

APPENDIX M

THE HONORS & EXPERIMENTAL COLLEGE
AT THE
UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA :
A PROPOSAL

Prepared & submitted by
The Student Planning Board
of the
Honors Program
at the
University of Arizona
in consultation with the Honors Council.

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Institutions of higher learning in the United States have traditionally been able to maintain continuity with their own past and at the same time keep up with our society's rapidly changing needs. In order to keep up with the increasing size and complexity of our society, these institutions have gradually changed from the original small, tightly knit academic communities of the past into the massive, dichotomized teaching institutions typical of today's major universities.

Recently, much valid criticism has been leveled at our universities. A great deal of this criticism reflects the growing rigidity and departmentalization of our university's atmosphere and curricula. The university community is well aware of the many, well documented, failings and inadequacies of the present system.

We in the Honors Program are particularly concerned with those failings and inadequacies which tend to stifle creativity, originality, and self-motivation in the more creative of our student body. A tendency to stifle these qualities may be inseparable from the overall demands of mass education, but such a tendency often drives the most creative, curious, and intellectually capable students from our campuses. At the same time our society has begun to recognize an increasing need for just this type of individual.

In order to meet this need and to provide for the creation of a flexible, integrated and open learning environment which may serve as a model for universities of the future, we propose the creation of an Honors and Experimental College at the University of Arizona.

Previous to the formulation of this proposal we considered and fully explored further expansion of the current Honors Program. However, in making such a projection we recognized certain limitations inherent in the program concept which would not be removed by expansion. Any program lacks centralized control over degree requirements, curriculum, and student-faculty environment. We conclude, therefore, that a college is the best administrative unit to realize this concept.

We note that this change from within is well in keeping with the great traditions of continuity and change on America's campuses.

Rationale

The primary reason for the Honors and Experimental College will be to allow the student freedom for self-expression and development of his

individual academic goals. This College will be designed for students who will take the initiative in planning their own academic pursuits and thus develop a greater capacity as a learner and a thinker. The College will also be concerned with developing the student's self-awareness and his capability for relating to others and to his environment. The College will permit the student to actively experiment with, and to explore, the many intellectual avenues available to him through the facilities and resources provided by a major university. Such exploration develops the student's ability to function well without relying on formal structure. This will prepare him to leave the shelter of the university and to participate fully in our rapidly changing society.

Purposes

We feel there is a real need for deeper intellectual involvement in the learning process. Deep involvement requires depth of study as well as breadth. The Honors and Experimental College will provide penetration of the subject matter and a more advanced study of the material rather than a faster pace. Deep involvement in the learning process requires more than just a new, perhaps more flexible, curriculum. Such involvement requires an entirely new approach to the learning atmosphere; one which allows for the development of the student's entire personality as well as his intellect. To realize this new environment the Honors and Experimental College will seek to develop a learning environment rather than a teaching environment. This learning environment will require the development of a new faculty-student relationship; one which will require the faculty members and students to be partners in learning.

In this new relationship the faculty member should view education as a cooperative effort between himself and his students. His approach to curriculum should be flexible enough to permit maximum exploration and experimentation with the subject material by both the individual student and the entire class. The faculty member should be willing to permit and encourage student-initiated as well as faculty-directed education.

The new learning environment requires, further, that the student assume a great deal more responsibility for his own education. He must develop a capacity for self-evaluation and the ability to honestly express this evaluation to the professor and the class. He must be honest and

frank with regard to his educational goals. The individual student will also have the responsibility of making a positive contribution to the class group. The partnership relationship will be expanded to one of fellowship, whereby each of the students helps the other in the learning process.

This group responsibility must be balanced with a desire to let students explore subject material on an individual basis. Both faculty and students must strive to conscientiously integrate their educational experiences so as to gain new insights from the interrelationships of their curricula. Through a cooperative interdisciplinary effort they should strive to maximize use of the facilities of the entire university community.

Another purpose of the College is to be experimental. The College should be the place where the university can try experimental approaches; new teaching techniques, new subjects, and/or new courses, which can not be tried on the institutional level of a large university. The College may act as a testing ground for the entire university community. There is also the function of creating new knowledge and then the application of this knowledge towards various academic goals. There should be, within the College, the simultaneous actions of creating and applying knowledge.

Structural Guidelines

In order to achieve the goals and objectives set forth for the new Honors and Experimental College we propose the following tentative structure for such a college:

- I. In order to insure maximum curricular flexibility, the Honors and Experimental College will grant two distinct types of degrees, the bachelor's degree in general studies and the bachelor's degree with a speciality (a major).
 - A. The bachelor's degree in general studies is provided for those students who wish to pursue an unconventional course of study. The only course requirement for this degree will be the completion of 130 units including 30 units of upper division courses. The bachelor's degree in general studies will be certified only by the college. That is, the degree in general studies certifies only that the student has completed the above requirements, and is not intended to indicate particular competence in any academic field. Students

must be advised of the dangers of pursuing such a program, and that personal competence must be displayed by a thorough evaluation of the courses completed rather than by the certification of his program by an academic department.

- B. For those students who wish to pursue a more traditional curriculum, the Honors and Experimental College will provide the bachelor's degree with a speciality. Requirements for this degree will be developed by each student in cooperation with the college and department(s) involved. We stress here, that close collaboration between the Honors College student, his advisor(s), and the department(s) concerned is necessary for the success of this type of degree program. The Honors and Experimental College will encourage complete departmental involvement in the design and evaluation of those student programs which lie within that department's academic area.
- II. One of the most important concepts of the Honors and Experimental College is that of "partnerships in learning". As an expression of this concept, a close-working relationship will be encouraged between the student and his advisor. In addition to serving as a curricular consultant the Honors and Experimental College advisor will also act as a counselor and will assist the student in his exploration of the University's facilities and opportunities.
- At the beginning of the sophomore year (or upon entrance in the case of upper classmen) the student, in consultation with his advisor, will prepare a tentative study program. This program will help the student to define his academic goals and to provide a general outline of his course of study. Further, at the beginning of each academic year, the student will prepare a specific program of study.
- III. In setting forth the general goals and guidelines for an Honors and Experimental College curriculum, we stress the point that, as presently envisioned, the college is oriented toward maximum utilization of the facilities of the entire University. Whenever possible, departments will be encouraged to offer Honors courses and Honors sections, open to both Honors College students and adequately prepared students from within that department. However,

in order to achieve the previously stated goals and objectives, the College must be in a position to develop curriculum which may differ substantially from courses found outside the college. The Honors and Experimental College curriculum will be highly innovative and might include such approaches as: the problems approach which relates academic solutions to real life problems; the integrative approach which brings together diverse academic disciplines into a comprehensive whole; the seminar approach which allows the individual greater participation within the classwork context; and the human interaction approach which provides for greater personal integration of learning experiences.

- IV. Since Honors College students will be expected to fully explore their intellectual and creative talents, the general student policy of the Honors and Experimental College must be designed to allow them sufficient freedom to transcend conventional academic limits and expectations. Under present academic policy, course prerequisites tend to restrain students from unconventional exploration. Further, a grading system which penalizes an ambitious student for unsuccessful attempts at experimentation often discourages further exploration. In order to remove the onus of failure, and the "roadblocks" to academic experimentation, the following general policy for Honors College students is proposed:
- A. Upon the recommendation of a student's advisor he may be admitted for credit to any course offered by the University, regardless of his class standing or course prerequisites. (The Honors and Experimental College will, of course, respect any essential college or departmental restrictions.)
 - B. All courses taken by Honors and Experimental College students will be graded 1, 2, 3, No Credit; that is, a grade of 4 or 5 will not be recorded for any Honors College student.
1. In order for such a "no failure" grading system to be fair and effective we must place a great deal of faith in the student-advisor relationship. Since retention in the Honors and Experimental College depends, in part, on the students adequate progress towards his academic objectives, the reasons for, and number of, recorded "N.C.'s" on a student's record must be constantly reviewed by the student and his advisor. Those students who fail to maintain

reasonable progress due to a large number of unsuccessful course attempts may be advised to pursue a more conventional program outside of the Honors and Experimental College.

2. We note that this system of grading is essentially compatible with the one used by the university generally, and thus allows students to enter or leave the Honors and Experimental College without penalty or loss of credit.

V. The very nature of the Honors and Experimental College concept necessitates student involvement in all levels of the educational process. In order to insure student participation in the administrative process, we propose that the Honors and Experimental College be governed by a nine-member board. The Honors and Experimental College governing board will consist of 4 students, 4 members of the Honors and Experimental College faculty and the Honors and Experimental College Dean. The Dean will serve on the board as chairman and will vote only in case of a tie. Decisions of this board will be determined by majority vote of the 8 members of the board. Student and faculty board members will be chosen so as to be representative of the college as a whole. Provision should be made to insure continuity and to guarantee that the membership of this board does not become stagnant.

Some of the responsibilities of the board are:

- A. To develop and implement the Honors and Experimental College curriculum. Ideas for new curricula should be solicited from the entire University community.
- B. To arbitrate disputes between students and their advisors and to act as a hearing board for general internal grievances.
- C. To establish and develop the Honors and Experimental College faculty. The members of this faculty should be sought from both within and without the University community. Procedures should be established by which Honors and Experimental College students and faculty may recommend individuals for consideration.
- D. To determine the standards for admission and retention of students. In keeping with the innovative and experimental aspects of the Honors and Experimental College, these standards will be developed so as to allow for the admission of students with divergent academic backgrounds. That is, the board will attempt to select both academically gifted and otherwise particularly creative individuals.

- E. To review and if necessary revise the entire structure, procedure and orientation of the Honors and Experimental College.

Conclusion

In contrast, then, to the present academic milieu, we propose that the Honors and Experimental College view all members of the academic community (students, faculty, and administrators) as scholars whose basic purpose is to learn and to interact as equals. A structure within which scholars interact as equals demands the full sharing of responsibility for the education process. The college structure herein presented provides for the involvement of all elements of the academic community in administration, curriculum, and the learning process. This we believe accomplishes the aims, goals, and objectives set forth for the Honors and Experimental College.

ADDENDUM

Admission of Students

During the deliberations leading to this proposal we found it impossible to reach a concensus concerning the admission policy for the college. Opinions ranged from selection by traditional academic measures (test scores and grades) to a completely open admissions policy. Strong and valid objections were raised to both these and other tentative solutions. Therefore, we have deferred this problem to further study, hoping to solicit ideas and opinions from a broader cross-section of the University community.

The most widely held opinion of these opinions is that which favors an open admissions policy. One of the best presentations of this point of view is found in an article by Grey Austin, which we have enclosed for your perusal.

