Breaking the Mold: Misperceptions Surrounding University Honors Students
Introductions

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Overview

- Activity: Who or what is an Honors student?
- Defining an Honors College/Program and Honors Students
- Who are our Honors Students?
- Best Practices
Activity Time!

What **words** would you use to describe an **Honors student**?
Activity Time!
Honors in the News

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

“Honors Colleges Promise Prestige, but They Don’t All Deliver”[10]

“What’s the Point of an Honors College, Anyway?”[16]

The Atlantic

“Who Needs Harvard?”[17]

Los Angeles Times

“Public Schools Turn To Honors Colleges”[13]
What is an Honors College?

- Curriculum features special courses, workshops, experiential learning opportunities, undergraduate research
- Students have a voice in the direction of the program/college
- Honors students receive academic advising from qualified faculty/staff
- Program engages in continuous assessment and evolution
- Program emphasizes and offers high impact experiences
- Articulation agreement with community colleges
- Offers residential Honors opportunity
- Honors Colleges oversee their own recruitment and admissions policies
- Exists within a multi-collegiate university structure

Reference: National Collegiate Honors Council
Honors Student Population

2014-2015 NCHC Admissions, Retention, and Completion Survey of Member Institutions

Race-Ethnicity (n=52)

- White
- Black
- Latino/Hispanic
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Two or More Races

Gender (n=165)

- 64% Female
- 36% Male

First Generation (n=61)

- 28.6% I'm First!
Honors Student Population

Fall 2016 Enrollment 6,894
FTF Entering GPA 3.79
National Merit Hispanic and Achievement Scholars 760+
Limited literature exists on the intersection of identities of Honors Students.

**LEARNER IDENTITY**

Strategic vs. Experiential

- S.E.S.
- Race
- Gender

Integrating identities

- Gender
- Race
- S.E.S.
# Intersection of Identities

## HONORS AND...

### 1st Generation

**1st Gen vs. Continuing:** distinct differences in college experience

Family has major influence on decision making

5 emergent themes on how family influences 1st Gen students:
- Support
- Understanding
- Motivation
- Goal Achievement
- Expectations

### Race/Ethnicity

**Diversity Issues:** Case study from UConn Honors College student (2000) - SOC see their Honors College being:
- Lacking a diverse population
- Elitist in nature or in reputation
- Unnecessary addition to academic experience
- Not preparing them for diversity conversations with majority White peers

### Gender

(assumes gender binary, excluding gender nonconforming students)

**Demographics:** Women account for majority of honors college participants.
- Women perform better in HS, tests, and have higher grad rates than males
- Low STEM representation
- High tier institutions have more equal gender distribution
- Women’s academic confidence decreases over time when it should be increasing
Best Practices

- Build your networks
  - It takes time to tear down campus stereotypes
  - Who are the “gatekeepers” on-campus?
  - Focus on benefits to combat pushback

- Educate students on how to explore their identities via workshops, Honors courses
- Language use matters. Encourage “AND” instead of “OR”
- Increase diversity representation amongst faculty, staff, and honors populations
- First generation Honors-specific programming / workshops / success component to help bridge info gap
- Use unique pedagogy, encouraged academic risk-taking, establish local women and STEM school outreach

What best practices can you see working on your campus?
Questions?

Contact us!

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References