

# Proposal to Institutionalize a Viable *Two-Year* Honors Program at NTCC

**Memo to:** President’s Cabinet: Vice President Ron Clinton, Vice President Jon McCullough, Executive Assistant to the President, Pat Tallant, Vice President Beth Thompson, Vice President Judy Traylor, and President Brad Johnson.

**From:** The NTCC Honors Committee: Joy Cooper--*Assistant Professor of Management*, Stephen Graham—*Presidential Scholar and Honors Student Council President*, Robert Fenton--*Associate Professor of Biology*, David Rangel--*Instructor of Mathematics*, and Dr. Andrew Yox--Honors Director and Professor of History.

**Date:** 24 March 2010

**Subject:** Providing exemplary learning opportunities for a new subset of freshmen, and for our best sophomores.

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**Background:** In the spring of 2007, the NTCC Board of Trustees accepted the NTCC Honors Program as initiated and proposed by the Honors Committee. At that time, the ideas of the interdisciplinary honors seminars and of codes of honor for high-achieving students were novel and untested. The Honors Committee at that time proposed a two-year program, but it was one which had considerable latitude for what courses sophomores could take in their second year. The thinking was that we needed to see how the Honors Program and the seminars would fare, before charting a stricter second-year course.

Last spring during the retreat of the honors professors,<sup>1</sup> Dr. Clay developed a suggestion for the Honors Program that was based on a strong consensus of concerns, and ideas among the others present. This suggestion was to extend the honors seminar experience into the sophomore year. Dr. Archer also developed

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<sup>1</sup> Present at that meeting: Vice President for Instruction Ron Clinton, Dr. Jim Archer, Dr. Shirley Clay, Dr. Mary Harron, Dr. Paula Wilhite, and Dr. Andrew Yox.

an idea for a capstone course that could be based on honors reading list, with the books introduced to our honors students as they entered the program, and then used as a common store of ideas to unite our honors experience at the end.

**Whereas:** the seminar experience has worked to promote the mission statement of the Honors Program as accepted by the NTCC Trustees, to “develop original ideas and successful projects,” winning national, regional, and state awards.<sup>2</sup>

**Whereas:** our honors freshmen, taking the seminars together, have had more sense of group élan, and have been winning more awards and honors than the sophomores<sup>3</sup> who currently scatter, and lack a honors seminar to unite them:

**Whereas:** the acceptance of more incoming honors students under the “Honors Scholar” category could be relatively inexpensive, and could heighten the competitive experience and social opportunities of the students in the program:

**Whereas:** there is a possibility to reach out to a less spectacular subset of students, many of whom are immigrants, or children of immigrants, who could use honors as a kind of turning point (this would not mean dropping standards, but simply accepting about seven more students which we believe would be feasible):

**Whereas:** the spring honors Statistics/Psychology seminar, after the attrition of the fall has been on the edge in terms of enrollment, and could benefit from an infusion of the successful first-year honors scholars from the Humanities/Music seminar:

**Whereas:** the tier of entering honors scholars taking the route of the Humanities/Music seminar could still work their way up to Presidential Scholar, and still receive the requisite amount of honors credits to graduate as such:

**Whereas:** NTCC exists to provide exemplary learning opportunities:

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<sup>2</sup> NTCC Honors to date has won a Coca Cola Gold Scholars Award on the national level, five Boe regional awards, four state Caldwell awards, and has gained three berths at the National Collegiate Honors Conference. All of these student achievements have come from work performed in the interdisciplinary seminars.

<sup>3</sup> NTCC Honors Sophomores have presented at national conferences, but their work was performed and accepted for this honor during their freshmen years. Thus far, two sophomores have won the Boe award compared to three freshmen. All four Caldwell award winners have been freshmen.

**Therefore the Honors Committee has unanimously proposed the following:**

1. That the fall sophomore honors experience include an interdisciplinary seminar of Humanities (Huma 1302) taught by Dr. Melissa Weinbrenner, and Music Appreciation (Musi 1306) taught by Andrew Daniel.<sup>4</sup> Enrollment would be capped at 15, and NTCC Honors would increase the number of honors scholarships to fill this class. In other words, this new exemplary learning opportunity would be experienced by returning sophomores and the overflow of incoming honors scholars.
2. That the spring sophomore honors experience include a three-credit capstone course, English 2342.22, "Forms of Literature," that would be taught by honors professor, Mindy Nobles. This course would include the list of au-courant classics designed by Dr. Archer,<sup>5</sup> designed to challenge our students to reassess the opportunities and possibilities of their future. To maintain enrollment, English 2342 would appear as a linked class, open to non-honors students.
3. That the college increase the honors budget to create this viable two-year program. This budget increase would be based on our experience after three years of: honors-student attrition rates, the need to satisfy pell recipients by other means, and the possibility of capitalizing still more on the flexible budget structure created with the cabinet's oversight last year.

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<sup>4</sup> The plurality of honors students though the three years have been Bio-Med majors. Humanities and Music Appreciation would satisfy sophomore-year requirements in this area for Humanities and Performing Arts electives. This would satisfy core-requirements in many other fields of study as well.

<sup>5</sup> The Honors Book List at this time includes: Barry, John M. *The Great Influenza*. Diamond, Jared, *Collapse*. A great society that failed, Diamond, Jared, *Guns, Gems and Steel*, Friedman, Thomas L. *Hot, Flat, and Crowded*, Gladwell, Malcolm, *Blink*. On why we do what we do, Isaacson, Walter, *Einstein*. Kluger, Jeffrey *Splendid Solution*. History of the Polio Vaccine, Kolbert, Elizabeth, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe*, Mortenson, Greg, and Relin, Oliver, *Three Cups of Tea*. Story of how one person changed the world, Obama, Barack, *Dreams from My Father*, Pausch, Randy, and Zaslow, Jeffrey, *The Last Lecture*, Philbrick, Nathaniel, *Mayflower*, \* Zakaria, Fareed, *The Post-American World*.

Conclusion: Proposed Budget Increases

- A. One-time start-up cost: **\$1,200**  
\$400 stipends for each new course-start up  
2 for the seminar, and capstone provided for  
the three honors professors.
- B. Continuous Yearly Expenses:
1. For six-seven new honors scholarships **\$7,000 First Year**  
(We set aside \$1k apiece, initially.(Fall \$350— **\$8,200 Subsequently**  
Spring \$650) 2-3 will drop after first semester, and  
half after one year. 1 will be promoted to  
Presidential Scholar after a semester, and continue on.  
In the second year there therefore could be 1-2 fairly substantial new  
Scholarships from this group in second year, but we are targeting students  
who we think will get a good amount of pell. We also, with more students, could  
sharpen the competition on promotions.
  2. Increased Program Costs to cover more **\$1,000**  
Honors Students per year.
  3. Summer Stipend for Honors Director<sup>6</sup> **\$1,500**
  4. Stipend to recognize year-round selection **\$300**  
work of three faculty members in the honors  
Committee (\$100 apiece)<sup>7</sup>
  5. Pay for Adjuncts to cover the extra classes **\$3,000**  
That Dr. Weinbrenner and Mr. Daniels would not  
Be able to teach. Ms. Nobles would not be participating  
In another class

**Yearly Increase in Honors Budget \$14,000<sup>8</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> The Honors Director already is working during the summer without pay. With seven more students to meet, socialize, advise and often help register, the stipend at least would recognize this extra work.

<sup>7</sup> This again is really just to recognize the valuable year-round consulting and evaluative work performed by members of this special committee. It does not reflect all of the extra work and responsibility involved.

<sup>8</sup> The initial outlay for start-up course stipends would end after the first year, but there would be additional costs to cover scholarships for an anticipated greater number of sophomore honors students. So there should be no substantial change in the need from the first to the second year and beyond.

