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The Honors Experience [brochure and video]

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Now what?

While the unique balance of offering many opportunities for small subset of students is beneficial in many respects, the costs of those experiences can detract from the overall campus culture. What can a student do to remedy those drawbacks?

Make sure to get involved outside the Honors College setting. Join a Greek organization, religious group, athletic team, or campus activities group. This will help the student remain connected the institution at large, and gain the experience with diversity that is lacking within the Honors College setting at its campus locale.

Students should also try to remain patient with the small Honors Colleges as they grow and develop to accommodate a large number of students. Using these simple strategies aids in the reduction of stress levels resulting in the realization that the advantages far outweigh the disadvantages.

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The Honors Experience

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Why Join?

Gifted and talented students become accustomed to exhibiting academic excellence throughout their K-12 careers; so much so that they learn to crave the intellectual stimulation and intrigue that is characteristic of their curricular experiences. Upon entering the realm of higher education, these same students are faced with a newfound independence and must make the decision of whether or not to continue their pursuits of specialized education. Students that are active in and outside the classroom during their collegiate career are more likely to complete their degree programs as proposed by Astin's Theory of Student Involvement (Astin, 1999). Therefore, getting involved in the Honors College experience is an ideal avenue for achieving that goal.

Connect

Honors Colleges pride themselves on offering a small, liberal arts college feel. Students will get to live and learn in a setting that is conducive to constant education and positive social development.

Learn

The smaller class size offers students the opportunity to have more one-on-one interaction with their professors as well as each other. These courses are more conducive to experiential learning. However, the resources of a large institution are still available, making Honors Colleges equally competitive.

Travel

Higher education institutes want their students to become global citizens, and encourage internationalization through study abroad experiences. Distance learning opportunities are highly publicized in every Honors College environment.

Compete

As a member of a gifted and talented community, Honors scholars prepare to become viable candidates for competitive national scholarships such as The Gilman Scholarship, Fulbright Scholarship, Boren Scholarship, Rhodes Scholarship, and Truman Scholarship.

Lead

Opportunities abound for the chance to lead within an Honors College. Whether serving as a mentor or an ambassador to prospective students, these scholars have a chance to stand out.

Engage

The pinnacle of the Honors experience is the encouragement to participate in research with a professor, compose an original musical score, create a photography exhibit, or engage in another form of senior-level work that differs from the average thesis.

But what if?

Despite the fact that there are so many positive aspects associated with the Honors College experience, the argument can be made that students feel drawbacks. Seifert, et al (2007) note certain critics of Honors Colleges believe that in the seclusion of Honors peers and their professors from the general classroom setting, the overall academic environment of the institution is harmed. Conversely, Honors students habitually report feelings of isolation from their non-Honors peers (citation). Additionally, critics challenge that students in Honors Colleges are less likely to experience ethnic and culture diversity in the Honors community due to the fact that historically minority student engagement in the Honors setting is low (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007; Pittman, 2001). Honors Colleges have to develop just as does the institution at large, students can feel the growing pains and consequently experience frustration with that entity. All these factors combine under the pressure of a stressful course load.