

# Chapter 10

## The Role of Honors Education Programs

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter discusses the role of honors education programs in advancing the university education standards in general and the quality of business education in particular. Given the current reality of evolutionary and revolutionary forces (i.e., educational technologies, knowledge economies, globalization, diversity, and stakeholder orientations), educational institutions of all categories and especially institutions providing higher education are in the search of innovative, demanding, and premium educational models for their talented and academically superior students. Developing an honors education program as an educational model or strategy at any level of the university in general, and at a bachelor level in particular, definitely provides opportunities to a relatively large number (approximately 10% of the campus population) of students who are naturally motivated and high performing to further enhance their potentials and competencies. More than that, it helps establish a challenging and exemplary educational environment for students, faculty, academic managers, and policymakers.*

### INTRODUCTION

Guzy (2003, pg.15) wrote that “The first notion of modern honors education was instituted in 1830 at Oxford and Cambridge Universities with the creation of separate pass and honors degree, the latter requiring a program of study that was both quantitatively and qualitatively more substantial than that pursued by the average student. Harvard then adopted a version of Oxford’s pass-honors program”. As stated on the website of the National Collegiate Honors Council “Honors education

in the United States first appeared in the 1920s. By the late 1930s, there were over 100 Honors programs in the United States. There was a lull in Honors education during and after World War II, but the Soviet launch of Sputnik in 1956 brought a new growth in Honors programs. In 1957, the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS) was formed as a clearinghouse for information on Honors activities. ICSS received funds from the Carnegie Corporation, the National Science Foundation, and the U.S. Office of Education to help establish Honors programs at

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colleges and universities across the United States. In 1965, ICSS disbanded, when its external funding expired. A number of people felt that there continued to be a need for a professional association of Honors educators, to share their ideas and provide a strong national voice for excellence in higher education. As a result, in 1966, the National Collegiate Honors Council was formed (National Collegiate Honors Council Website)".

*The National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) is the professional association of undergraduate Honors programs and colleges; Honors directors and deans; and Honors faculty, staff, and students. NCHC provides support for institutions and individuals developing, implementing, and expanding Honors education through curriculum development, program assessment, teaching innovation, national and international study opportunities, internships, service and leadership development, and mentored research. (National Collegiate Honors Council Website)*

*The National Collegiate Honors Council values an atmosphere that promotes academic opportunity and challenge for Honors students and faculty. Within this intellectual environment, members of Honors communities demonstrate integrity, respect, and excellence. Through the Honors experience, participants realize enhanced personal, social, and intellectual development. The NCHC recognizes the importance of life-long learning and social responsibility in preparing individuals for an increasingly complex world. These beliefs and values are reinforced among member institutions through the collegiality and shared purpose of the NCHC. (National Collegiate Honors Council Website)*

Today, more than 800 member institutions of all ranks and files (academic institutions) with honors education programs are associated with NCHC. Most of these member institutions are from the USA. There are a few honors programs from

other regions including Latin America (Mexico) and Europe. The growth of honors programs has remained steady over the past many years. Lately, academic institutions from other regions or parts of the world have started realizing the importance of honors education as well. It is believed that honors programs will play an important role in promoting and maintaining quality education standards of academic institutions they belong to. Therefore, this chapter is dedicated to explain and understand: What is an honors education program? What are the basic requirements of a fully developed honors education program? What are the key success factors of an honors education program? How about the general management of an honors education program in a wider university context? What are the potential benefits and challenges of offering an honors education program in a large university setup?

## **WHAT IS AN HONORS EDUCATION PROGRAM?**

An honors program is an education model composed of a sequence or series of educational activities spread over the length or duration of a career or academic program, designed for highly achieving and talented students at undergraduate levels. Honors programs can be found at different levels within a university system such as (though this is not an exhaustive list of the honors program options):

- An academic department (academic department of Management for example) can offer honors program (type of honors concentration) to the rest of the university population. Program management in this case usually depends on the chairman of that particular department.
- A school (like business school, engineering school etc.) can offer an honors program to its own students as well as to the students

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