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"A special program for highly gifted students:" The evolution and growth of UNI's Honors Program, 1959-2009

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“A SPECIAL PROGRAM FOR HIGHLY GIFTED STUDENTS:” THE EVOLUTION AND
GROWTH OF UNI’S HONORS PROGRAM, 1959-2009

A Thesis Submitted
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Designation
University Honors

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This Study by: Matthew Miller

Entitled: "A Special Program for Highly Gifted Students:" The Evolution and Growth of UNI's
Honors Program, 1959-2009

has been approved as meeting the thesis or project requirement for the Designation University
Honors

Date

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Date

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In 1959, the faculty of the Iowa State Teachers College (ISTC), what is now known as the University of Northern Iowa (UNI), approved the creation of an honors program for gifted students, those who performed “above the norm for their age.”¹ Over the next 50 years, this program’s structure evolved and expanded to meet the changing needs of both the university and students from various backgrounds. The UNI Honors Program’s creation and evolution were not isolated events; rather, they reflected various local and national trends in education. UNI’s first honors program began as a reflection of ideas promoted by other universities and an organization known as the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS), which influenced honors programs across the country in the 1950s, 1960s, and beyond. One of the ideas that this program relied on was that of the academically superior student, which it based on qualities such as grade point average. During the early 1970s and 1980s, the program evolved in reaction to changing national attitudes about race and gender in education and removed its academic entrance requirements in order to include students from diverse backgrounds. Finally, at the turn of the century, UNI created an honors program that reflected not only the idea of the superior student but also the university's desire to provide opportunities to a variety of students. Despite the program’s connection to these trends and attitudes, its history is not well-documented. The only historical literature that discusses the honors program at UNI is William C. Lang and Daryl Pendergraft’s *A Century of Leadership and Service: A Centennial History of The University of Northern Iowa*, which briefly mentions the program’s first few years.² This study builds upon this literature by exploring the program’s evolution and its connections to national trends during

¹ “What is Giftedness?” National Association for Gifted Children, accessed October 27, 2017, <https://www.nagc.org/resources-publications/resources/what-giftedness>.

² William C. Lang and Daryl Pendergraft, *A Century of Leadership and Service: A Centennial History of The University of Northern Iowa Vol. 2, 1928-1976* (Cedar Falls: University of Northern Iowa, 1990-95), 235-236.

its first 50 years. Through its examination of these topics, this study serves as the first in-depth historical analysis of the UNI Honors Program.

In order to examine the history of the UNI Honors Program and its connections to national education trends, this study utilizes a variety of primary sources in the Archives and Special Collections located in UNI's Rod Library. These sources include newspaper articles from the university's student newspaper and other local papers, as well as documents that the Honors Program itself created, including reports, handouts, and brochures. This study uses the information in these sources to address issues such as why the university started an honors program, how the program's structure and requirements for admission changed over time, and how the program's changes adhered to or deviated from national trends. This study also addresses the topic of diversity by examining how the UNI Honors Program has attracted and represented students with different backgrounds and academic disciplines. In addition to addressing these issues, this study also uses these sources to examine the viewpoints that students, faculty and administration members had towards the program. While Rod Library's Archives and Special Collections contain numerous sources related to UNI's Honors Program, these documents discuss some of the program's aspects more than others. Due to this and the scope of this project, this study contains small gaps in information that require further research and sources.

In addition to constructing a history of the UNI Honors Program, this study also attempts to place this history into the larger historical narrative of honors programs and higher education in the United States. In order to do this, the study relies upon the historiography of three different subjects: honors programs in the United States, higher education in the United States, and diversity and representation in higher education. The historiography of honors programs, like the

historiography of the UNI Honors Program, is fairly limited. One of the most important works of literature concerning honors programs in the United States is Joseph W. Cohen's edited collection, *The Superior Student in American Higher Education*.³ This work contains several short essays that outline the development of different honors movements and programs during the late twentieth century. These essays also discuss several key events that contributed to these developments. Most of the remaining literature that concerns honors programs is made up of studies of honors programs at specific universities, such as James K. Olsen's examination of the honors program at Kent State University and E. Jackson Baur's study of the development of an honors program at an unnamed state university.⁴ Although the historical literature on honors programs is fairly limited, these studies each contain ideas of "superior" students and suggest that honors programs reflected universities' desires to provide these students with more challenges than they typical offered.

The historiography of higher education in the United States is a much more developed area. One of the first historians to examine the development of colleges and universities in the United States was Charles Franklin Thwing, who, in 1906, wrote about the development of higher education in the country from the founding of its first college to the end of the nineteenth century.⁵ Historian Frederick Rudolph later built upon Thwing's examination by looking at how student organizations and activities developed alongside universities in the late twentieth

³ Joseph W. Cohen ed., *The Superior Student in American Higher Education* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1966).

⁴ James K. Olsen, "The Honors Program at Kent State University," *Educational Research Bulletin* 40, no. 9 (1961): 224-231; E. Jackson Baur, "Learning in an Honors Program," *Improving College and University Teaching* 17, no. 4 (1969): 291-296.

⁵ Charles F. Thwing, *A History of Higher Education in America* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1906).

century.⁶ In recent years, Historian John R. Thelin has contributed a number of works to the study of higher education. Many of Thelin's works look at the changes made in higher education during the twentieth century, however, he has also looked at other periods and expanded upon existing literature concerning the development of colleges and universities.⁷ While they explored different topics, these historians each addressed ideas of progress and change in their studies. Addressing these ideas allowed them to create an extensive historical framework that outlined the evolution of higher education in the United States and place topics such as honors programs and diversity in colleges into this framework.

The history of diversity in American higher education is also well documented. In the early twentieth century, Historian Thomas Woody examined the development of women's education in the United States, and how this development connected to changes in women's economic status.⁸ In 1982, Beverly Guy-Sheftall discussed both gender and race by looking at how two colleges for African American women, Spelman and Bennett, helped increase opportunities for African American women.⁹ Jacqueline A. Stefkovich and Terrence Leas later discussed the history of desegregation in America's higher education system during the twentieth century.¹⁰ More recently, Michael Dennis has looked at the role that higher education played in

⁶ Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History*, 2nd ed. (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 1991).

⁷ John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004); "Success and Excess: The Contours and Character of American Higher Education Since 1960," *Society* 50, no. 2 (2013): 106-114.

⁸ Thomas Woody, *A History of Women's Education in the United States*, vol. 2. (New York: The Science Press, 1929).

⁹ Beverly Guy-Sheftall, "Black Women and Higher Education: Spelman and Bennett Colleges Revisited," *Journal of Negro Education* 51, no. 3 (1982): 278-287.

¹⁰ Terrence Leas and Jacqueline A. Stefkovich, "A Legal History of Desegregation in Higher Education," *Journal of Negro Education* 63, no. 3 (1994): 406-420.

furthering ideas of racism and discrimination around the turn of the twentieth century.¹¹ Steven Crum later added to this historiography by examining the experiences of students from the Choctaw Nation during the nineteenth century to discuss the inclusion of Native Americans in higher education.¹² The historians who studied diversity in higher education, like those who studied higher education in general, addressed ideas of progress and change in their studies; however, their focus on minority groups allowed them to examine the factors that influenced these changes, colleges and universities' reactions to these factors, and these factors' effects on minority groups more thoroughly.

By exploring different topics related to honors programs, higher education, and diversity in higher education, these historical studies have each contributed to the existing knowledge of honors programs and higher education in the United States. This study of the UNI Honors Program adds to the understanding that these previous historical studies created in several ways. First, this study explores how the UNI Honors Program conformed to popular honors trends discussed in other studies, such as providing superior students with more academic opportunities. Next, it examines how changes in the UNI Honors Program reflected the evolution of higher education in the United States outlined in previous studies. Finally, this study explores how the UNI Honors Program reacted to changing attitudes about diversity and representation in higher education. Exploring each of these connections allows this study to place the history of the UNI Honors Program that it constructs into the larger historical narrative of honors programs and higher education in the United States.

¹¹ Michael Dennis, "The Skillful Use of Higher Education to Protect White Supremacy," *Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* no. 32 (2001): 115-123.

¹² Steven Crum, "The Choctaw Nation: Changing the Appearance of American Higher Education, 1830-1907," *History of Education Quarterly* 47, no. 1 (2007): 49-68.

A Brief History of Honors Programs in the United States

The history of contemporary honors programs in the United States begins with a program started at Swarthmore College in 1921. Frank Aydelotte, Swarthmore's president, developed this program to resemble the honors system used in English institutions such as Oxford University.¹³ The program at Swarthmore included only a small number of students with junior or senior standing due to the idea that the public education system had not prepared students to engage in honors work during their first few college years. While this program's elite nature prevented many other institutions from copying it, Joseph Cohen credits Frank Aydelotte for helping to found the honors idea in the United States. "He was in every way the originator of honors strategy," claimed Cohen, "and we are hugely indebted to him and to his Swarthmore faculty for developing the honors concept. Here the stress on group experience in the small seminar or colloquium and the idea of divisional honors got their full real start."¹⁴ In addition to Swarthmore College, several other institutions, including Harvard University, the University of Wisconsin, and the University of Colorado, also founded their own honors programs during the early twentieth century; however, these programs differed in size and structure.¹⁵ After World War II and the expansion of higher education, attempts to create a uniform type of honors program that any university could use started replacing the efforts of individual institutions such as Swarthmore.

¹³ Joseph W. Cohen, "Development of the Honors Movement in the United States," in *The Superior Student in American Higher Education*, ed. Joseph W. Cohen, (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1966), 10.

¹⁴ Cohen, "Development of the Honors Movement in the United States," 12.

¹⁵ Cohen, "Development of the Honors Movement in the United States," 13-24.

In 1957, 27 institutions from across the United States sent representatives to an honors conference held in Boulder, Colorado. This conference resulted in the creation of an independent honors association called the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS). Over the next few years, the ICSS spread honors ideas through visits to institutions across the United States and through its newsletter, *The Superior Student*.¹⁶ As it helped colleges and universities across the United States form their own honors programs, the ICSS created a list of ideas to help these institutions track their honors efforts, *The Sixteen Major Features of a Full Honors Program*. This list included ideas such as “[Making] such programs continuous and cumulative through all four years,” and “Employ[ing] methods and materials appropriate to superior students.”¹⁷ The ICSS honors program model became very popular during the late 1950s and early 1960s. By the time that the ICSS ended operation in 1965, numerous institutions across the United States had created honors programs that included at least some of the Sixteen Major Features. One of these institutions was the Iowa State Teachers College.

An Honors Program at the Iowa State Teachers College

Following the trend set by other universities across the country, the faculty at the Iowa State Teachers College approved the creation of an honors program in 1959. In an article entitled “Honors Program Initiated By ISTC Faculty,” student reporter Lowell Childers discussed the College’s plan for the new program:

A special honors program for highly gifted students has been approved by the ISTC faculty. Under the new program, about 25 students, out of an enrollment of 3,400, will become honors candidates. They will be freed from normal course requirements and will follow, at their own election, a program of either reading,

¹⁶ Joseph W. Cohen, “The First Coordinated Effort: the ICSS,” in *The Superior Student in American Higher Education*, ed. Joseph W. Cohen, (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1966), 31-34.

¹⁷ Cohen, “The First Coordinated Effort: the ICSS,” 46-47.

writing or group discussion. Upon graduation, they will receive a special diploma distinguishing them as honors graduates of the college.¹⁸

The program that Childers described reflected several aspects of the ICSS model, which called for honors programs to use a variety of course types, including seminars and independent study, encourage open discussion, and to eliminate lectures when possible.¹⁹ Childers's suggestion that the ISTC Honors Program provided students with greater independence supports the idea that this program connected to these aspects of the ICSS model. His use of the term "highly-gifted students" also reflected the language that the ICSS used to describe prospective honors students. These connections suggest that even if the Iowa State Teachers College did not follow the ISCC model exactly, it used the same language to promote its honors program.

The connections between the ISTC Honors Program and the ISCC model did not end with Lowell Childers's description of the program. In January 1961, Joseph Cohen visited the Iowa State Teachers College and spoke at a conference on honors programs. During this conference, Cohen discussed several aspects of honors programs and the challenges that they provided students.²⁰ Cohen's visit to the Iowa State Teachers College marked one of many such visits that he conducted during his time as director of the ICSS. Cohen used these visits to generate interest in honors programs, honors conferences, and to learn about the status of different honors programs across the country.²¹ His attention to the ISTC Honors Program

¹⁸ Lowell Childers, "Honors Program Initiated By ISTC Faculty," *College Eye* (Iowa State Teachers College), May 22, 1959, *The College Eye* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

¹⁹ Cohen, "The First Coordinated Effort: the ICSS," 46-47.

²⁰ "Cohen Says Honors Programs Will Heighten Scholastic Tone," *College Eye* (Iowa State Teachers College), January 27, 1961, *The College Eye* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

²¹ Cohen, "The First Coordinated Effort: the ICSS," 33.

provided a direct link between it and the ICSS model, and further supports the idea that the national movement had influenced the new program.

The ISTC Honors Program began in the summer of 1961, almost two years after its approval, and less than half a year after Joseph Cohen's visit. During this trial period, the program consisted of 15 freshmen students who participated in special sections of English and Humanities courses: *Times Through the Reformation*, taught by Dr. Edwin Maurer, and English I taught by Professor Robert Dalziel.²² These students also engaged in weekly seminars called theme-groups. Joseph Cohen claimed that theme groups, also called symposiums or colloquiums, were "at the heart of the honors method."²³ This type of course allowed students to engage with both content and their peers through discussion and debate. By including theme groups in its structure, the ISTC Honors Program not only provided students with opportunities to pursue the programs of reading, writing, and discussion that Lowell Childers described but also used one of the key features of the ICSS honors program model. While few records that include details of the program's first year exist, its expansion the following year suggests that it had encountered success.

In 1962, the Honors Program expanded and became a more permanent feature of the Iowa State Teachers College, which changed its name to the State College of Iowa this same year. The program's mission was "to provide for the above-average and superior student a continuous and cumulative program of greater intellectual challenge and with more flexibility

²² "15 Superior Freshman Tackle New Program in English, Humanities," *College Eye* (Iowa State Teachers College), June 23, 1961, *The College Eye* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

²³ Cohen, "The First Coordinated Effort: the ICSS," 40.

and individualization than can be attained under the regular curriculum.”²⁴ To qualify for admission into the Honors Program, incoming freshmen students had to score in or above the 90th percentile on the American College Testing Program (ACT) or equivalent and receive a recommendation from their high school principal based on qualities such as intellectual capacity, self-motivation, and leadership skills.²⁵ If a student scored lower than the 90th percentile on the ACT, they could still join the program by submitting a recommendation from their principal. As part of the program’s expansion in 1962, sophomore students with a 3.25 or better grade point average could also apply to become honors students. In 1964, the Honors Program expanded yet again to include students in their junior year who had a 3.5 grade point average or better.²⁶ These expansions helped the program include students in different stages of their college careers, which helped it grow in both size and diversity.

During its early years, the Honors Program subjected the growing number of students who joined it to a variety of requirements. The first requirement these students had to meet was to maintain a certain grade point average. The program required students to have a 2.7 GPA by the end of their freshmen year, and then maintain a 3.0 GPA until the time of their graduation.²⁷ In addition to maintaining a certain GPA, the program required honors students to participate in special class sections created just for them. The final requirement for honors students at this time

²⁴ University Honors Program, “The General Honors Program at the State College of Iowa,” (State College of Iowa, 1962), Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

²⁵ University Honors Program, “The General Honors Program at the State College of Iowa,” (State College of Iowa, 1962).

²⁶ Lang and Pendergraft, *A Century of Leadership and Service*, 236.

²⁷ University Honors Program, “The General Honors Program at the State College of Iowa,” (State College of Iowa, 1962).

was an independent study project, which the students needed to complete no later than a month prior to graduating. Honors students could choose from a variety of project options, including a research paper, creative musical work, or a work of art. In addition to these requirements, the program also expected honors students to “exhibit qualities expected of an Honors student.”²⁸ While the Honors Program’s documents did not expressly state what these qualities were, they did make it clear that the program would remove students if they did not exhibit these qualities, regardless of their grade point average. Those students that exhibited the qualities expected of them and who met each of the program’s requirements were eligible for graduation with a General Honors distinction.

In addition to the different expansions that it went through, several different directors led the Honors Program during its first few years. The director served as the program’s head and the head of the Honors Board, a small committee made up of both students and faculty. Dr. Wallace L. Anderson, the Dean of Undergraduate Studies, served as the program’s first director from its founding until 1967.²⁹ Under Anderson’s leadership, the Honors Program made several expansions; however, the program also continued growing after he left. In May 1967, the State College of Iowa selected Dr. Charles Quirk, an assistant professor of history, to serve as the program’s new director.³⁰ During his time as director, Quirk worked to develop a four-year program and expand some of the program’s features, such as the theme groups. “We hope that with the establishment of departmental honors programs for juniors and seniors,” stated Quirk,

²⁸ University Honors Program, “The General Honors Program at the State College of Iowa,” (State College of Iowa, 1962).

²⁹ Lang and Pendergraft, *A Century of Leadership and Service*, 235-236.

³⁰ “Dr. Quirk to Head Honors Board,” *College Eye* (Iowa State Teachers College), May 16, 1967, *The College Eye* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

“we will eventually develop a four-year honors program.”³¹ “We also anticipate an expansion in the number and kinds of theme groups,” Quirk claimed later.³² Over the next few years, Quirk and the Honors Board worked on making these changes to the program. Although they did not know it at the time, the work that they started almost completely reorganized the Honors Program.

Reorganizing the UNI Honors Program

In 1967, the State College of Iowa became the University of Northern Iowa (UNI). As the university matured and expanded its structure, the Honors Program also started reorganizing itself to meet the institution’s growing needs. The program began this reorganization process by addressing the growing amount of criticism that it received from students and faculty alike during the late 1960s. After receiving the approval of the university’s president, J. W. Maucker, Dr. Charles Quirk and the Honors Board began working on a new structure for the program in the spring of 1969.³³

As the Honors Board worked on reorganizing the Honors Program, it focused its efforts on the features that received heavy criticism from both students and faculty. One of the aspects of the Honors Program that drew criticism was its inclusion of freshmen students. “Freshman honors has been criticized by many faculty, virtually from the beginning, on the basis that the selection process was not refined enough,” claimed one Honors Board report. “The program,

³¹ “Dr. Quirk to Head Honors Board,” *College Eye* (Iowa State Teachers College), May 16, 1967.

³² “Dr. Quirk to Head Honors Board,” *College Eye* (Iowa State Teachers College), May 16, 1967.

³³ Kris Tasa, “Honors Program Revision Planned,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), July 11, 1969, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

consequently, contained a number of students whose ability to do honors work was in doubt.”³⁴

The Honors Program also received criticism for the sections of general education courses, referred to as starred sections, which the university set aside for honors students. According to the Honors Board, faculty members criticized these sections for being difficult to organize:

The starred sections of general education courses have proven extremely difficult to structure as honors courses while still preserving the content that these courses assume. Taking note of these complaints, the Board has agreed that it is now time to adopt an approach that provides greater flexibility and challenge for students and instructors.³⁵

In addition to the criticisms that faculty members presented, the Honors Board also discussed complaints students made about the theme group seminars that the program included. According to the Board, students criticized the theme groups for demanding too much work for the time provided to complete it.³⁶ As the Honors Board worked on reorganizing the Honors Program, it took the complaints that both students and faculty made and incorporated them into a proposed restructure for the program.

After working during the spring and summer of 1969, the Honors Board presented a proposal for restructuring the Honors Program to the university's administration and the Faculty Senate in the fall. The proposal included three major changes to the Honors Program that addressed the complaints of both students and faculty. The first proposed change addressed the system of freshman honors that the program used. Rather than inviting high school graduates to participate in the program during their first year of college, the Board proposed a system that

³⁴ Honors Board, “UNI Honors Program,” (University of Northern Iowa, 1969), Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

³⁵ Honors Board, “UNI Honors Program,” (University of Northern Iowa, 1969).

³⁶ Honors Board, “UNI Honors Program,” (University of Northern Iowa, 1969).

allowed all first-year students to attend honors functions and then apply for admission into the program on their own if they wished.³⁷ The Board believed that using such a system allowed them to admit more students who met the program's standards. "Utilizing the freshman year for selection, the Board will be able to admit only those students of promise who themselves apply for admission," claimed the proposal. "We anticipate far fewer students who degrade the quality of the program by performing below honors expectations."³⁸ This statement suggests that the Board believed that using the freshman year for selection helped it avoid admitting students who performed below expectations, which thereby increased the program's status. It also shows that the Honors Board had taken the issues surrounding freshman honors into account, and attempted to resolve these issues with this proposed change.

The second change to the Honors Program that the Honors Board proposed involved replacing the starred sections of general education courses with more theme groups and independent study courses. The Board also planned to expand the theme groups from one credit hour per semester to three credit hours, which addressed student concerns and provided them with more credit for the work they completed. In addition to expanding the theme groups, the Board also proposed a plan of independent study for honors students. This idea sprung from the Board's belief that "students of Honors caliber have the desire and the ability to do research and writing with a minimum of formal supervision."³⁹ The Board believed that the system of independent study, combined with the expanded theme groups, not only effectively replaced the

³⁷ "Approval Sought: Honors Program Revised," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), September 9, 1969, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

³⁸ Honors Board, "UNI Honors Program," (University of Northern Iowa, 1969).

³⁹ Honors Board, "UNI Honors Program," (University of Northern Iowa, 1969).

program's existing structure, but also better represented the program's ideals. "Taken together," stated the Board, "we argue that the expanded Theme Groups and independent study epitomize the idea of Honors work."⁴⁰ The expansion of the theme groups and independent study not only reflected the Board's desire to address student and faculty concerns but also the ideals of the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student, which highlighted both of these features.⁴¹ These connections suggest that even though the ICSS no longer operated, its model continued to influence honors program across the country, including the program at UNI.

The third major change that the Honors Board proposed was to set up a formal honors faculty. During the program's first several years, it used an informal process to select faculty members to instruct the starred honors sections of different courses. This system began to attract criticism because the most "qualified" faculty members were not always available to teach these courses.⁴² To create a formal honors faculty, the Board claimed that it would identify the most qualified faculty and use part of the honors budget to pay them for their time. In its proposal, the Board identified two criteria that made a qualified honors faculty member. The first criteria was that honors instructors "ought to be more than usually capable of exploiting cross-disciplinary connections," and the second was that they "should be skilled enough in their comprehension of the content and internal organization of a limited subject to pursue it to the limit of their students' comprehension."⁴³ In essence, the Honors Board wished to select faculty members who were experts in their field and who could help students explore the connections between different

⁴⁰ Honors Board, "UNI Honors Program," (University of Northern Iowa, 1969).

⁴¹ Cohen, "The First Coordinated Effort: the ICSS," 47.

⁴² Honors Board, "UNI Honors Program," (University of Northern Iowa, 1969).

⁴³ Honors Board, "UNI Honors Program," (University of Northern Iowa, 1969).

subject areas. Selection of the correct faculty members was also an important part of the ICSS honor program model. The Honors Board's inclusion of this factor in its proposal reinforces the idea that the ICSS continued to influence honors programs even after it ceased to exist.

The Honors Board's proposal to restructure the Honors Program served as a starting point of a reorganization process that changed the program almost entirely. The program that emerged from this process promoted independent study and provided students with opportunities to engage in programs of study that suited their personal interests. Over the next two decades, the reimagined honors program expanded the ways in which students engaged with honors work at UNI.

The Individual Honors Program at UNI

The restructured honors program that emerged from the Honors Board's 1969 proposal began operation in 1970. It became known as the Individual Honors Program because it provided students with "the freedom to pursue his or her own personal, individualized interests without the restrictions generally placed upon students by the normal classroom requirements."⁴⁴ This freedom that it provided students represented the core of the program's structure. The Individual Honors Program consisted of four different independent study courses: self-forming Honors Seminars, Honors Reading, Independent Study, and Undergraduate Thesis.⁴⁵ The program also offered regular classroom courses on a variety of subjects, such as The Role of Computer in

⁴⁴ Honors UNI, "Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972," (University of Northern Iowa, 1972), Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁴⁵ Edward Amend, letter to the University of Northern Iowa faculty, October 18, 1972, Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Society and Turning Points in the History of Physics in the spring of 1974.⁴⁶ In most cases, these courses satisfied general elective requirements; however, the program also allowed students to have them applied to their major or minor with approval from their department head and the honors director. The combination of classroom work and independent study provided students with the opportunity to work towards their degrees while also pursuing their own interests. While classroom work provided students with skills and knowledge of different fields, the independent study courses provided students with the opportunity to apply these skills and conduct their own research. Once a student decided to enroll in one of the program's independent study courses, it became their responsibility to plan and complete a project for that course.

At the beginning of each semester, the program gave students enrolled in independent study courses a prospectus to help them plan out their semester of study. In this document, students listed their goals for their project and the methods they planned to use to achieve these goals. The program encouraged students to use the research methods used by professionals in their chosen field of study; however, it also allowed students to use different methods if they wished. If students decided to use new or different methods, the program expected them to take extra time and care to learn how to use them properly. The Honors Program also provided these students with research guides and handbooks to help them learn different methods.⁴⁷

Once a student had decided on an independent study project, or if they needed help in choosing the right methodology, they then began searching for a faculty consultant. Faculty consultants served as advisors for the students, and they helped plan, guide and evaluate the

⁴⁶ Cynthia Haring, "Alternative Studies-Self Motivation," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), November 13, 1973, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁴⁷ Honors UNI, "Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972," (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

students' work. According to the program's guidelines, selecting the right faculty consultant represented one of the most important aspects of the planning process. "The blank for the faculty consultant is, perhaps, the most important part of the prospectus," the guidelines stated. "The student should take care in choosing a faculty consultant who is in agreement with the student as to his educational aims and objectives so as to guarantee that there be no misunderstandings between them during the course of study."⁴⁸ Once a student and faculty consultant agreed on a project, the prospectus became their contract. It was important that students planned their study and chose a faculty consultant quickly, as students who did not submit their prospectus during the first two weeks of the semester received a failing grade.⁴⁹

After selecting a faculty consultant and submitting their prospectus, students enrolled in independent courses began working on their projects. The students received a list of deadlines at the start of each semester, and it was their responsibility to complete their work by these deadlines. If a situation arose when a student could not complete their work by the end of a semester, it became their responsibility to contact the program and ask for deadline extension:

If the semester is too short for the task that has been planned, the consultant and the Honors director should know before the deadline for the submission of completed Honors projects, and a later completion date will be entered on the prospectus. This is the time when a "U" may be granted. However, later requests for the grade of "unfinished" cannot be approved, and the work involved will have to be regarded as unsatisfactory or failing.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Honors UNI, "Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972," (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

⁴⁹ Honors UNI, "Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972," (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

⁵⁰ Honors UNI, "Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972," (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

Once students finished their projects, whether on time or after an extension, they received a grade from their faculty consultant, who then shared their evaluations with the honors office. This process signified the end of the independent study course.

While independent study courses played a key role in UNI's restructured honors program, the program also included several other new features. In addition to changing the program's structure, the Individual Honors Program also changed the requirements for admission into the program. Rather than inviting freshman or sophomore students to join it, the university opened the Individual Honors Program to all undergraduate students, regardless of their grade point average or test scores. "Neither test scores, class rank, nor grade point average is used to screen students," claimed the program's guidelines. "This general lack of entrance requirements places most of the responsibility of the course on the student. By the simple act of enrolling in an independent study course or Honors seminar the student becomes a member of the Honors Student Association and a participant in the program."⁵¹ This change in admission requirements marked the program's transition from the idea of the superior student to the idea that any student could participate in honors work. Although any UNI student could join the program, the university also directed it "toward those students who are self-reliant and who are willing to undertake independent programs of study" due to its focus on independent work.⁵² The program encouraged students who could not handle the responsibility that independent study projects required to focus on regular classroom work. "Students who tend to procrastinate in honors work would benefit from restricting their endeavors to teacher-directed classroom courses which are valuable preparation for independent study," stated the program's guidelines. "Independent study

⁵¹ Honors UNI, "Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972," (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

⁵² Honors UNI, "Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972," (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

is not really an achievement when its results are of poorer quality and of less seriousness than the work of a regular class.”⁵³ These quotes suggest that while the Individual Honors Program accepted all undergraduate students, it also expected those who joined the program to perform at a higher level than other students.

The opening of the Honors Program to all undergraduate students allowed students from a variety of academic backgrounds to engage in honors coursework; however, enrolling in an honors course did not mean that a student graduated with an honors designation. Students who wished to fully participate in the program and graduate with “Individual Honors” submitted an application that included a personal written statement and two faculty recommendations.⁵⁴ The students then completed an interview with both faculty and student members of the Honors Board. After a student became a full participant in the program, the program required them to take an average of three credit hours of honors work each semester and maintain a 3.0 grade point average. The program also allowed students who did not wish to become full participants to enroll in several courses without committing to the program. This structure gave students the opportunity to take the courses that they wanted when and if it was convenient for them.

The opportunities and convenience that the Individual Honors Program provided to students helped it grow rapidly in just a few years. Eight students enrolled in the program during its first semester in the fall of 1970. This number grew to over 100 the following semester, and in the spring of 1973, 387 students enrolled in honors courses.⁵⁵ The spring semester of 1972

⁵³ Honors UNI, “Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972,” (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

⁵⁴ Honors UNI, “Guidelines for Individual Honors Study, Fall 1972,” (University of Northern Iowa, 1972).

⁵⁵ Honors Board, “Report of the Honors Board to the University Faculty Senate,” (University of Northern Iowa, May 1, 1973), Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

marked the largest enrollment during this period, as 580 students took part in the program and a special topic seminar that it offered which had unlimited enrollment.⁵⁶ The growing number of students that joined the program included undergraduate students of several class standings, as well as a small number of graduate students (Figure 1). The program's growth suggests that the opportunities it provided interested students in various stages of their academic careers and that students from a variety of academic backgrounds had joined the program, which also suggests that the program had grown more diverse.

As the Individual Honors Program grew in size during its first few years, it also began representing a diverse range of subjects and disciplines. Between 1972 and 1973, eleven students with majors such as Art, Biology, English and Business Management graduated with Individual Honors designations.⁵⁷ The faculty consultants that students enrolled in independent study courses chose also reflected the program's increased diversity. In the Fall of 1972 alone, 64 members of UNI's faculty from more than 20 different departments and one off-campus community member served as faculty consultants.⁵⁸ The self-forming seminars that many students participated in during this time also covered a variety of topics, which further supports the idea that the program had become more diverse (Figure 2). As the program continued growing in both size and diversity, the Honors Board committed itself to adapting along with the needs and desires of both students and faculty. One of the ways that the program reflected this commitment was in its choice of directors.

⁵⁶ Honors Board, "Report of the Honors Board to the University Faculty Senate," (University of Northern Iowa, May 1, 1973).

⁵⁷ Honors Board, "Report of the Honors Board to the University Faculty Senate," (University of Northern Iowa, May 1, 1973).

⁵⁸ Edward Amend, letter to the University of Northern Iowa faculty, October 18, 1972.

During its first few years, two different men directed the Individual Honors Program: Dr. Richard Brook and Dr. Edward Amend. Dr. Brook, a professor of English, served as the program's first director when it began in 1970. During his time as director, Brook encouraged any students who wished to complete an independent study course to explore the program in a newspaper column he wrote entitled "The Plastic Iceberg."⁵⁹ While Brook's tenure as the honors director did not last long, his column reflected his dedication to meeting the needs and desires of students. In 1971, Dr. Edward Amend, a professor of Philosophy and Religion, replaced Brook as the program's director. Like his predecessor, Amend believed that the program's success depended on the students themselves. "The continued progress of the honors program," he claimed, "depends a lot on the suggestions and interest of students."⁶⁰ Amend's belief in the importance of students' interest reflected the program's ideals of providing students with the freedom to pursue their own personal and academic interests. Following these ideals, Amend and the Honors Board made yet another change to the program.

In 1973, Amend and the Honors Board recommended changing the program's name from the Individual Honors Program to the Individual Studies Program. The Board recommended this change because it felt that the new title helped clarify the program's role and that it would help attract students who did not know about the opportunities the program provided. "The Honors Board continues to hear from students that they wish they had known about Honors opportunities earlier," claimed the Board, "and it is a difficult task to inform present and prospective students

⁵⁹ Richard Brook, "Plastic Iceberg Revisited: Questions and Answers About the Individual Honors Program," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), September 25, 1970, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁶⁰ Cindi Haring, "Communes, Drugs & the Ghetto Explored in New Honors Seminars," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), November 19, 1971, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

about individual study opportunities. Hopefully, dropping the word ‘Honors’ from the title will be a step in overcoming some of the confusion about entry into the program.”⁶¹ The name change, which the university quickly approved, marked the end of the honors program at UNI.

The Honors Program’s transition to the Individual Honors Program and later the Individual Studies Program reflected not only changing attitudes about the program at UNI but also discussions that took place across the nation. By the late 1960s, universities across the country had begun addressing the relationship between race and education. In 1969, the United States Department of Health, Education and Welfare began encouraging schools and colleges across the country to adhere to the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and replace their old systems of desegregation.⁶² As universities worked on increasing their representation of students from minority groups, the necessity of honors programs came into question. Some students believed that these programs and their admission requirements excluded minority students and those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.⁶³ While there is no evidence that UNI’s Honors Program encountered these criticisms, its evolution and removal of admission requirements such as ACT scores suggest that the university was aware of these discussions and wanted to provide all students equal opportunities to participate in the program.

Although the creation of the Individual Studies Program marked the end of UNI’s Honors Program, it did not put an end to the honors idea at UNI. In 1985, the university began creating a new honors program. A year before, the university’s president, Constantine Curriss, appointed a

⁶¹ Honors Board, “Report of the Honors Board to the University Faculty Senate,” (University of Northern Iowa, May 1, 1973).

⁶² Leas and Stefkovich, “A Legal History of Desegregation in Higher Education,” 411.

⁶³ C. H. Ruedisili, “The Student Revolt and the Honors Program,” *Journal of Higher Education* 41, no. 4 (April 1970): 286.

committee to investigate honors programs at different universities and design a program for UNI. After studying the honors programs at 50 different institutions, the committee submitted a report that outlined a list of six objectives for the proposed program (Figure 3). These proposed objectives reflected some of the aspects of the institution's first honors program, such as exploring the interconnectedness of different subjects. One of the significant features that the proposed program revived was a set of admission requirements that included Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) scores.⁶⁴ The university also proposed awarding 15 Presidential Scholarships and 15 merit scholarships to incoming freshmen students who graduated in the top ten percent of their high school class, and who maintained a certain grade point average during their college years.⁶⁵ The proposed revival of these academic requirements suggests that the university wished to create a program designed for academically superior students that mirrored the programs that groups such as the ICSS advocated for in the 1950s and 1960s. While the proposed program reflected some aspects of the university's original honors program, it also included a feature that the previous program did not, social interaction. The university's inclusion of this feature in its objectives suggests that it wanted honors students to engage with each other outside of class, possibly to learn more about other cultures, beliefs or viewpoints. This feature also suggests that the university incorporated both old and new ideas into its plan for the program.

The university slated its new honors program to begin in the fall of 1986. The available resources in Rod Library's Archives and Special Collections do not contain any information about this program or how long it lasted; however, the university created another honors program

⁶⁴ "Honors Encourages Excellence," *Northern Iowa Today* (University of Northern Iowa), March 1, 1985.

⁶⁵ James Welch, "New Honors Program," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), October 25, 1985, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

in the early twenty-first century, which suggests that this program did not last long. While the exact reasons for this program's short-lived nature are unknown, it is possible that it did not last long due to national attitudes toward such programs. During the 1980s, honors programs continued receiving criticism for their misrepresentation of minority groups, particularly women. Some women believed that the "elitist" nature of honors programs and their entrance requirements not only excluded minority students but also encouraged white male supremacy.⁶⁶ The short-lived nature of the proposed honors program at UNI suggests that the university faced these or similar criticisms and that it remained committed to providing equal opportunities to all students. Whether because of national attitudes or some other reason, the lack of success that the university encountered with this program helped prevent it from reexamining the honors idea until the end of the century.

The Current UNI Honors Program

As the start of a new millennium approached, the university started to reexamine the idea of a university-wide honors program. One of the factors that inspired the university to discuss such a program was the creation of an honors program in the university's College of Social and Behavioral Sciences in 1998. This program grew from 20 students to close to 70 in less than two years, and its success led the deans of other colleges to discuss creating similar programs.⁶⁷ A growing amount of student interest also inspired the university to examine the idea of an honors program. According to Jay Lees, an associate professor of history, the lack of an honors program had led many students to decide not to attend the university. "Time and again," claimed Lees,

⁶⁶ Jean Owens Schaefer and Madonna Miner, "Honors and Women's Studies: Two Perspectives on the Interactions," *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 8, no. 3 (1986): 103.

⁶⁷ Andrew Wind, "Honors Program in the Works at UNI," *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, April 25, 2000, Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

“we’ve heard that students don’t come to UNI because there is no honors program.”⁶⁸ Taking note of the interest in such programs, university officials formed a committee to examine the issue and plan a university-wide honors program in 1999. Over the next year, the committee, chaired by Jay Lees, worked on creating a program that fit the university’s needs.

After working to design a program that met the university's needs, the honors committee brought their plan to the Faculty Senate in early 2000. The committee proposed a program that included a mixture of honors general education courses, seminars, thesis and project research, and independent study.⁶⁹ The committee also proposed opening the program to first-year students with an ACT score of 27 or higher, a high school grade point average of 3.65, or who graduated in the top 20 percent of their class, as well as other UNI students who had a 3.3 grade point average or higher.⁷⁰ The Faculty Senate approved the proposed program in April 2000, and the Iowa Board of Regents followed suit in the following month.⁷¹ After approving the program’s creation, the university slated it to begin in the fall of 2001. This decision gave the university just over a year to prepare the Honors Program for operation.

One of the important steps that the university took as it prepared the Honors Program for operation was hiring a program director. To fill this position, the university chose Dr. Harry Brod, a professor of philosophy and humanities. Jay Lees, who led the committee that chose Brod, believed that Brod displayed the ability to work with different people and lead such a

⁶⁸ Wind, “Honors Program in the Works at UNI,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, April 25, 2000.

⁶⁹ Wind, “Honors Program in the Works at UNI,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, April 25, 2000.

⁷⁰ Wind, “Honors Program in the Works at UNI,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, April 25, 2000.

⁷¹ Wind, “Honors Program in the Works at UNI,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, April 25, 2000; Office of Public Relations, “Gift to UNI Promises Foundation for New Honors Program,” (news release, University of Northern Iowa, 2000), University of Northern Iowa News Releases Collection #06/03/01, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

program. “He's quite sensitive to different ideas and attitudes,” claimed Lees. “He just works well with people.”⁷² UNI’s Provost, Aaron Podolefsky, also believed Brod made a good choice for the position. “There is no doubt that he has the ability to bring others along,” Podolefsky claimed, “as he engages in the most interesting analysis and synthesis of everyday events.”⁷³ After receiving support from individuals such as Lees and Podolefsky and accepting the responsibilities of his new position, Brod began sharing his thoughts on the program and outlining its structure.

In the months leading up to its first semester, Harry Brod often promoted the Honors Program and its structure. According to Brod, the planned program both challenged students and provided them with opportunities to engage with faculty and each other. “It [the honors program] gives people opportunities to reach for their best in an environment that’s both supporting and challenging,” claimed Brod.⁷⁴ “We’re going to bring students together,” he continued, “in a way that connects them to other students and faculty in a more personalized way.”⁷⁵ As Brod promoted the program, he also shared some details about its goals and structure. “The program’s goals are to enhance its students’ college experience...,” he claimed, “through classes which are smaller and more participatory, extra-curricular activities, and close work with faculty.”⁷⁶ In

⁷² Kate Melloy, “Harry Brod Named Head of University Honors Program,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), January 19, 2001, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁷³ Kate Melloy, “Harry Brod Named Head of University Honors Program,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), January 19, 2001.

⁷⁴ Melloy, “Harry Brod Named Head of University Honors Program,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), January 19, 2001.

⁷⁵ Melloy, “Harry Brod Named Head of University Honors Program,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), January 19, 2001.

⁷⁶ Koppes, “New Honors Program to Begin Fall Semester,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), April 27, 2001.

addition to sharing the program's goals, Brod also declared that the program planned on only including first-year students during its first year of operation. "Next year is our first, pilot year," he stated, "so we will be working only with a small number of first-year students."⁷⁷ Brod was not the only promoter of the new program. During this same period, it received various forms of support from different sources, each of which helped increase the university community's awareness about the program.

As the Honors Program prepared for its first semester, it received support from within and outside of the university. One of the forms of support that the program received was financial support. In October 2000, the university received a \$200,000 gift from the estate of Nadyne Harris, a resident of Centerville, Iowa, who made financial contributions to each of Iowa's Regent universities.⁷⁸ The university allocated this gift to a scholarship fund for students who joined the Honors Program. The university also provided the program with \$5,000 to cover the costs of equipment, as well as funds to pay for the program's director and support staff.⁷⁹ These decisions suggest that the university wished to aid the new program and the students who joined it with financial support. They also suggest that the university had committed itself to the program's success.

In addition to financial aid, the Honors Program also received a large amount of verbal praise. Randy Rumery, the director of gift planning for the UNI Foundation, stated that the program benefited both the university and the state. "This program will attract and retain

⁷⁷ Koppes, "New Honors Program to Begin Fall Semester," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), April 27, 2001.

⁷⁸ Office of Public Relations, "Gift to UNI Promises Foundation for New Honors Program," (news release, University of Northern Iowa, 2000).

⁷⁹ Wind, "Honors Program in the Works at UNI," *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, April 25, 2000.

exceptional students to the university,” he claimed. “The state of Iowa will benefit from UNI committing itself to a program mean to assist our best students in achieving their goals.”⁸⁰ The *Northern Iowan*, UNI’s student newspaper, also spoke positively about the program and the opportunities it provided. “Those admitted to this selective program can anticipate a variety of interesting opportunities not to be found anywhere else on campus,” claimed one *Northern Iowan* article.⁸¹ “Though UNI’s Honors Program is clearly an endeavor primarily geared toward the academic aspects of college,” the article continued, “it also provides a unique out-of-class experience as well.”⁸² The positive comments that the Honors Program received in the year leading up to its first semester suggest that this type of program excited the university community. These comments also reflected the community’s expectations for the program. As the program entered the final stages of preparation, these expectations provided it even more goals to meet.

After many months of preparation, the Honors Program began operating in the fall of 2001. The new program’s structure included several key features, each of which allowed students to engage in honors work in different ways. One way that students engaged in honors work was through special honors sections of general education courses. The Honors Program designed these sections specifically for honors students and limited the class size for each to 20

⁸⁰ Office of Public Relations, “Gift to UNI Promises Foundation for New Honors Program,” (news release, University of Northern Iowa, 2000).

⁸¹ Kevin Koppes, “New Honors Program to Begin Fall Semester,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), April 27, 2001, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁸² Koppes, “New Honors Program to Begin Fall Semester,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), April 27, 2001.

students to encourage discussion and class participation.⁸³ Honors students also participated in special seminars that the program developed. These seminars covered a variety of topics, including “Family Relationships in Contemporary Films,” Cryptology: An Introduction to Secret Codes,” and “Ethics in Biology.”⁸⁴ The final feature of the program’s structure was the Honors Thesis, which students typically completed during their senior year. Once a student finished their senior thesis, they could graduate with either a University Honors or University Honors with Distinction designation, depending on the number of honors credits they took during their college career.

In addition to providing students with opportunities to grow academically, the Honors Program also provided them with opportunities to engage with each other socially as well. The program held several events throughout the year designed to help honors students connect with each other and the world around them. These events included hayrides, movie nights, and theater events at the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center located on campus.⁸⁵ The program also offered social events designed to enhance students’ academic and cultural experience, such as field trips, guest speakers, and “Pizza with a Prof.”⁸⁶ Many honors students enjoyed the social interaction that the program provided through these events and its small size. Matt Musgrave, a chemistry major and honors student from Webster City, Iowa, made comments that reflected this

⁸³ “Head of the Class: UNI Honors Program Challenges Students,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, March 24, 2002, Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁸⁴ “Head of the Class: UNI Honors Program Challenges Students,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, March 24, 2002.

⁸⁵ “Head of the Class: UNI Honors Program Challenges Students,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, March 24, 2002.

⁸⁶ Koppes, “New Honors Program to Begin Fall Semester,” *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), April 27, 2001; “Head of the Class: UNI Honors Program Challenges Students,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, March 24, 2002.

idea. “Not only do I love the smaller class sizes and increased interaction with my honors professors,” claimed Musgrave, “but the fact that we are such a small group means that I have friends in my classes. I get a chance to socialize with my honors friends outside of class, eating lunch and just relaxing with a great group of people. It’s a blast.”⁸⁷ Musgrave’s statements suggest that students enjoyed the social aspects of the Honors Program and that the program was meeting its goal of enhancing students’ college experience. In addition to providing students with opportunities to engage socially, the program’s social events also reflected the program that the university proposed in the 1980s, which encouraged social interactions between honors students.

The program’s use of social events suggests that the university had looked to the past when it created the program. In addition to these events, the program also incorporated several other ideas and features from previous programs into its structure, which further supports this idea. These features included the program’s admission requirements, the honors sections of general education classes, and its use of small class sizes. Each of these features reflected those found in the university’s first honors program, which followed the ICSS honors program model. The program’s use of test scores and class rank also suggest that the idea of the academically superior student continued to influence honors programs at UNI, and possibly the rest of the country. During the following years, the program made a few small changes to its structure; however, it continued to include the features that connected it with its predecessors.

After establishing its structure, the Honors Program focused on expanding itself to engage more students. The program began its expansion by allowing sophomore students to join in 2002. This expansion reflected the university’s original plan for the program, which allowed

⁸⁷ “Head of the Class: UNI Honors Program Challenges Students,” *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, March 24, 2002.

UNI students with a 3.3 GPA to join the program, and, according to the program's assistant coordinator, Jessica Moon, the program had planned on taking this step since its beginning.⁸⁸ "It's always been something we have planned to do," claimed Moon. "We have always wanted an entry point for current students."⁸⁹ The program's expansion did not remove its requirements for admission or its expectations for students work; however, it provided students who possibly did not know about the program or who did not meet its requirements before their freshman year with an opportunity to see what the program had to offer.

In addition to expanding itself to sophomore students, the Honors Program also recruited larger numbers of incoming freshman students during the following years. While the program's records do not list the genders or ethnicities of the students who joined the program, the popular cultural identification of the names they list suggest that the program recruited more cisgender women than men (Figure 4). The program's inclusion of students of different sexes suggests that it wanted to engage not only a larger number of students through its expansion but also students from a variety of backgrounds. While the program's expansion helped it grow in both size and diversity, the program experienced a series of events during the next few years that changed it significantly.

One of the significant changes that the Honors Program went through during its first few years was a change in leadership. Due to budget cuts, the university removed Harry Brod from his position as the program's director in 2003. Jessica Moon, a graduate student and the program's assistant coordinator, replaced Brod as the program's director after his removal.

⁸⁸ Office of Public Relations, "Gift to UNI Promises Foundation for New Honors Program," (news release, University of Northern Iowa, 2000); Wind, "Honors Program in the Works at UNI," *Waterloo-Cedar Falls Courier*, April 25, 2000.

⁸⁹ Katie Hammitt, "Program Expands Borders to Sophomores," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), October 15, 2002, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Before she became the program's director, Moon created the Honors Student Advisory Board (HSAB), which provided students with an opportunity to help the program plan events and programs for students. Some honors students believed that creating the HSAB had helped Moon prove her leadership abilities. "Jessica has proven to be a great leader for our program," claimed one honors student. "The HSAB was her baby, and it's become a great way for students to be active in the program."⁹⁰ Over the next few years, Moon's leadership abilities and her previous experiences with the program helped her create and work on a series of goals for the program.

After becoming the director of the Honors Program and accepting the responsibilities that came along with the position, Moon created a list of goals that she had for the program. One of the first goals that Moon worked on was strengthening the connection between the program and the university's faculty. "The connection with faculty is something we'll have to be careful not to lose," she claimed. "I feel that will be a big responsibility for me in the next few years."⁹¹ In order to strengthen this connection, Moon expanded the responsibilities of the Honors Faculty Advisory Board, a small group of faculty members who helped guide the program. Another goal that Moon worked towards was providing students opportunities to participate in events such as the National Honors Convention held in Chicago, Illinois.⁹² Events like this one allowed honors students to share their work and connect with honors students from different universities, which connected to the program's goals of engaging students both academically and socially. In the

⁹⁰ Heidi Weiskircher, "Honors Program Loses Faculty Advisor to Budget Cuts," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), October 15, 2002, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁹¹ Weiskircher, "Honors Program Loses Faculty Advisor to Budget Cuts," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), October 15, 2002.

⁹² Weiskircher, "Honors Program Loses Faculty Advisor to Budget Cuts," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), October 15, 2002.

years that followed, the goal of engaging students both academically and socially remained one of Moon's, and the program's, top priorities.

In 2004, the Honors Program went through another significant change. As the university prepared for the fall semester, it gave the program control of the Presidential and Provost scholarship programs. These scholarships were the same ones that the university created for its proposed honors program in the 1980s, and this decision marked their return to the program. According to Jessica Moon, giving the Honors Program control of these scholarships allowed the program to help the university recruit more potential students as it recruited potential students. "This [giving the honors program control of the scholarships]," she claimed, "puts the university's efforts to recruit high ability students into one office."⁹³ After taking responsibility of the scholarships, the Honors Program awarded 20 Presidential and 30 Provost scholarships each year to students with an ACT score of 29 or higher and who graduated in the top ten percent of their high school class.⁹⁴ While the number of scholarships that the program awarded did not change during the following years, the number of students who joined the program did. While it is unclear whether the scholarships helped the program's growth, their addition to the program's structure marked the last major change that the program went through during its first few years.

After it added the Presidential and Provost Scholarships to its structure, UNI's Honors Program followed a similar routine each year, and by 2009, the program had essentially finished changing its structure. At this time, the program included several of the features that it had when it started, including honors sections of general education courses, special honors seminars, and

⁹³ Heidi Weiskircher, "Presidential, Provost Scholarship Programs Undergo Changes," *Northern Iowan* (University of Northern Iowa), August 31, 2004, *The Northern Iowan* Collection, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

⁹⁴ Office of Public Relations, "UNI Honors Program Invites High School Seniors to Enroll," (news release, University of Northern Iowa, 2004), University of Northern Iowa News Releases Collection #06/03/01, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

the senior thesis. The program also continued providing students opportunities to engage socially through small class sizes and events such as field trips and picnics. The Honors Student Advisory Board also continued providing students the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas, which helped the program stay flexible and open to change. Although the program remained open to change, its continued use of so many of its key features suggests that it had found a system that worked for both students and faculty. The program's continued use these features also suggests that after so many years, the university had finally achieved its goal of creating a program that met both its needs and the needs of its students.

Conclusion

As the evidence has shown, the Honors Program at the University of Northern Iowa began as a reflection of national ideas about how such programs should be modeled, and during the next 50 years the program underwent several changes that not only reflected changes in the university but also changes happening across the country. The first honors program that the Iowa State Teachers College created reflected popular ideas about providing opportunities to academically superior students. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the University of Northern Iowa moved away from these ideas and opened the Honors Program to all of its students, regardless of their academic backgrounds. While the new Individual Honors Program deviated from the previously accepted honors models, the university's continued use of this program, which later became the Individual Studies Program, reflected not only the program's popularity with students but also discussions about race and gender that occurred across the country during the 1970s and 1980s. When the university created the current Honors Program at the turn of the century, it revived several of the features that the previous programs used, including seminars, small class sizes, and academic-based entrance requirements. These features not only reflected

the influence of the trends and factors that had influenced the program's predecessors but also the university's shifting needs and its continued desire to provide opportunities to students from different backgrounds. While it underwent a few significant changes during its first few years, the UNI Honors Program continued using many of these features in 2009 and beyond. Although it is unknown at this time, the history of UNI's Honors Program and its connections to various national trends in higher education suggest that the program will continue evolving and reflecting new trends as time goes on.

Through its examination of the sources found in Rod Library's Archives and Special Collections, this study has constructed a history of the Honors Program at the University of Northern Iowa. This history, however, is not yet complete. This study merely serves as a foundation on which future research on the program, its place in the university, and its connections to similar programs at other universities can rely. Despite this study's scope and its reliance on sources from a single archive, it has examined a piece of history that was previously unexplored. In doing so, this study uncovered numerous connections between the UNI Honors Program and topics discussed in previous historical studies. These connections make this study not only an important part of the historiography of the University of Northern Iowa but also of honors programs and higher education in the United States.

Appendix

Figure 1. Number of Students in the Honors Program by Semester and Classification, 1970-1973.

	Special	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior	Graduate	Total
Fall 1970			5	1	2		8
Spring 1971	1	11	48	40	17	2	119
Summer 1971	1		4	7	4		16
Fall 1971	2	25	40	52	31	2	152
Spring 1972	6	131	185	145	102	7	576
Summer 1972		2	8	9	15	1	35
Fall 1972	1	183	156	143	72	9	564
Spring 1973	4	45	66	113	157	2	387

Source: Honors Board, "Report of the Honors Board to the University Faculty Senate," (University of Northern Iowa, May 1, 1973), Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

* Note: The totals listed in each semester are the sum of the numbers provided in each category.

Figure 2: Selective List of Honors Seminar: Self-Forming, 1971-1973

<u>Seminar</u>	<u>Semester</u>	<u>Number of Students</u>
The Effect of Hormones on Plant Growth	Spring 1971	3
Production of the rock opera 'Jesus Christ Superstar'	Spring 1971	1
Student Government & Leadership	Spring 1971	5
Rhymes for the Times	Spring 1971	1
Study of Australia	Summer 1971	2
Residence Hall Counselling	Fall 1971	11
Exploring the Para-normal	Fall 1971	2
Colorado Ski Area Development	Spring 1972	4
Study of the Para-normal	Spring 1972	9
Women's Studies	Spring 1972	7
Placement and Research in Alternative Education	Spring 1972	4
Song Writing	Spring 1972	2
Short Stories in Dramatic Form	Fall 1972	22
Crates of Frogs	Spring 1973	2
Analysis and Development of Simulations Regarding the Origins of World War II in Europe	Spring 1973	6
Has She Changed?	Spring 1973	4
High School Student's Opinions of U.S. Involvement in the UN	Spring 1973	2
Self-expression through the Mixed-media	Spring 1973	3
Rock Choir	Spring 1973	3

Source: Honors Board, "Report of the Honors Board to the University Faculty Senate," (University of Northern Iowa, May 1, 1973), Honors Program Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Figure 3: Proposed Objectives for the New UNI Honors Program, 1985.

1. To attract and select students of exceptional potential who demonstrate qualities of curiosity, creativity self-motivation and emotional maturity, and to provide them with exceptional opportunities to enhance and accelerate their educational growth.
2. To provide an opportunity for students and faculty to work together as teaching, learning and research partners within a flexible framework of scheduling and programming.
3. To provide Honors students the opportunity to interact, both academically and socially, that they may mutually reinforce and share their common goals.
4. To encourage meaningful experimentation which can later be adapted to the needs of the more traditional programs within the institution.
5. To promote inter-disciplinary tracks to foster student awareness of the interconnectedness of various modes of thinking and behavior and to nurture a sensitivity of the wholesome variety of human endeavor as well as to the common bonds of human consciousness.
6. To give to the entire campus a feeling of freshness of ideas and methods that will do much to counteract the present feeling of an educational lock-step, even for those students and faculty not directly involved in the Honors Program.

Source: "Honors Encourages Excellence," *Northern Iowa Today* (University of Northern Iowa), March 1, 1985, Special Collections and University Archives, Rod Library, University of Northern Iowa, Cedar Falls, Iowa.

Figure 4: Number of Freshman Students and Provost Scholars Enrolled in the Honors Program by Year and Biological Sex

Year	Female Students	Male Students	Total
2002	54	26	80
2005*	66	25	91
2006**	19	11	30
2007	94	41	135

Note: The delineation of male and female is based on the cultural construction of the names listed. For example, Mary is categorized as female and Robert is categorized as male.

*: The numbers for this year do not include freshman students who received Presidential Scholarships.

** : The numbers for this year represent the freshman Provost Scholars for 2006.

Sources:

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