

Honors Program - Administrative Files

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**UNIVERSITY OF TOLEDO ARCHIVES
INVENTORY**

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Studies into both an honors program and an advanced placement program began in 1958. A faculty council committee reviewed honors programs at other universities and mad a “tentative proposal” for a similar program at the University of Toledo. Revisions were made to this original draft in response to criticisms about various requirements and advantages for members of the Program. The colleges began to define their own honors programs in accord with the university-wide efforts of the Faculty Council. The Colleges of Education and Arts & Sciences made initial agreements to combine their efforts in creating lower-level Honors courses. Other meetings dealt with the process of entering the Honors Program, indicating honors sections on transcripts, and noting honors work on diplomas. In spite of all the preparations, however, President Carlson had to remind them to give themselves a budget.

The Honors Program initiated classes during the Fall Semester of 1963 with Dr. Arthur Steele as Director. Under Steele, the Program got off to a faltering start. The Director found the merits of the first students as a whole questionable, even after they had made formal requests for a heavier workload. In 1965 Steele requested a replacement.

Dr. Earnest Gray brought a healthier attitude to the program as well as ideas to reform it. He sought autonomy for the Honors Program that would allow those faculty involved to experiment with non-traditional methods of instruction. The need for departmental honors at graduation also became apparent at this time since the first honors class was in its junior year. Proposals from the various departments followed for the rest of the 1965-66 year. Gray also discouraged the use of “grading on the curve” in honors sections. Events of the 1966-67 year included the development of the Honors Program office in Dowd Hall, weekly Faculty-Student get-togethers, and an Honors-High School Recruiting Committee.

As time went on, faculty members involved with the Honors Program became increasingly desirous of removing university-wide academic restrictions from Honors students’ schedules. Concurrently, the belief that the students were not curious and academically adventurous enough began to spread. Although there seemed to be no shortage of faculty members willing to teach honors courses and the majority of their evaluations after the fact were positive, a good number of the faculty considered the students “bright, ignorant, and unawakened.” The Director felt the purpose of the program was not to provide a more challenging curriculum but to expose program members to different points of view in order to “shock these students out of their ruts.”

In response, plans for an “Experimental College” appeared in 1969 as an attempt to provide willing students with an opportunity for a self-directed curriculum with few restrictions or limits. The Honors Program would become part of this college. A number of new techniques, many of them non-traditional, could be utilized. The founding of the University College responded to these desires, but the Honors Program did not become a part of it.

In fact, after Gray retired in 1970, the Program nearly fell apart. Due to a lack of funding, Arts & Sciences had to close its classes to “outsiders.” Without that College’s guidance, the other honors programs in the various colleges quickly folded. The Arts & Sciences Honors Program continued with much smaller accommodations in University Hall. Dr. James Larson replaced Gray who died in 1974. Despite its reduced stature, the Honors Program continued to provide new opportunities, for example the “Hospital Field Experience” course in 1975.

Throughout Larson’s seventeen years as Director, the Honors Program remained in the College of Arts & Sciences despite his efforts to expand it. In 1986 Dr. William Bischoff replaced Larson, and now that James McComas was President of the University, the Honors Program was able to attain university-wide status again by Fall, 1987. Separate

honors programs were organized in the Colleges of Business Administration, Education & Allied Professions, Engineering, and Pharmacy. The Arts & Sciences Honors Program took care of recruitment and admission for all the programs, in general taking the part of coordinator. An honors student organization was also founded.

This series is arranged chronologically and documents the administration of the Honors Program from its beginning through the tenure of Director Gray. Included are early proposals for the program, scattered annual reports, and information on honors courses. Material on honors programs at other universities in the 1960s is also included.

Completed by: Richard Adler

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