelled by events to undergo critical review while being prepared to change. As Zubizarreta suggests,

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enriching a larger, institution that may be functionally hollowed-out by sharp cuts. It is already clear what this regrettable trend will mean for higher education generally. What will it mean for honors education, in particular, if it is left in the attic?

[16] Unless otherwise noted, I have retained the categorical terms used by authors for socially recognized demographic groups in cited sources. The ways we variously describe and classify persons have always been fraught with problems. Further, for a variety of reasons, the terms that stand for these descriptive categories can be both highly contested and subject to equally contested revisions over time.

with what was "normal" fundamentally disrupted, we may have in honors (as elsewhere) an opportunity for critical self-examination. His example of an opportunity for re-examination is that of resistance in honors to remote learning as he explains here:

> Undoubtedly, the sudden demand to 'go remote' has upended much of what we have always done well in honors and why and how we have done it. The need to adapt has been difficult, but it has also opened new opportunities, new avenues for rethinking and redesigning our pedagogical approaches. For instance, perhaps now honors is ready to reconsider the notion that honors and "distance learning" are antithetical propositions. Having been compelled to adapt to remote teaching, learning, and program management in order to continue to challenge, encourage, support, and reward our students (and faculty), perhaps now we can reimagine how the honors experience can be sustained and even enhanced by technology" (John Zubizarreta 2020, 2).

While online education may not be immediately germane to the subject of equity and inclusion, it is entirely appropriate to any consideration of "access" and the differential nature of access—whether that be to technology or, simply, to a physical campus where face-to-face honors courses may be otherwise exclusively taught. The larger point that I am making here, however, is that for all of the hardship that we collectively face in this time of pandemic disease and societal turmoil, it is also an opportunity to challenge ourselves to think and act differently going forward for an even greater good. That is what I aim to do with this report.

Inclusive Excellence

Having provided an overview of the basic history of honors education in the United States and with some consideration of aspects of selectivity and access, I will turn now to a more detailed examination of inclusive excellence in honors. In their own examination of diversity in honors, Peter Long and John Falconer (2003, 54) make the simple but significant observation that while public regional universities, like Marshall University, are often the most accessible for minority students, this accessibility does not always match with the idea and, perhaps the particular practices, of a selective honors program within these institutions. Following this point, they assert that because of the position of honors programs and, as at Marshall, the mandate to serve all colleges on campus, they are often highly visible and can thus send important signals about the institution's support for people of all backgrounds.

As suggested by Dail Mullins (2005) fifteen years ago, admissions criteria in honors have been shifting away from more traditional models primarily or exclusively reliant on quantitative measures to a more diverse and complex array of factors with the intent (possibly one among others) to improve the recruitment and representation of historically under-represented students who, while not having the scores, have demonstrated great ambition and promise real contributions that are not simply academic in nature. At least some of the programs making the shift have explicitly stated that their move was intended not only to meet goals of "diversity," by some measure—perhaps to align with previously or newly held ideals of equity and fairness and even commitments to social justice—but also to create what I might describe as an "intentional community" within honors where, as noted by Mullins, this may mean "bringing students of proven high academic ability and privileged educational backgrounds together with those who may lack these advantages but who clearly show promise and ambition" to learn from each other (2005, 22). Thus, meaningfully attending to deficits in diversity may be a means to improve educational outcomes for all.

Educational systems in the United States have long sorted and placed students within different "tracks" (most simply recognized at the secondary level as "college-bound" and "vocational") according to their apparent attainment of certain culturally informed academic ideals. Evidence from social science has nearly as long identified that this process (or perhaps "processing") contributes to increased inequality and inequity. When people speak of such things as racism being "structural" in nature, this practice can be recognized as a potentially significant part of that structure. Speaking to this, Graeme Harper finds that it

must "prompt us to ask if we in college honors education, for all our promotion of community service and support for aspiration and recognition of commitment and touting of the foundational importance of a civic responsibility, are in fact contributing to societal inequity rather than challenging it" (2018, 2).

Admissions in Honors: Skimming and Holistic Models

Following a review of both national and international honors program selection processes for incoming, first-year students, Richard Stoller (2004, 79) suggests that there are two basic types which he characterizes as "skimming" and "free-standing." The former constitutes those practices based on quantitative measures while the other—more typically referred to in the literature as "holistic"—entails a much wider range of criteria and may, in some cases, dispose of standardized test scores and other such arbitrary markers all together. Essentially, Stoller finds a continuum of practice from the strictly quantitative to the strictly qualitative assessment of students for the purpose of admission. Stoller describes how

> In the skimming selection model, usually called "by invitation" or something similar, the overall flow of applications to the institution is scrutinized according to some numerical threshold—generally some combination of SAT/ACT and GPA/rank. Intake may be limited by fixed program capacity (starting downward from the "top student" until offer capacity is reached) or by fixed entry criteria (all applicants with the specified criteria are offered honors admission) (Stoller 2004, 79).

At Marshall University, we currently operate a skimming selection process "by invitation" with intake entailing fixed, solely numeric entry criteria. Why do programs as we have at Marshall adhere to the quantitative side of the continuum? Clearly, from an institutional point of view, at least, there are benefits. The process is essentially one of "set it and forget it" wherein very little or no additional program-level expense is required for staffing or paperwork—unless there are some allowances for "exceptions," but these are likely minimal and possibly wholly dependent on the initiative of a student to challenge existing criteria in light of their particular circumstances. As Stoller describes, a skimming model *generally* avoids outright rejection of students. Rejection is made *only implicitly* by having not received an offer of admission. Institutionally-speaking, and through the lens of recruitment, such a process might avoid alienating high-achieving applicants, who are just under the given threshold for admission to honors. From the point of view of students, as well, there is an undeniable simplicity to the model given the lack of any paperwork burden—either you've cleared the bar, or you haven't. There's nothing that you need (or most likely can) do. Without an individual case to be made, there are only scores automatically reported. Of course, there is no doubt some students for whom this inherently closed procedure is profoundly alienating if they stop to consider that an alternative model could be used that is more sensitive to the particulars of student experience.

As for downsides to skimming's reliance on standardized test scores and high school GPAs, we already have a good sense of that. Calls for admission reform, generally, in higher education have focused on large gaps in mathematical and verbal standardized test scores when race is considered, particularly for African-Americans when compared to both Hispanic and Caucasian students. Research suggests that these gaps may be due to implicit racial biases in the composition of exams themselves and the verbal portion, in particular, or to uneven access to high-quality education as well as relative lack of financial and social access to such things as test preparation—though income alone does not explain a persistent gap in scores (VanZanten 2020). A report from the Brookings Institution found that evidence for a stubborn race gap on the SAT provides "a snapshot into the extraordinary magnitude of racial inequality in contemporary American society. Standardized tests are often seen as mechanisms for meritocracy, ensuring fairness in terms of access. But test scores reflect accumulated advantages and disadvantages in each day of life up the one on which the test is taken. Race gaps on the SAT hold up a mirror to racial inequities in society as a whole" (Reeves and Halikias 2017). Turning away from these tests to a more exclusive reliance on high school GPA, as an alternative, shows an ongoing commitment to setting a

numeric threshold and offers another set of challenges born of the fact that these numbers too, for a variety of related but distinct reasons, are at best uncertain measures of academic (or other) potential. As suggested by Jones, such metrics as these were initially selected for honors admission "not because they were known as valid predictors of student success, but because they served as a tool for enrollment management" (2017, 46).

On the other end of the continuum from skimming are those admission procedures described as "free-standing" or, as I suggested earlier, holistic in nature. As explained by Stoller (2004), the most free-standing among them are, in fact, characterized by a process wherein only those applicants who take initiative to complete a separate honors program application—wholly supplemental to the institution's application for admission—are considered for honors. The fact that they are "above and beyond" applications makes them independent or free-standing. Typically, these applications contain elements such as essays, lists of accomplishments that are both academic and non-academic in nature, as well as letters of recommendation that all serve to go beyond the numbers. Operating under a free-standing model which entails careful, individualized review of these sorts of application materials requires considerable resources and, potentially, a significant institutional investment in honors staffing. At least some honors programs charge a fee with applications to help offset additional costs to this approach.[17]

For some number of students, the additional and potentially onerous step of applying to honors could preclude their seeking admission. In such a process, for those that do apply, if the program has fewer spots than applications, it would be necessary to outright reject students, which as noted previously might be gauged as undesirable at the institutional level. Despite potential risks to a free-standing, holistic application, Penn State's honors college believes a significant recruitment benefit outweighs any potential loss of applicants. Specifically, they find that the process is a good "hook" that enables students to become familiar with honors at Penn State and, further, one that conveys a "regard *for the individual* that high-achieving prospects expect and generally receive from selective private institutions," but not generally from large public universities like Penn State where its "on the numbers" approach to general admissions is justified based on logistics (Stoller 2004, 80; emphasis added).

Basic Issues Regarding Diversity in Honors

Without an understanding of the effects of social, cultural, and economic factors that systematically create advantage or disadvantage for certain students based largely on racial categories with which they are societally identified, it might seem simple to explain away the lack of racial or ethnic diversity within honors programs as a matter of lacking sufficient candidates who could be described as African-American, for example, and who are also qualified for admission based on credentials garnered through quantitative measures. As described by VanZanten (2020), with an understanding of differential success based on the impact of racial identification, one finds that the small pool of qualified candidates who are not white come from public schools that are, by and large, comparatively weak academically, "have fewer guidance counsellors, do not offer AP or IB programs, have greater student-teacher ratios, and are chronically underfunded." Further, current demographic trends underscore the need for those in higher education, generally, to better understand best practices of recruitment, admission, and retention, generally, for increasingly diverse students in terms of race/ethnicity, age, and other identities as well as of low-income, and first generation college-bound status (Jones 2017).

At this point, we have considered "diversity" in a predominantly "compositional" or even "structural" form. There are, importantly, many other ways that diversity can and should be considered and measured and I will be exploring those later. For now, consider Coleman's definition of "structural diversity" and her sense that it is but a starting point:

[17] Of course, any fees can become an additional hindrance to applications generally and perhaps particularly from those students that a "diversity initiative," as it were, might be trying to reach.

> Structural diversity is essentially a census of an institution's gender, racial, and ethnic composition: a snapshot of an institution's demographic realities. We might reasonably expect that sufficient numerical or structural diversity provides the variety of personal experiences institutions need if they are to successfully pursue other forms of diversity. It is important, however, that we recognize that *numbers only provide the necessary foundation to succeed*; numbers do not guarantee success in improving campus climate, improvements in our efforts to become more inclusive, or a positive impact on the number of equitable outcomes we achieve (2017, 320; emphasis added).

As Coleman describes, attending to structural diversity through efforts in recruitment, admission, and retention can start a process that should move beyond simply counting who is at an institution (in compositional, numerical forms of diversity) to valuing who is within it as a community wherein people are given opportunities for genuine interaction and difference is not treated as a kind of commodity. Both Coleman (2017) and Jones (2017) visualize the end goal of a process that may begin with identifying underrepresentation and understanding structural inequalities as a "transformative diversity." As Coleman envisions, transformative diversity …

> … actively cultivates, nurtures, and values what these individuals have to offer … Beyond the important goals of fostering equity, inclusion, and social justice on our campuses, transformative diversity serves the important function of creating an environment where people are able to come together to address problems that their individual talents would not allow them to solve on their own. Here the dynamic shifts from providing utility to fostering synergy (2017, 324)

One must remember, however, that unequal access across society remains a systemic and intractable social problem that must be addressed meaningfully in our practices of recruitment, admissions, and retainment before we might see a transformative diversity such as that described here in honors. One of the first steps, as Coleman suggests, is to reject using what she and others describe as a "deficit model" to thinking about diversity. This way of thinking focuses attention on diversity as a problem—as are *practices* that preclude any meaningful achievement of it—and thus tends to ignore substantial opportunities that a truly transformative diversity can provide. In short, focus on shared opportunities as a place to begin.

For a sobering perspective on how, at this moment in history, we are still at the beginning of what must be a demanding process of undoing systemic inequalities in American society—one that will require sacrifices by those who have wittingly or unwittingly benefitted from current arrangements—consider the recent *The New York Times* opinion piece by Erin Aubry Kaplan (July 06, 2020). Among other things, Kaplan asserts that "Racism is a form of convenience, in the sense that it's designed to make life easier for its beneficiaries." If one accepts her assertion, it is problematic to also uncritically accept a system of admission as worthy of being maintained by virtue of its convenience to the institution. And, if Benjamin Reese's position in his piece in *Inside Higher Ed* is also to be accepted, simply "tweaking" the system now in place may end up, even if unintentionally, reinforcing existing structures of inequality—the language of "diversity" and "inclusion" should not, in this view, allow institutions to abdicate their responsibility to contribute to dismantling systems of structural inequality. Reese exclaims that while we may be at the beginning of a process, "The notion of slow, measured steps is absolutely unacceptable. Yes, it will require some of us to relinquish or share power in ways that may make people who hold power uncomfortable, but that's a characteristic of structural change. At every turn, we must question the notion of incremental steps. The journey toward justice must be on a fast track" (Reese, June 22, 2020).

Calling on the expert testimony of Derek Bok in the 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* U.S. Supreme Court, which upheld use of affirmative action in admissions processes, Jones (2017, 64) invokes a sense of the shift suggested above and enabled through rejecting a deficit model of diversity and aiming for one that emphasizes the positive, transformative opportunities of a genuinely diverse community of scholarship:

> A great deal of learning occurs informally. It occurs through interactions among students of both sexes; of different races, religions, and backgrounds; who come from cities and rural areas, from various states and countries; who have a wide variety of interests, talents, and perspectives; and who are able, directly or indirectly, to learn from their differences and to stimulate one another to re-examine even their most deeply held assumptions about themselves and their world.

Such a recognition may further shift our attention to one of "pluralism." As suggested by William Ashton (2009, 66), who directs an honors program at a public college in New York City, "diversity" may imply "that a dominant power or perspective is allowing or inviting different perspectives to join the conversation," whereas "'pluralism' implies that no group or perspective dominates; there are so many voices that there is no majority." For Ashton, a focus on "student diversity" within recruitment and admissions might lead (as it arguably has in many cases) to what he describes as minority "tokens" who may lack confidence in their place within an institution. Importantly, any situation engendered by such a limited focus on diversity is unlikely to provide opportunity to call into question status quo beliefs and practices, to hold people accountable for the ways that the think and do things, unlike a situation where a true plurality exists.

Framing Honors Education

Among other things, the discussion so far should suggest that our attention must be on far more than matters of recruitment and admissions from the bare point of view of numbers. Among them, is the need to question how "honors" is framed; How do we talk about it? How might the language and images that we use preclude engagement in honors by students who may be well-qualified, personally capable, and certainly valuable as community members, but who do not see a "fit" with the project of honors (at least in its current form) and their present sense of their self (Walters, Cooley, and Dunbar 2019; cf. Davis 2018)? Speaking to the experience of the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, Jones (2018, 68) refers to an "undermatching" where some students voluntarily opted-out of participation in honors when they did not *perceive* themselves as qualified. Providing some context to better understand such undermatching, Dziensinski and her coauthors (2017, 92) explain that "For students from majority groups, negotiating [or first perceiving for themselves] an honors identity may not be problematic in itself because honors likely coordinates well with other identities more associated with privilege," which is a comfortable, privileged association that we would not expect among students from underrepresented groups in higher education or those who identify with socially marginalized groups. As noted by Davis, a significant disconnect between how honors is framed and how potential honors students from such groups (among others) see themselves "signals the need for reconsideration of the language used to describe honors students … to enhance how this population of students is supported by faculty and staff or recruited by admissions" (2018, 63).

In the literature of honors, analysis of this and related points has entailed much discussion of the fluid nature of student identities and the fact that while students may be asked to "check a box" to describe one or more seemingly essential elements of their identity for institutional purposes, multifaceted identities are not, in fact, as definitive or well aligned as they might appear on a standardized form. As noted by Dziensinski (2017, 99), identity is affected by external forces where "judgment can place them in a box before they get a chance to explain their story of identity navigation and chosen identity. While part of identity navigation involves processing external feedback, personal identities are ideally chosen with an awareness about the range and potential meaning of the identities available … Students may also make choices about the meaning of their honors identity and how this will intersect with other valued dimensions of self." To confront a limited and limiting view of identity—and these shortcomings may stand in the way of meaningful change to the status quo in honors education—Dziensinski and her co-authors suggest that we must understanding how "diverse groups of students make meaning of honors and how the specific social practices of any particular honors community might shape student experiences, including their own self-perceptions of privilege and social responsibility" (Dziesinski, Camarena, and Homrich-Knieling 2017, 91).

Accessibility and Inclusion: Transfer Students

Acknowledging the need for honors programs to "recruit, retain, and meaningfully engage diverse populations of talented students," Patrick Bahls (2018, 74) finds that a natural corollary is recognition of a need to ensure accessibility to honors by transfer students. Transfer students are numerous, with National Student Clearinghouse studies cited by Bahls indicating during the 2015-2016 academic year, fully half of the students completing bachelor's degrees at four-year institutions in the United States had transferred or at least completed one-semester of coursework in the previous 10 years at a two-year institution. In some states, the figure was over 70 percent. Transfer students are not only numerous, they are also most likely to represent first-generation students, generally, and particularly greater ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic and age diversity than students who complete their four-year degree wholly at one institution—a fact particularly true for those that began their studies at a two-year institution. Even when aware of the possibility of honors at the institution to which they have transferred, undermatching is a significant issue.

The design of many honors curricula are fundamentally unwelcoming to transfer students and, in their rigidity, deny both these students and the program considerable opportunities that may be afforded by their inclusion. Co-curricular requirements such as mandatory service programs and required honors courses that can be designed for generally younger, less experienced students may provide unrealistic expectations or, practically speaking, obstacles for non-traditional, transfer students who may already have considerable "real world" experience (that could obviate a need for "service" or "leadership" commitments) and who certainly need a quicker pace to graduation. For a program like Marshall, required hours that students are expected to earn in completion of lower-level departmental, honors-designated General Education courses essentially preclude participation of transfer students in honors. As noted by (Bahls 2018, 85), in the absence of curricular flexibility "some transfer students may find it difficult to complete honors curricula that are 'frontloaded,' with a significant portion of required courses falling in the early years of a student's college career. On the other hand, an honors curriculum that places too many requirements in the final semesters of a student's study may find itself in competition with major departmental curricula for transfer students' time."

Possible Paths Forward

For the remainder of this report, I will consider possible paths forward toward what I characterized as a *transformative diversity* in honors. Currently, I will resist making any specific recommendations for honors at Marshall University—though I may point out places where the program stands relative to a particular path. For a point of departure, I would like to note that it has always been our understanding in honors at Marshall that the college should serve as a hub, at least, for curricular innovation and an advocate for thoughtful, civic-minded engagement. Further, while economic pressures experienced by under-funded public universities like Marshall have driven us away from pedagogically desirable smaller, more intimate seminar-style classes for most students, honors continues to do its best to hold the line—at least for students within the program. However, as should become clear in the coming pages, honors could do much more.

Jones makes that case, arguing that "honors can have perhaps its greatest impact by serving as a rigorous, persistent, and public *advocate for change* in how inclusive excellence is perceived, enabling honors to model for other campus programs ways of implementing inclusive excellence" (2017, 38; emphasis added). For the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) inclusive excellence is critical to the well-being of democratic culture. The association has established it as a guiding principle in their efforts to help universities integrate inclusive excellence and educational quality efforts into both their missions and institutional operations. For the AAC&U, making excellence inclusive is "… an active process through which colleges and universities achieve excellence in learning, teaching, student development, institutional functioning, and engagement in local and global communities … [and a process that requires] that we uncover inequities in student success, identify effective educational practices, and build such practices organically for sustained institutional change" (2013; cf. Williams, Berger, and McClendon).

If administrators are to be activists for a richly inclusive, diverse community of scholars committed to inclusive excellence, then honors has come a long way from serving simply as a traditionalist barrier to economically expedient developments in higher education. Inclusive excellence would put honors out front, in the lead. Clearly, honors must not and, indeed cannot, remain on the sidelines in what has become subjects of necessary public debate as well as social and institutional reckoning: "Programs that attempt to remain neutral, insisting that their curriculum and objectives are focused on helping all students achieve their highest academic potentials independent of any social bias or judgment, are missing the point. To the degree that programs do not actively challenge the social norms of privilege tied to honors, they are *tacitly supporting the status quo* that makes honors a privilege for the privileged" (Dziesinski, Camarena, and Homrich-Knieling 2017, 84–85; emphasis added). The University of Wisconsin provides an effective illustration of the fundamental purposes of inclusive excellence in which we see reflected the attention that I noted earlier to go beyond a simple numeric or deficit-minded approach to diversity focused minimally on admissions to embracing diversity as positively transformative.

> Inclusive Excellence is a change-oriented planning process that encourages us to continue in our diversification efforts albeit with a greater intentionality and attentiveness of how they serve the needs of our students. Informed by a well-established body of empirical research as to the institutional contexts, practices, and cultures that contribute to the establishment of a diverse learning environment, Inclusive Excellence represents a shift not in the essence of our work but how we approach it and carry it out. Above all, Inclusive Excellence asks us to actively manage diversity as a *vital and necessary asset of collegiate life rather than as an external problem* ("Inclusive Excellence," University of Wisconsin System, quoted in Jones 2017, 40; emphasis added).

Recruitment and Admissions

We have already reviewed some of the issues related to admissions practices along a continuum from skimming's total reliance on quantitative measures to exhaustive reviews of qualitative data from candidates seen in free-standing approaches. Clearly, honors programs that have embraced the principle of inclusive excellence or emphasized the transformative potential of diversity can be expected to be found at or at least near the free-standing end of the continuum with a broadly holistic take on recruitment and admissions. As a reminder of the central concern among such programs over use of standardized test scores as the definitive factor, consider a recent essay in *Inside Higher Education* by Alicia Reyes-Barriéntez, an assistant professor of political science at Texas A&M. She provides a damming indictment of honors programs such as the one at the institution where she earned her undergraduate degree.

> I didn't apply to the university honors program because my SAT score was lower than the required threshold. But ... I was, in fact, an excellent student: I graduated magna cum laude with a double major and a GPA of 3.93 and was inducted into Phi Beta Kappa. I was certainly qualified for my university's honors program, but the institution's *discriminatory requirements denied me this opportunity* (Reyes-Barriéntez in VanZanten 2020, 5; emphasis added).

Any significant shift from admissions procedure based on skimming, as now employed at Marshall, may result in a "torrent of angry phone calls and emails" that would make any administrator "dread going to work," as Knudson (2011) relates from his experience in the honors program at the University of Florida, but it will also generate enormous appreciation from families with students who are more than worthy but would have been left out of an opportunity to push the boundaries and succeed in honors. At universities such as the University of Florida and Marshall, alignment between a public mandate, stated institutional missions and decisions regarding admissions and selectivity, generally, should mean "special attention to applicants who by virtue of disadvantaged individual or community background tend to be overlooked" (Stoller 2004, 84). As explained by Davis, one way to bring this attention to bear is to broaden the scope of what we consider to be high achievement such that it is not characterized "solely by students' performance in the classroom or testing; community involvement and demonstration of character are also

important factors in determining a student's ability to achieve. Current methods of selection for honors often leave this piece out of the admissions process, potentially overlooking many qualified candidates" (2018, 65).

Even when we are looking at holistic approaches that wholly or mostly eschew quantitative measures, an inclusive approach entails some reimagining of prevailing qualitative standards to allow for far more sensitive consideration of communal and individual circumstances. Examining the socioeconomic context of her honors program at Loyola University in New Orleans, Louisiana, Naomi Klos describes how 40 percent of adults are illiterate and nearly as many children live in poverty. While not all communities in which we find honors programs have such desperate statistics, many schools, such as Marshall, have considerable numbers of students whose backgrounds reflect significant social, economic, and personal hardship—but also may hold many shining examples of high achievement of different kinds. Klos describes how understanding and considering this reality in the context of a holistic admissions process entails overcoming a systemic bias in traditional metrics of achievement and "excellence" through an inclusive reframing of previous standards that evaluates students as individuals within particular circumstances.

> [A] student's grades might have slipped in a given semester because his family lost their home or a parent was struggling with addiction … a student may not have a lot of clubs or leadership positions listed on her application because she was working after school or helping to care for younger siblings so her single mom could work. Admitting such a student to honors hardly constitutes a lowered standard of excellence; instead, it *re-envisions valued traditional standards* such as "commitment to service" or "work ethic" that we value when linked to the same type of activities framed as "tutoring children from disadvantaged backgrounds" or "volunteering in a soup kitchen" or "principal cellist for the youth orchestra" (Klos 2018, 7–8)

Holistic Admission

Speaking to honors at Minnesota State at Mankato, Walters and his co-authors describe their holistic admission process, which began in 2009 and holds, as suggested by Davis, a broader vision of high achievement and academic potential.

> Applicants to honors programs—whether incoming first-year students, current Minnesota State Mankato students, or transfer students—are evaluated with a holistic rubric that takes into account their potential for growth and achievement as well as any previous successes. Qualitative evaluations of achievement—such as student narratives and recommendation forms—carry more weight than numeric data. An important component of our efforts toward inclusivity is accepting current students after their first semester as well as transfer students; we do a round of applications for current students each fall and spring semester (Walters, Cooley, and Dunbar 2019).

The situation at Mankato suggests a comprehensive vision when it comes to the scope of students who remain eligible as they advance toward completion of their degree—from first-year to community college graduate transfers, for example. Most discussions of admission (holistic or otherwise), however, continue to focus on incoming, first-year students. As shared by Jones (2017, 46), in the case of the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire, holistic admissions work is essentially a two-step process. The first step is what amounts to a kind of "screening" that defines a pool of potential students and is tied to one of several benchmarks that they use to initiate a second step holistic review of applications. Those benchmarks include an ACT score of 26 or higher, top 10% of high school class, or a 3.75 GPA or better—all of which are together or independently used in many honors programs for automatic "skimming" of incoming students offered admission to honors without a separate application. If an applicant to the university meets one of these criteria, a review by multiple readers from several institutional offices—

including honors, admissions, and multicultural affairs—is conducted in which applications are evaluated for evidence of strength in several additional criteria.[18]

VanZanten (2020) describes a similar "one of the following" first step strategy at Valparaiso University in Indiana which includes similar quantitative measures to Eau Claire but also such factors as a student being referred by an admissions counselor or alumni, attending an honors recruitment event, or expressing personal interest in honors membership. These additional elements help constitute a measure that they refer to as the "Quest Quotient" intended to capture student interest and possible commitment. So, in this way, Valparaiso's honors program may be more accessible than Eau Claire whose criteria, while offering three different possible numeric measures of achievement, remains inarguably demanding, and arguably discriminatory, in any one of them.

Importantly, Valparaiso's honors program acknowledges that their curriculum is founded on small, interdisciplinary seminars centered in the humanities and social sciences and that, accordingly, require extensive reading and intensive writing. Thus, they are careful in their review of student applications for indications in coursework and among various test scores, including AP exams when available, that students will be prepared for this kind of work as they do not want, effectively, to set them up for failure. It should be noted as well that Valparaiso's university application requires writing samples as well as letters of recommendation. Thus, there is no need to require a separate application in order to obtain these materials for review by the honors program.

For students applying to Valparaiso whose Quest Quotient is high enough to attract attention from the honors program, but for whom there are concerns about preparedness and as a matter of "fit" with their particular curricular demands, promising candidates are invited to complete an additional form with six short writing prompts meant to affirm that they have a "questing spirit." Here the suggestion by Peter Long and John Falconer (2003) to use what is called the "strivers" model, developed by the Educational Testing Service, seems related in its motivation. The stivers model uses fourteen socioeconomic indicators to provide a means of identifying motivated applicants whose standardized test scores and GPAs are believed to be depressed because of social and economic circumstances. Essentially, an approach such as this aims to find students who "achieve beyond expectations" or, put another way, who accomplish outstanding things despite where they live and how the may have been marginalized based on socially recognized categories of race, for example.

In all of this, it can be difficult to know from what is written or to imagine, in the absence of direct experience with these kinds of processes, how to "draw the line" that decides who is admitted and who is rejected when holistic approaches entail what are, no doubt, subjective, individual forms of assessment and attribution of value among a multitude of different criteria. Stoller suggests that at least some of the answer must be informed by the overall institutional mission and culture. It is, in both cases in his illustration, essentially a question of fit with the program in a larger institutional context. The view that he conveys below might be considered somewhat coolly pragmatic—at least in the first instance. However, it is realistic, no doubt, given how honors program admission results—which is to say the program's success measured in calculations of structural diversity—will very likely themselves be subject to a bleak numeric (and very likely in its case, economic) calculus. Thus, he suggests that it is essential in evaluating potential students to think about …

> … whether the honors program is considered by the upper administration primarily as a device to bring in a measurably "better sort of student" than the institution usually gets, or whether the program is valued more for what it does (for lack of a better word) programmatically. In the

[18] As suggested by Stoller (2004, 82), what is being suggested by a more holistic admissions process shares a parallel set of concerns with comprehensive assessment of learning outcomes—through use of student portfolios, for example—that is itself a response an understanding that a transcript (whether high school or college) is "not a sole or sufficient record of incremental degrees of student success."

> former case, privileging nonacademic qualities would probably not produce the kind of measurable gains in admission credentials that are the program's lease on life; in the latter case, getting students who "fit the program" is paramount, and depending on the program, particular nonacademic qualities might have particular value (2004, 83–84).

In the second instance to which Stoller speaks, program fit is sought through holistic admissions procedures in which some applicants, with otherwise competitive academic credentials, fail the test while some applicants with numbers that are "less than stellar," but still more than the average at Penn State, do very well. Importantly, Stoller notes that a holistic admission process requires both the student and program to be clear with each other and with themselves about what is important to them. The individualized and, frankly, more demanding process compared to skimming will no doubt lead to some students simply finding the task of applying too onerous, but acknowledgement that "it isn't worth it" or even that "it's just not for me" can be a good outcome for all concerned if these determinations are suggestive of a lack of fit and a potential obstacle to student success. Of course, in those cases, it likely isn't possible to find out what may have been at issue.

The question here of fit certainly harkens back to the earlier discussion of "matching," or specifically "undermatching," where students who are, in fact, qualified and capable of joining honors simply do not see themselves as being in honors. In the context of admissions and, specifically, of how applications might be put together—not only in terms of what is looked at from students but also how students see themselves—we can consider how the program at Mankato addressed a problem of perception. They did so as a means of increasing access and diversity by revising application questions.

> [I]nstead of asking students to list or describe leadership positions they held, our question pertaining to leadership now reads: "Identify the most meaningful school or community activity in which you have participated. How did your participation in the activity impact others in your school or community?" In other words, we now acknowledge in our application the mantra that we constantly assert to our students: leadership is about opportunities and results, not positions. This question also allows our students to engage in deeper thinking about their experiences by asking them about the effects their actions had on other individuals, not just on themselves (Walters, Cooley, and Dunbar 2019).

Another consideration is how degree of fit might shape student retention and completion in honors. On this point, Jones describes how in the four years prior to his report "students admitted to honors through a holistic process (based on a diversity-aware review of multiple measures of academic performance) have *performed similarly to students admitted through automatic admission* based solely on ACT score/class rank, with holistic admissions having the additional benefit of diversifying the potential pool of students who can benefit from high impact experiences in honors" (2017, 46; emphasis added). It would be important to carefully track outcomes and to adjust, as necessary, procedures suggested by results in retention and rates of graduation.

First-Year Achievement

As suggested earlier, beyond incoming, first-year students, some honors programs allow and even seek to admit current, first-year students. Joy Pehlke describes how a first-year achievement method allows for students to enter honors even if their high school academic record did not permit them initially.

> Many students have shown that they do not reach their full academic potential until *after* they enter college. Expectations are often woven into the picture, and students who were not expected to succeed in high school begin to push themselves beyond their own and others' expectations in college … This multi-tiered method of honors admissions has allowed for increased representation and a diversity of life experiences in the honors student body (2003, 30; emphasis added).

Pehlke clarifies that some programs (and perhaps generally those who rely on a skimming model for incoming, first-year admission) rely exclusively on first-year GPA, but some other programs allow, for example, evaluation of individual faculty recommendations and interviews with students themselves. Longo and Falconer (2003, 58–59) consider such programs one of an array of mechanisms for enhancing diversity and akin to the "walk-on" program famously employed by the University of Nebraska football coach Tom Osborne. With an honors program, students who establish a first-year record of academic and other forms of achievement can apply for admission. Again, this sort of approach opens the door for students who (for reasons already described) may not have done well enough with traditional indicators of success to demonstrate their ability *before* coming to college. Importantly, it also provides an opportunity for honors programs to partner with institutional "first-year success" programs that they note are increasingly common in higher education as revenue-strapped schools worry not only about recruitment but also retention.

Speaking to their experience in honors at Central Michigan University, Dziesinski and her co-authors discuss how their program developed a second "track" for admission that "gives priority to students with high academic goals who are overcoming challenges to achievement once on campus. Referrals from both our faculty and our multicultural program office are useful tools for identifying students from diverse backgrounds who would specifically benefit from extra support and increased academic challenge" (2017, 86–87). They further describe how admission to honors through this additional, first-year track has increased student participation from underrepresented groups on campus, including students of color, first-generation college students, and international students.

Transfer Students

Earlier, I explained how considering the situation of transfer students is an essential part of addressing inclusive excellence. As suggested by Bahls, to the extent an honors program is holistic in its admission procedures for incoming or current first-year students, and for likely the same reason, treatment of potential transfer student applicants should avoid using

> measures that may not only re-inscribe historical inequities but also may no longer be valid indicators of transfer students' current readiness for honors. After all, many transfer students come to honors a few years after having taken the SAT or ACT, making these already-suspect indicators of academic excellence even less valid measures. In contrast, asking transfer students to describe, in writing or an interview, their experience with learning outside the classroom, study abroad, community engagement, or other life experiences enables those screening honors applications to gain a much clearer view of the applicant (2018, 89).

Bahls suggests that in order to fully address concerns as may be related to transfer students in the context of diversity, inclusion and equity, honors program need to consider not only questions of admissions, but also (as suggested previously) the design of the honors curriculum and, in particular, its "balance" over a student's career, requirements for remaining in good standing and graduating, agreements with other colleges and universities regarding transfers of credit, and website design and language. Further, honors programs concerned about equity, and open to opportunities presented by an abundant diversity of experience that transfer students can bring, will need to provide flexibility in their curricula while continuing to provide worthy challenges. As noted by Bahls

> Some curricular structures can give flexibility to all students, including transfer students, without sacrificing the richness of the honors experience. Granting waivers to honors "latecomers," including both continuing students and transfer students, respects these students' academic efforts *prior* to joining the honors community. Such waivers are reasonable for courses like first-year seminars or first-year writing, which students are likely to take in their first one or two semesters regardless of their membership in an honors program. Moreover, honors contracts, reading courses or independent study in honors, and honors credit for high-impact practices like study

> abroad and internships grant students autonomy in crafting a sustainable honors schedule (2018, 86; emphasis added).

Given practical limitations presented by what might be a highly compressed timeframe for transfers to complete both honors and major requirements, programs such as that of the University of North Carolina at Asheville offer at least two distinct tiered options for graduation with honors from the university that are based on completion of different amounts of honors credit. Specifically, UNC Asheville has two categories of graduate from the program: Either "with Distinction as a University Scholar" after completing at least 21 of specified honors credits or "with Recognition as an Honors Scholar" with at least 12 hours of specified honors credits.

Recruitment

Speaking of his recent experience as a self-described Black honors student at West Virginia University, Stephen Scott encourages honors programs not only to pursue a more holistic and inclusive admissions process but also to be more thoughtful about recruitment. Specifically, Scott (2017, 128) suggests that programs could participate in or host recruitment events in urban areas, conduct outreach to National Merit Scholarship recipients, Gates Millennium Scholars, or recipients of other national undergraduate scholarships, and directly invite both incoming and current Black students to join honors. Illustrating a robust attempt to broaden and diversify recruitment through their outreach to schools near the University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC), Stacey and Kelber-Kaye (2018) describe a growing mentoring partnership between honors and an anchor high school in Baltimore City, in particular, which is the nearest urban area to the university.

I find Stacey and Kelber-Kaye's perspective on their efforts an important and powerful one that helps remind us of earlier points about perception as well as the need to establish relationships of mutual trust and respect.

> Increasing diversity happens one student at a time. Sometimes an organization or institution can rely on its reputation and stated mission to attract diverse students. [The Honors College at the University of Maryland Baltimore County] on the other hand, has to sell itself energetically to diverse students, one at a time. We hope at some point to achieve critical-mass, a happy situation in which we can rely on the twinned fact and perception of our diversity to perpetuate and solidify our inclusive excellence. But for us, for now, increasing diversity is a person-by-person effort, and this is probably true for most Honors Colleges (2018, 15–16).

A personalized perspective of earning a relationship with each student through meaningful contact that helps to broaden and deepen mutual understanding is further indicated by the University of Maryland's approach to recruiting admitted students who have not accepted an offer to join honors. While ensuring that they were including what they describe as under-represented minorities, they work with current honors students to hand write notes that capture elements of their own experience as students in honors to send to these undecided students as they weigh the offer. Their outreach went beyond students offered admission to honors to include high-performing, under-represented minorities who had not pursued membership in honors.

As they describe, this entailed "reading their UMBC application essays and materials, and then using Honors College stationery to hand write notes to them, mentioning aspects of their history, trajectory or aspirations that suggested they would find the Honors College a congenial and rewarding place, and inviting them to call, e-mail or visit" (Stacey and Kelber-Kaye 2018, 10). Scott explains that any such outreach …

> … needs to feel personal and cannot consist only of an email that does not address the student by name or that is identical to another student's email. Black honors students are especially aware of wide-net outreach and inclined to ignore an invitation that is not authentic because, like other

> Black students, they are often included on email lists purely on the basis of their race. Personal outreach needs to be accompanied by Black representation in scholarship presentations or events, which should feature previous Black finalists and winners and Black faculty members who have mentored them or whose work can be useful to scholarship applications (2017, 128).

Longo and Falconer (2003) also point to the opportunity for outreach in academic summer camps, many of which may be right on campus. These student experiences can provide indicators other than standardized test scores, GPAs, and class ranks. They suggest that, as has been done at Marshall with the Governor's Honors Academy, honors programs can assist in delivery of camps and be given the opportunity to directly work with and observe students as well as solicit feedback from camp faculty. However, they also advise that in order for this effort to have any hope of reaching underrepresented minorities, the camps themselves must be committed in their efforts to recruit, admit and, potentially, support the participation of students from such groups in the first place.

While not simply something that might shape the outcome of recruitment efforts, *representation* is a significant factor contributing to perception and the degree to which a potential student may or may not see a "fit" with themselves and honors. In the qualitative study of the low involvement and experience of African American students in honors at Western Kentucky University, Sarah Rigsby and her co-authors provide a sense of what may matter to such students when it comes to representation and perception.

> When asking the students … about what the Honors College could do to increase support from the African American or other minority students, many participants mentioned being more inclusive with print publications. One participant said, "Advertise for us more, nothing special but just show us that people of our ethnicity or race are accepted." This lack of representation in print materials proved to be significant in the study because when assessing the materials most utilized by the Honors College Admissions Team, minorities are almost overrepresented compared to their existence within the Honors College. However, when looking through the Honors College blog photos of different events, most of them depict White students. Additionally, those students who utilize the Honors College Facebook and Twitter pages tend to be Caucasian. Since those are the media outlets that incoming and current students will most likely reference in determining what their experience will be like in the Honors College, it is not surprising that the participants would request more minority representation (Rigsby, Destiny Savage, and Jorge Wellmann 2012).

Scott (2017) suggests engaging current Black students in, for example, an "honors ambassador program" that would serve not only to help promote honors in recruitment efforts but also to foster and support Black students already in the program. VanZanten also encourages honors programs to make sure that their online presence is one that highlights genuine diversity and the success of students of diverse backgrounds. She also asserts that students of color, as she characterizes them, "should be invited to serve as hosts, tour guides, and panelists for campus visit days, so potential students can see a diverse community at work" (2020, 13). The study by Rigsby (et al., 2012) reaches the same conclusion that recruitment and outreach efforts, generally, must illustrate a commitment to diversity which serves not only in those efforts but also provides supportive opportunities for engagement among current students of diverse backgrounds. Walters and her co-authors provide an illustration of their efforts on this front at the University of Minnesota at Mankato through an advisory, support, and advocacy group that they refer to as Equity Ambassadors that consists of students of color.

> The honors program empowered the group to make bold programmatic recommendations targeting changes that could make the program a more inclusive, safe, and relevant learning environment for all students. As with any group, the efforts of this one involved a lot of trial and error. Some of the students' ideas were successful and became integral, for instance, to rewriting our application questions. Some of the students' ideas and efforts flopped—like the conversation

> circle coordinated for honors students of color that no one attended (Walters, Cooley, and Dunbar 2019, 60).

Finally, two additional points on the topic of representation. First, Bahls (2018) provides a compelling quasi-linguistic as well as visual analysis of language use and web design as a means to consider how, again, matters of "framing" for honors can lead to undermatching. So, this too is a question of how, in this case, the honors program represents itself to others and, in doing so, may unwittingly convey messages that tend to exclude rather than include potential students—particularly those that may lack what he describes as "academic cultural capital" (2018, 77). Second, it is important to speak clearly and convincingly to what will almost certainly be resistance to change in existing procedures of recruitment, admissions, and retention. Specifically, Jones states that those in honors administration who pursue change of the sort described in this document

> must be willing to confront deficit-minded assumptions about diversity in higher education that are expressed not only by the broader public but also by faculty and administrators … [and that hold] that undergraduate students of color are at fault for being underprepared for rigorous educational experiences, a perception that also stigmatizes other diverse student communities such as non-traditional students, English language learners, and students participating in programs designed to expand college access. Such perceptions become a first line of resistance to equity-minded change in educational practices … (2017, 57).

Retention

While it may be understandable, though unadvisable (and certainly if a simple numeric diversity is the goal) that recruitment and admissions be an all absorbing focus, work is not over when incoming classes are made more diverse. As pointed out by Stacey and Kelber-Kaye (2018), it is arguably more important to plan to support the members of these newly diversified classes *all the way through their graduation*. VanZanten puts it clearly:

> Pursuing higher numbers of diverse bodies is not enough; we must also work to cultivate a sense of inclusion and value for our students from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds. Inadequate academic preparation, lack of support networks, alienating pedagogies, few role models in faculty and peers, the loneliness of being one of only a few, and a traditional classical curriculum are all factors that can discourage a sense of inclusion. Too often the handful of students of color in a program may face suspicion and isolation (2020, 11).

This continues the earlier point regarding the necessarily personalized attention and work given to building relationships as an essential element of any of these efforts. Dziesinski (2017, 88) and her co-authors refer to how the staff at their honors program try to develop personal relationships with all of their students but that this work is even more intentional with students from underrepresented groups "including students of color, first-generation college students, international students, students with disabilities, and others who have been identified as being at greater educational risk." They have developed targeted advising outreach where they identify and assign honors college staff as mentors to provide tracking and support. Walters and his co-authors similarly assert that recruitment and admissions is only the beginning of a relationship where the goal is to make admitted students happy and fully participating members of the program.

> Building successful student relationships is key to that goal but is challenging in an era of budget cuts. One budget-friendly way to increase student access to high-impact teaching and mentoring practices is through campus partnerships, which can make a little investment go a long way. Honors programs can, for example, partner with groups including a greater diversity of students to co-host campus events … (Walters, Cooley, and Dunbar 2019; cf. Scott 2017 on ideas for such partnerships).

The point here about cultivating partnerships is an important one. Such partnering should not be simply a matter of efficiency and cost savings, rather it is essential element of relationship building and one that can provide additional opportunities for support and inclusive forms of community for students. For an honors program seeking to address diversity and social justice issues, such efforts could be greatly facilitated by fostering partnerships with academic and student affairs programs that share these goals (cf. Dziesinski, Camarena, and Homrich-Knieling 2017).

Fostering partnerships intersects with an interest in authentic honors "programming," i.e., the preparation of co-curricular social and academic events, which could be enriched and made more meaningful through collaboration with other units on campus. A vision for such programming should be a natural extension of a program's mission statement and associated learning outcomes. This is a matter of operationalizing core values concerning self-reflection, critical inquiry, and social justice that are likely already (or should be) at the center of such statements and outcomes (cf. Dziesinski, Camarena, and Homrich-Knieling 2017). As described by Scott, honors programs universally pride themselves on the intellectual curiosity of their students and on their efforts in fostering it through facilitating a supportive environment where a diverse community of students and faculty can learn from each other's experience. However, he finds that honors programs may not always meet the challenge of providing difficult topical programing that invites critical examination of salient local and national issues. According to Scott, our programming should be

> unapologetic in educating students about current events related to race. Do not be afraid to host an event about Black Lives Matter or to encourage a student to do so. Do not be afraid to facilitate a dialogue on Rachel Dolezal and transracial identity. Do not be afraid to create a networking event specifically for Black honors students and Black alumni. Do not be afraid to let your students be Black, to express their Blackness, and to educate others about the spectrum of Blackness. Within a predominantly White space, Black students need at least a corner of the room to call their own or to encourage them to redesign the entire space so that Blackness is not sectioned off (2017, 128–29).

Pedagogy and Curricular Development

While attention to "content" (as we've seen above related to questions of co-curricular programming) is an appropriate area of concern and means of potentially addressing inclusive excellence through engagement with those subjects in coursework, the broader question of pedagogy, i.e., how any such content is *delivered*, warrants special focus. As already suggested, honors in higher education within the United States has generally relied on pedagogical practices that would today fall under the rubric of "high-impact practices" (HIP). The more intimate, engaged mentoring approach within seminar-style classes with much lower student-faculty ratios are methods widely recognized as valuable. However, it is now recognized as especially beneficial to underrepresented students. Speaking to the high-impact practices as outlined in the aforementioned "Basic Characteristics" provided by the NCHC for "fully developed" honors programs, Klos describes how these are of particular benefit "to students from underrepresented backgrounds and low socioeconomic status, including first-generation, ethnic minority, undocumented students, and at my institution, 'first in family' honors students have the same high four-year graduation rate as those whose parents graduated from college" (Klos, 6).

Located in a university ranked as the nation's most diverse for 18 years by U.S. News & World Report, the experience of the extraordinary honors program of Rutgers University at Newark is especially insightful. As described by David Kirp (May 22, 2018) in his *New York Times* reporting on the program, honors at Newark has remarkable student demographics compared with other honors programs: Forty percent are community college graduates; forty percent are first in family college students; and seventy-five percent are eligible for Pell Grants. Their average high-school grades and SAT scores are actually lower than the campus average. Students in honors at Rutgers-Newark, who would likely be characterized initially as "at risk" most anywhere, benefit from high-impact pedagogical practices that encourage a

sense of belonging to a nurturing community through forging personal connections with each other, the faculty, and with the staff of the program.

While academic skill matters to the Rutgers program, selection is based on an emphasis on student resiliency, a drive to learn, indication of what some refer to a "growth mindset" (a willingness to work through problems and learn rather than give up) and a passion for addressing social justice issues head on. At Rutgers-Newark, not only is admissions fundamentally different than what is found at most other honors programs (and the resulting student demographics), they spend a great deal of resources supporting and encouraging their students through building relationships as well as through the unifying and engaging focus of their curriculum and co-curricular programming on social justice issues. In the socioeconomic context within which Rutgers-Newark is found, and with its particular honors student body, this has worked very well. The curriculum is a cornerstone that necessitates a high degree of fit between the program and its students.

While not every honors program will be ready, willing, or even able to implement such a singularly focused curricular approach, they can certainly look critically at their own curriculum with an eye to the sorts of skills students are believed to be obtaining. Speaking to his experience at the University of Florida, Knudson notes that (as is increasingly true at Marshall), incoming honors students have already completed a great deal of the general education requirements through advanced placement (AP) courses. Knudson laments the fact that students in numerous majors who skip these general education courses likely miss an opportunity to work on improving their writing and acquiring a more sophisticated understanding of material learned only at a high school level. In order to address this concern, the honors program at Florida has developed a new course built on addressing the issue of social justice that will be offered to *all* of its first-year students with the goal to give them "a common intellectual experience that helps them hone their critical-thinking and writing skills" (2011).

Beyond simple concern for what honors students may be missing, many in honors have come to understand that given its privileged position, honor programs have a special responsibility to be agents for change and advocate for social justice on their campuses. Honors programs typically have a great deal of discretion to shape their curricula. Again, working from progressive mission statements and learning outcomes, these curricula can serve honors in that effort while also helping the broader communities of which they are a part. Speaking to the need to turn attention to what, specifically, is being taught in honors, Jones speaks to what could be an obstacle when he asserts that

> honors leaders must challenge assumptions that topics of multiculturalism, equity, and diversity lack rigor as academic discourses, which means, therefore, a limited role for these topics is acceptable within high-value programs. Challenging these assumptions successfully *will require review and revision of mission statements and programmatic practice to centralize the goal of inclusive excellence in honors*. This process will be difficult, and it may require an infusion of expertise from on- and off-campus practitioners in the area of student diversity to institute equity-minded change in honors (2017, 60; emphasis added).

To be sure, I want to convey the point that the curriculum should not be thought as a curated collection of subject matter, regardless of topic. Rather, it is the means to create a particular kind of community—an *intentional* community as I earlier named it—amongst students as well as an extension and operationalization of a stated mission and path to fulfillment of expected learning outcomes. Dziesinski and her co-authors speak well to how promoting themes such as pluralism, multiculturalism, equity, diversity, and social justice are important to the work of honors in at least two ways:

> First, it ensures that all students coming to the honors community will develop new tools to understand their identities and place in society. This understanding prepares honors students to be advocates for social change and allies for their peers from more marginalized backgrounds. Second, students from underrepresented and marginalized groups would see honors as a

> welcoming community for them—a place where the intersection of honors privilege and other identities can be navigated in positive ways. Programs that explicitly address privilege and power challenge hegemonic notions of society and the honors students' positions within it; these programs recognize that students are not "climbing the social ladder" apolitically but are instead embedded in broader dynamics of inequality, oppression, and privilege (2017, 84).

An important caveat is that honors administrators cannot (and should not) expect students to acquire such skills as intercultural competence or come to value civic engagement through limited, one-off "service" requirements, for example. Indeed, even while declining to require that students participate in them, schools such as Marshall have moved away from even describing these experiences simply as "service." In recognition of how efforts might previously have been both highly limited and potentially more beneficial to the institution as an practical means to a curricular end than to some community partners involved, such experiences are now reimagined as "community-based learning," which suggests a greater commitment to building-up meaningful collaborative partnerships through longer-term, experiential, and grounded understandings of what different people in the community need. I believe the interest here is for achieving a more immersive experiential learning that is mutually beneficial and even transformative.

Speaking to their experience at Loyola, Klos explains that if social justice is important to a program (as it is must be the broader society), then justice education must be "scaffolded into the curriculum as a whole … Just as we break undergraduate research into a framework of skills—how to read texts, how to find and analyze sources, how to develop an original hypothesis that draws from and responds to received opinion—so we need to provide incremental and ongoing training in the historical understanding of justice, in the embrace of diverse cultures and traditions, and in the experience of others (2018, 5). Among suggestions from Klos and others for this more comprehensive, even immersive, approach to how their students follow their curriculum, are opportunities for community-based, inter-cultural learning whether in domestic or international, study-abroad contexts. An essential point is that what can be called experiential education is vital: "To understand a community, students need to be part of it, not just talk about it in the classroom. They need to go out into the larger community not just to serve or give back but to comprehend their similarity and solidarity with others whose lives on the surface may seem disparate from their own. And such experiences, incrementally, should go beyond [limited] encounters to community-engaged research" (ibid).

Here we are returned again to the notion that honors education is *uniquely positioned* to offer an example to the entire institution—specifically here of the potential for transformative education built on and through an inclusive and equitable diversity that is truly sensitive to the array of cultural and other identities. In this Pehlke (2003, 32) maintains, "honors administrators must create a level of expectation and accountability among their faculty members that honors holds a unique responsibility to live out the privilege of being deemed honorable … Being held accountable for how honors affects the undergraduate culture as a whole is a challenge that administrators should accept with enthusiastic anticipation." This brings me to my final area of inquiry, which is where honors is "located," both physically and symbolically within a broader institution.

The Institutional Position and "Place" of Honors

Jones rightfully claims that "Because honors is broadly understood as a high-value program where curricular innovation is welcome, honors programs are uniquely positioned to assist institutions in the strengthening of diversity-related outcomes. If inclusive excellence is sought and attained in honors, the broader campus is more likely to conclude that inclusion and excellence can be simultaneously and successfully attained in other programs" (Jones 2017, 41). Clearly, the point that honors has an organizational position that simultaneously enables and mandates that it play such a role is important and one that should be well understood at this point in the discussion. Interestingly, commentators such as Nancy West, speaking from her experience in the honors college at the University of Missouri, draws our attention to the *physical* space associated with honors. As described by West,

> The physical space it occupies can … establish the social difference of an honors college from other colleges on campus. It can suggest that an honors college offers its students more resources, support, and attention than other students receive on campus, which is an age-old promise of honors. But this promise may not be one we want to keep making. Perhaps it is time to rethink that promise by locating our colleges *within spaces that assert the collaboration of honors with other colleges/units* on campus rather than its separation from them (2017, 202; emphasis added).

Basically, we should not take for granted how honors represents itself *spatially* and how its spaces may inform the social identity of those who use it. Thus, if we are concerned with questions of diversity, inclusion and equity, what sort of physical space might embody the qualities that we hope to see in the community of people who are engaged with honors such as a spirt of innovation, creativity, and openness?[19] By virtue of the selectivity of admission and exclusive (or even exclusionary) offers that extend to honors students but not other students, among other potential contributing factors, the physical spaces of honors programs can be intentionally insular, isolated and unaccommodating. Here, referring to the work of cultural geographer Doreen Massey, West suggests that we may need to reorient honors away from what may be a traditionally introverted sense of space and place, which is "inward-looking, static, and bounded," perhaps born of its own marketing as being a place apart from the larger university that is self-contained and protected, to one that is progressively "outward-looking, dynamic, and open" (2017, 204).

Picking up on these ideas, it seems to me that honors stands, and should embrace its position fully, as an *intersectional space*, which is to say the space where differences intersect that is a sort of liminal place between others more sharply defined within and limited by their disciplinary homes, for example. Liminality allows for unbounded creativity, freed from rigid expectation. While honors programs such as at Marshall routinely acknowledge the value attributed to interdisciplinarity, this is mostly restricted to the realm of ideas. Seldom promoted is honors' status as a *physical* crossroads and common ground for people to gather and share ideas. On this possibility, honors well positioned and all the more so if within a larger context of institutional efforts to become more diverse and inclusive.

West suggests that universities lack "third places." Universities most typically organize physical spaces of campus to serve discrete populations and their activities. Borrowing the concept of "third place" from Ray Oldenburg, a sociologist, we are presented with the opportunity to think of honors as a sort of *neutral ground* where people of diverse backgrounds can equitably gather and interact. The designation of such a space as "third" comes from its presumed distinction from "first" places, i.e., the domestic sphere or home, and "second" places, which is the more public, but still closed, workplace. As Oldenburg saw them, these third places—such as lively main streets and corner cafes—as providing a vital foundation to a functioning democracy by through supplying a space for people to converse and create habits of public association. Their absence is a serious threat to social well-being in the broader society as it is to the university.

Among advantages of re-imagining honors as a third place is the opportunity to meaningfully reinforce the fact that honors programs house important, interdisciplinary curricula "given that their job is to bring

[19] When I came to the honors college at Marshall as a contributing faculty member in 2011, the college—having inherited its décor from a nearly three-hundred-thousand-dollar interior decorating scheme devised in the 1980s to provide a distinctive home for the Society of Yeager Scholars—conveyed an unmistakable message of old-fashioned exclusivity and upper-class white privilege. I believe the intent was to invoke a sense of the historical origins of honors referred to earlier in this document, i.e., the rarefied air or "majesty" of places like the University of Oxford in England. Heavy, ornate furniture, brass accent pieces including what appear to me as funeral urns, juxtaposed with numerous porcelains in curio cabinets that could be described as Orientalist kitsch, walls festooned with scenes of English fox hunting and maps of colonial-era French government administrative districts. How were students, of any background, meant to experience these spaces? If choices about the space, made at staggering expense, were meant to inform as they must have been, then what lessons were intended by those who designed and paid for them?

faculty and students from different disciplines together. Like all third places, honors colleges are de facto neutral ground, separate from departments and yet in the business of serving them all; as such, they provide an ideal space for the kind of in between collaboration required by interdisciplinary work. Honors colleges are where team-teaching—that activity we all say we should do more of but cannot because of departmental restrictions—really can happen" (West 2017, 210). Finally, perhaps the greatest benefit to repositioning honors colleges as third places, asserts West, is that it could divorce them from their exclusionary, elitist associations and deliver us at the doorstep of a transformative diversity.

> The best third places are *social levelers*. They welcome anyone who has the creativity, curiosity, and sense of adventure to be there. And while thinking of honors colleges as levelers seems radically counterintuitive, doing so will allow us to put much more emphasis on a person' s intellectual curiosity than his or her resumé or transcript. As third places, honors colleges can openly welcome as part of their community students who do not have a perfect 4.0 GPA. The key to coming into an honors college would, instead, be a … [liberality] of interest and a fierce desire for breadth of knowledge (ibid.; emphasis added).

Concluding Remarks

As I noted earlier, this is the work of an individual with his own positionality. I have done my best in a to develop the subject to a point where a group of stakeholders can share a common language built from the literature reviewed here and consider a range of possible courses of action highlighted within. Recognize, however, that the illustrations of possible "best practices" going forward are necessarily limited in detail. The sources from which they were drawn were more suggestive than exhaustive. I believe the point for those authors, as it has been for me, was to give people things to think about—a starting point for looking closely at particulars of the institutional context into which any change may be introduced. For me, it is important to know what's at issue before one gets mired in the technical aspects of procedure.

Here in the Honors College at Marshall University, we've been largely content to define our diversity in terms of the broad (but still far from completely representative) inclusion of ideas drawn from a multitude of disciplines and taught by an array of faculty who volunteer to teach for us. Here, we can justly celebrate a real diversity. Perhaps not complete, but rich and rewarding. With students from every undergraduate college and very nearly every undergraduate major and academic discipline represented in our college, we can again claim a kind of academic or disciplinary diversity that is, manifestly, valuable.

Now we must advocate for and cultivate diversity in forms discussed in this document. This will likely start with a minimalistic, somewhat deficit minded approach to a structural diversity in the context of admissions, but it must become much more than that if we want to support diverse students and collectively enjoy a *transformative* diversity. It will require a fundamental rethinking of many things that we currently do, and it will, as should be clear, be built out of authentic, mutually respectful relationships—partnerships—of many kinds. Importantly, we mustn't get lost in a concern for diversity alone without a diligent effort to create an intentional community akin to the third place described here. This speaks to the need to carefully consider all that I presented here that goes well beyond admissions. Diversity without inclusive equity isn't likely to be community at all. This entails not just such principles as having an equal voice and a meaningful role as a member, it is also a recognition that we are all accountable—administration, staff, faculty, and students—for building a community that allows everyone to reach their full potential.

Appendix 05: Illustrative Examples of Honors Admissions Practices

A Report to the Honors College at Marshall University

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Submitted 12 October 2020

I believe that it could be very helpful to consider different arrangements for at least two different honors programs as starting point to any deliberations on our part as a college here at Marshall. I had initially thought that I would need more than two illustrations; I think that these two reflect current practice among programs that have made some effort to "open up" their programs while retaining certain elements of what remains prevailing practices when it comes to use of quantitative measures. Note that there are some programs, such as the University of Minnesota at Mankato and the Rutgers University at Newark, which are not among the two here, that do not use any such measures as thresholds for admission to honors.

While I have chosen from among those programs that figured prominently in my manuscript, *Report to the Honors College: Diversity, Inclusion and Equity* so that we can see how the ideals discussed in their academic publications variously manifest in policy, I have attempted to provide illustrations that offer glimpses not into all possible variations on a theme, but rather into a realistic range of possibilities for us at Marshall. My earlier report could be considered a source for both inspiration and, potentially, justification to make changes to policy and practice. Having established something of the "why," as well as a broad ranged sense of "how," to make change, the document here on "Illustrative Examples of Honors Admissions Practices" should provide more detailed insight to how we might arrive at meaningful and sustainable change in admissions procedures. These are illustrations of practices born of particular deliberations guided by particular missions within specific institutional contexts.

We are now at a stage of considering our own values and ideals—in terms of a renewed mission—and will be seeking, as a next step, some kind of action to meet them in practice. Though admissions is only part of the totality of changes that may be recommended, it is indisputably an essential part. The programs listed below provide a robust variety of approaches from which we could realistically "borrow" some combination—likely with appropriate modifications for our situation—to create an overall plan for admission to the Honors College at Marshall University. I think that an important point of departure is to recognize that this must be a thoughtful process and that it is entirely possible, even necessary, that some kind of stepwise approach be taken to reach a broader vision of change. While there is an undeniable urgency for transformational change to address potential issues related to inclusive excellence at Marshall, I think that it is also true that we would not want to make changes in the Honors College that might end up being harmful to students (e.g., by not having adequate support for all admitted students) or that, given practical limitations such as staffing or other resources, we could not realistically sustain.

In addition to as much details about the admissions processes as may be necessary to begin a conversation about possible paths for Marshall, I will also provide some general details about the curricula and requirements of these programs in order to give a sense of the demands on students who are admitted—by whatever means. However, some forms of policy and practice may not be entirely clear from available online information and questions will no doubt remain.

This approach could retain our something of our existing "automatic invitation" methodology, which might be argued as at least beneficial to the institution (as suggested in my report), while extending it to a greater population of students and also opening up additional pathways to admission into honors that should be more inclusive and increase diversity by some measures.

Specifically, the approach to admissions here is one of "process," where over time there are different ways into honors. While allowing for some variation in criteria, there is a prevalent reliance on quantitative measures. There is also an opportunity for transfer students, though only for those who have already been in an honors college or program.

There are six pathways for admission to honors at UWEC. There are two ways for *incoming, first-year students* to be admitted to honors—including an automatic invitation and a holistic review (that each have a "one of the following" approach to clearing a required quantitative threshold). There are two ways for *current students* at UWEC to be admitted to honors. In the automatic invitation, quantitative thresholds must be met. However, in a student-initiated petition process does not require meeting a set threshold for review and possible admissions. Thus, current students have a chance to "prove themselves" by way of their work at UWEC. In addition, there are two ways for *transfer students* to be admitted to honors—one entailing the same petition process as for current students.

Incoming, First-year Students:

1. *Fall* semester **automatic invitations** (incoming first-year students)

   First-semester students may be invited to join honors based on scores achieved on the ACT or SAT and their academic standing in high school. Students are invited if they have *one of the following* combinations:

   - A 28 or higher ACT composite score (SAT 1310+) and high school class rank in the top 5%
   - A 29 or higher ACT composite score (SAT 1350+) and high school class rank in the top 10%
   - A 30 or higher ACT composite score (SAT 1390+) and high school class rank in the top 15%

   IF high school class rank is not available, a 3.95 GPA is used.

2. *Fall* semester **holistic invitations** (incoming first-year students, *fall semester only*)

   In addition to the thresholds established above, incoming first-year students who meet at least *one of the following* criteria (first list) may be considered for Honors admission via a "holistic review" process:

   - A 26 or higher ACT composite score (SAT 1240+)
   - High school class rank in the top 15% (if high school class rank is not available, a 3.95 or greater GPA is used)
   - 3.75 or greater high school GPA

AND

- Additional characteristics "that will provide a diverse pool of students for consideration."

Applications, including essays, are reviewed for those who have high academic potential but have fallen below the higher test score thresholds for automatic admission. For this admission pathway, applicants do not need a test score, but it is taken into account, if submitted.

NOTE: Since 2010, when their admissions process was reworked, the UWEC reports that between 20 and 42 percent of *invited* students have been admitted through this pathway. UWEC states in their "Honors Resource Book" that:

> Anyone motivated to participate in Honors education can request to be reviewed in the holistic process. Once students meet at least one of the requirements above, candidates' applications undergo a double-blind reading prior to final decisions which are made by the Honors Directors. The double-blind readers are looking for students who demonstrate the inquisitive, motivated, creative and/or "spark" to benefit from and contribute to the Honors program, courses, and community.

Current Students:

1. *Spring* semester **automatic invitations** (current, first-year students with 14 or more credits earned at UWEC)

   Students who were not invited to join Honors during their first semester at UWEC receive an invitation to join the program for spring semester if *both* of the following criteria are met:

   - An earned 3.66 GPA or better on at least 14 academic credits in your first UWEC semester
   - A 26 or higher ACT composite score (1240+ SAT score)

   Essentially, this lowers the fall semester threshold for entry via a standardized test score by introducing another quantitative measure in the form of a first-semester GPA at the institution.

   NOTE: An ACT score is required for an automatic invitation, but students do have the option to *petition* (as below). It is also possible for a student to retake the ACT or SAT and have the score updated with the university, but students need to inform the honors program that they feel that they are qualified after obtaining and reporting an updated score.

2. **Petition** for admission

   Current students in their second or third semesters at UWEC who are "highly motivated to do honors work" may petition for admission to honors. Petitions for honors admission are reviewed during three periods annually: June 1 - August 1 and March 1 - April 15 for admission for fall semester and between December 1 and January 1 for spring semester admission.

The following materials are required for a complete petition for honors admission:

- Current Degree Audit
- Personal Statement (1-2 pages) explaining:
  - Academic qualifications for Honors
  - How the student would contribute to the honors community
  - Why Honors coursework and program support would positively impact the student's college experience

Criteria for admission decisions for petitioning students include the following:

- Strength of academic qualifications
- Strength of the personal statement
- Potential for honors enrollment to support student completion of "liberal education" (i.e., "general education" at Marshall) requirements
- Potential for honors to support the student's intellectual curiosity and achievement

Transfer Students:

1. **Petition** for admission

   Same as number 4 above.

   NOTE: There is no mention of whether or not there is a limit for how far a student may progress toward graduation before they might be unable to complete honors curricular requirements. See below under "Curriculum and Graduation Requirements."

2. **Parity** for transfer students from other honors program/colleges

   For students who transfer "in good standing" from a university's honors program or college at accredited institutions are permitted to continue their honors education at UWEC and any honors credits previously earned are counted toward UWEC's Honors Program requirements.

   NOTE: It isn't clear how the calculations are made in terms of equivalencies, i.e., whether at least some courses will still be required regardless of the honors credits earned elsewhere. See below under "Curriculum and Graduation Requirements." It also isn't clear how admission to honors is initiated in this pathway. It appears that students would need to be aware of the possibility of admission and contact the honors program to initiate a review of a student's record.

Curriculum and Graduation Requirements:

The UWEC honors program does not appear to have any distinct "tracks" for students who may need a reduced number of honors credits to accommodate starting after accumulating credits either at UWEC or at another university. However, as noted above, students transferring from other honors programs or colleges where there are in good standing can transfer previously earned credits (though there are no details as to whether this, for example, would only apply to certain credits within the curriculum). The requirements for graduating with "university honors" at UWEC are as follows:

- Complete HON 100, an honors first-year *seminar* (1 credit)

- Complete Honors 400, an honors senior-year *seminar* referred to as a "capstone," but apparently distinct from any departmental capstone (1 credit)
- Complete 24 credits of any combination of honors *colloquia* (interdisciplinary courses unique to honors) and honors *electives* (dedicated honors sections of regular, departmental courses), at least two courses must be at the 300-level or higher
- Attain a total and resident GPA of 3.5 or higher at graduation. Note that at UWEC, a 3.5 GPA or above is a requirement *at graduation*. They state that a student's "status in the program will not be affected if [their] GPA falls below the threshold at any time prior to graduation."

All honors courses count toward university requirements for general education, major, and/or university requirements. Students can earn credits through HNRS 410 (Honors Mentoring) and HNRS 420 (Honors Tutoring), which count as one credit each, but are each equivalent to a 300-level, 3-credit honors course for the purposes of honors. Up to 9-credits may be earned through non-Honors courses such as honors contracts and credits earned in "departmental honors," which are distinct from the aforementioned honors *elective* courses. Students majoring in certain departments and programs at UWEC may apply to earn "departmental honors" in place of, or in addition to, "university honors." With arrangements made with the honors program, honors students have the possibility of earning honors credit for special experience courses such as directed study, independent study, internships, study abroad, or a senior honors thesis (within a student's major program).

University of Missouri

Unlike UWEC, the University of Missouri has a holistic process *across the board* without any reliance on automatic invitation. Like UWEC, UM has defined (though singular) pathways for incoming, first-year students, current students, and transfer students to gain admission to the college. While all are holistic in terms of information considered, current students seeking admission to honors must clear GPA threshold in credits earned at UM to be eligible to apply. There is no such threshold for incoming, first-year students—though high school GPA is one among several "academic criteria" that are considered. The honors college at UM states that they welcome applications "from any student who feels that they have an academic record or traits of learning and intellect that will make them a successful Honors student at MU."

Students must apply for admission to the honors college at UM after they have submitted a standard application to the university. This is an entirely separate, additional application for would-be honors students. The college considers every applicant through a holistic review process, which they describe as "competitive and selective … [with] no specific criteria or level of achievement that will automatically result in acceptance." Once admitted to UM, "qualified students" (undefined) receive an invitation to apply to the college through a university-administered admissions status page. It appears that this happens for any complete application to the university. Applications are reviewed by a dedicated "admissions committee" in the college consisting of five members and chaired by the college's director/dean.

They state that decisions regarding admission to the college are rendered on complete applications within one month of receipt and that decisions are final and without feedback to the applicant. No late applications are accepted. They state that process is "need blind" with regard to applicant's socioeconomic status.

Incoming, first-year students:

Applications are evaluated on the following criteria.

- Academic Criteria

- Official ACT and/or SAT score reports
- Class rank, if applicable
- Strength of curriculum and coursework
- Core or weighted core GPA, whichever is higher (as calculated by the UM admissions office) from an official high school transcript.

    - NOTE: Official score reports and transcripts must be received by UM before the college will review an application. The core and weighted GPA are calculated by the admissions office using grades from all English, science, social studies, foreign language, math (Algebra I and higher), and highest fine art course grade. Weighted core GPA gives extra weight to Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) coursework for which the applicant receives a grade of C or higher.

- Resume
- The resume should list accomplishments and activities from their time in high school, including "sustained and meaningful involvement" in clubs, organizations, sports, civic programs, employment, volunteer work, and more.
- Essay
- The college provides essay prompts within the college's distinct application.
- Essays should demonstrate the applicant's "approach to learning, leadership, and plans for the future."

Deadline:

The final deadline for incoming freshman to submit all materials for consideration for admission to the honors college is March 01 (in 2021).

Current Students:

Current MU students who have "excelled in their academics … are encouraged to apply" to join the college. They apparently allow students to join into junior status. They state that they are "looking for upper-class students who will integrate into Honors whole-heartedly, enthusiastically, and who are striving for all-around excellence."

Students may be eligible to apply if <u>all</u> of the following are true:

- They are a UM student who has completed at least 12 credit hours
- They have a cumulative UM GPA of 3.7 or higher
- They have never been a member of the MU honors college
- They have not earned more than 75 credit hours (including credit hours obtained at other academic institutions) or be beyond the fifth semester of your college career (as defined by full-time status).

Application Details:

Before applying, current students must call to set up an appointment (phone or in-person) with a designated admissions and outreach coordinator (a defined position in the college) to discuss the application process and options for completing a course plan. They state that it is a competitive process and current students meeting the criteria above are not guaranteed admission.

In order to be considered for admission an eligible (as defined in the list of criteria above) current MU student must submit the following required materials:

- A completed admissions application to the college
- A personal statement of no less than 750 words addressing why the applicant wants to be a part of the college, including reference to enrollment in honors courses and participation in honors programming. This statement should be reflective of experience, achievements, and goals, to date at MU as well as how the applicant will integrate honors into your academic and extra-curricular experiences.
- A proposed honors completion plan document (an official document provided by the college) that provides a detailed listing of honors course options that the applicant intends to follow in order to complete the required honors coursework.

Deadlines, Notification and Enrollment:

- Students who apply for fall are notified by February 01 and are enrolled in the college as of that date, in time for priority registration for summer and fall semesters. Current MU students applying for admission into the college for fall semesters must apply by January 15.
- Students who apply for spring are notified by September 01 and are officially enrolled as of that date, in time for priority registration for spring semester. Current MU students applying for admission into the college for spring semesters must apply by August 15.

They explain that students will not be eligible for college-specific grants, awards, and scholarships until they are actually enrolled in and taking coursework during their first full semester in the college.

Transfer Students:

The honors college claims to welcome "highly accomplished and academically talented transfer students." Transfer students are eligible for admission to the college if all of the following are true of the student:

- Has completed at least 12 credit hours of college credit at an accredited institution
- Has a cumulative collegiate GPA of 3.7 or higher, including grades from all institutions from which they have received college credit (e.g., dual credit during high school) with "particular attention paid" to honors courses and courses within the student's major
- Has not earned more than 75 credit hours or be beyond the fifth semester of their college career (as defined by full-time status)

They state (unlike UWEC) that transfer students do not need to have been a member of an honors program or college, but if they have, they may transfer only a total of 9 honors credits if they appear as honors credits on their previous college or university transcript, to count toward completion of MU's honors curriculum.

Application Details:

Before applying, current students must call to set up an appointment (phone or in-person) with a designated admissions and outreach coordinator (a defined position in the college) to discuss the application process and options for completing a course plan. They state that it is a competitive process and current students meeting the criteria above are not guaranteed admission. In order to be considered for admission to the college, a transfer UM student must submit the following materials:

- A personal statement of no less than 750 words addressing why the applicant wants to be a part of the college, including reference to enrollment in honors courses and participation in honors programming. This statement should be reflective of experience, achievements, and goals, to date at MU as well as how the applicant will integrate honors into your academic and extra-curricular experiences.
- A proposed honors completion plan document (an official document provided by the college) that provides a detailed listing of honors course options that the applicant intends to follow in order to complete the required honors coursework.

Deadlines, Notification and Enrollment:

- Transfer students applying for admission into the college for fall semesters must apply by Feb 01. Students who apply for fall are notified by Feb 20 and officially enrolled as of that date, in time for priority registration for summer and fall semesters
- Transfer students applying for admission into the college for spring semesters must apply by Sep 30. Students who apply for spring are notified by Oct 20 and officially enrolled as of that date, in time for priority registration for spring semester

Curriculum and Graduation Requirements:

To retain membership and enrollment in the honors college, students must maintain a MU cumulative GPA of 3.5 or above. Students with a cumulative GPA below 3.5 will receive a warning letter the first semester in which this occurs. Students with a cumulative GPA below 3.5 for a second consecutive semester will no longer be members of the college. If a student falls below a cumulative 3.0 GPA at the end of any semester, they will be immediately dismissed from the college without a probationary semester. Students who are dismissed and who then wish to reapply to the college, once raising their GPA above the college requirements, must meet the same eligibility requirements for admission to honors as current MU students.

There are several ways to graduate with honors at UM, not all of which require membership in the honors college.

Honors Certificate:

Honors students who complete 24 or more hours of courses for honors credit and maintain a 3.5 cumulative GPA are eligible to graduate with an Honors Certificate. Specific honors certificate eligibility for students are as follows:

- Completion of 24 or more hours of courses for honors credit that may include any number of "general honors" and "departmental honors" course credits but no more than 9 hours of honors transfer credit, 8 hours of "honors learning-by-contract" credit, 6 hours of approved study abroad credit, and 8 hours of approved graduate coursework credit.

- A 3.5 cumulative GPA
- Students must achieve a minimum letter grade for each course: a C or better for regular honors or graduate courses or a B or better for Learning-by-Contract courses.

Departmental Honors:

Departments have their own criteria for graduating students with honors in their programs. These may include GPA requirements, special coursework, and/or the completion of an honors senior thesis or capstone research project.

Latin Honors:

Latin Honors are based on GPA, with varying requirements for different schools within the university. Please see the website for your division to find the requirements for graduating with a Cum Laude, Magna Cum Laude, or Summa Cum Laude designation. Students at or above the Cum Laude level are invited to participate in an honors convocation (even if not members of the college).

University Honors:

Honors students earn "university honors" by completing both an Honors Certificate in the college and departmental honors from a list of approved departments that require a senior thesis or capstone project.

Possible "Paths" in an Honors Curriculum

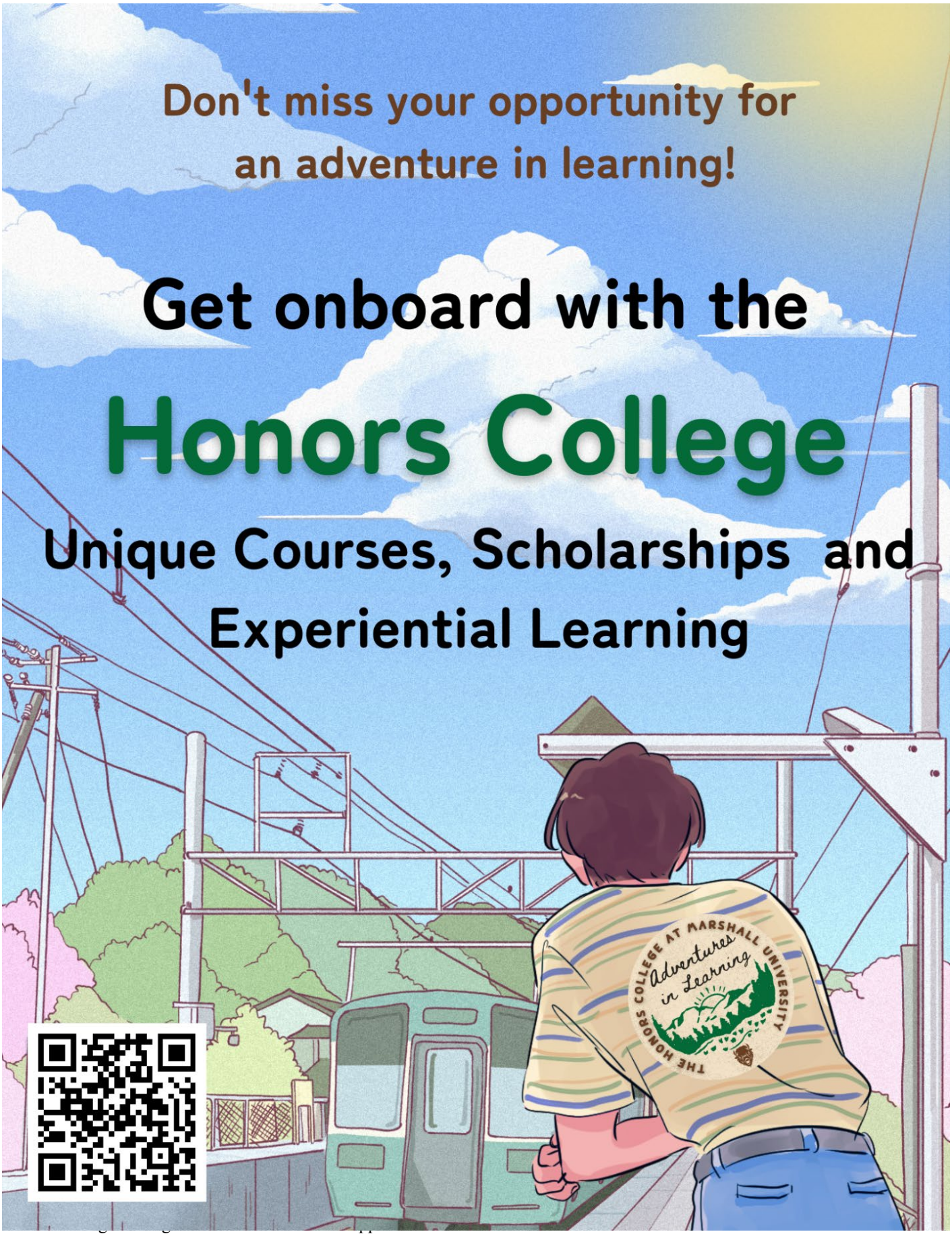
Although sometimes referred to as "tracks," I am hesitant to use that terminology for what I want to discuss in this section given possible association (as referenced in my report) with the practice of "tracking" in secondary schools, in particular, of students into what amounts to an "academic" and a "vocational" plan of studies leading to graduation. Therefore, I am going to refer to "paths" to completion of an honors curriculum and, ultimately, some institutional form of honors recognition. As I note above in reference to the University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire's practice of admitting transfer students to honors, there does not appear to be any means of altering the required curriculum to achieve the status of graduating with university honors at UWEC or, for that matter, at Missouri University. I believe, however, that it is very likely helpful have some flexibility in some situations to provide admitted current and transfer students, who have already progressed in completion of degree requirements well beyond the majority of their peers, a realistic means to complete a separate, but still coherent and meaningful, honors curriculum. In the establishment of differentiated paths to achieving a form of honors recognition, there must be careful deliberation as to what these paths will mean (practically and otherwise) for the students who may willfully or necessarily follow them. In particular, although one path might be a realistic accommodation to the circumstances of some number of current and transfer students admitted to honors, it could still potentially be seen as a "less than" form of honors that could have adhered a certain stigma among a larger population of honors students pursuing a "full" version. I do not think that this is an inevitable outcome, but careful attention would need to be paid to avoiding it.

Note as well that in some instances the term "track" as applied to honors can refer to distinct topical/disciplinary and/or "experiential" areas of focus that differentiate what students may be studying and that incorporate additional elements that are unique to those tracks such as might be seen at the University of Nebraska at Lincoln and Wichita State University.

Among those universities whose programs have written about their attempts to create a more diverse, inclusive, and equitable community of scholars in honors, Central Michigan University has two "tracks,"

as they refer to them open to honors. The second track represents a two-fold path for current and transfer students to be first admitted to honors and then to complete a separate set of curricular requirements. Note that, as far as I can tell, the only distinction between those students admitted as incoming, first-year students (which they do as tied directly to competition for the Centralis Scholarship), is a reduction in the number of service hours required from 120 to 90, which does not seem very significant. In a number of other programs, I have observed a tendency to remove requirement for a first-year or introductory honors course, which students entering honors at the end of or after their first year will have missed. In addition, there may be a modest reduction in overall required credits or, as seen at CMU, some accommodation for students with a nearer time horizon on extra- or co-curricular requirements such as “service.”

Appendix 06: Honors College and Honors House Branding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