

Career Trajectory Paper

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My higher education career aspirations are inspired by both my own undergraduate experiences and my professional experiences so far. The Honors Program at Jacksonville University was my first college home. I love working with Honors students, both as a fellow student and as a staff member. At Barry University, I worked with the Honors Program to recruit highly qualified honors students. After much consideration, I would love to pursue working with Honors Students. Luckily, the field of Honors Colleges is growing. Honors Colleges within state universities are expanding quickly. They offer the experience of a small, liberal arts college at the price of a subsidized state college (Jaschik, 2014).

Critical Points

As an undergraduate student, I was involved in everything I could handle. I was a sister of Alpha Epsilon Phi, an admissions ambassador, a member of a dozen different clubs, on the leadership team of a few of them, and active in the leadership as well as a member of the Honors Program. Of all the organizations I was involved in, I was significantly enamored with the Honors Program. I first attended their orientation as a freshman. It was dull and not well attended. It was very clear to me that the program was struggling.

Over the following years, my involvement in the program and the orientation increased. I worked one-on-one with the program coordinator and the director and they have continued to provide guidance. I enjoyed creating a completely new program with the help of faculty, staff, and fellow students and took pride in the result. Witnessing the reactions of the students participating in the new retreat sparked something in me – a desire to work with these honors students on everything. I began working with the Honors Program in other ways. I spearheaded

the student portion of our on-campus honors accepted student day. I also volunteered on the committee that hosted on campus cultural events. Lastly, I was selected to teach the honors section of our First-Year experience course.

I was an admissions ambassador for the university, and upon graduation, I quickly found a position in Undergraduate Admissions. I have stayed in admissions for the past four years because I had experience in admissions. I had originally believed that I wanted to continue my career in admissions working with international students. While I was at my previous institution, I had the opportunity to work with the honors program. This made me realize how much I missed working with honors students. Honors students are unique. As quoted in the Chronicle article, “Honors research track links UNT faculty & students,” Gloria Cox says, “Honors College students are talented, accomplished, and motivated. They are seeking the best academic and intellectual experience” (n.d., para 5). I do enjoy working with prospective students, recruiting and aiding in the decision making process. While working on this assignment, I had a long conversation with the director of the Honors Program at my alma mater. I came to realize that I do not feel professionally satisfied in my current position. I would truly like to return to an Honors College or Program in an administrative capacity.

Long Range Plan

In order to achieve anything, whether it is personal or professional, you must have a plan. Part of this plan is to list detailed goals. In the short term, I will finish my graduate degree, completing my practicum in an Honors College. While still enrolled, I will create more on-campus professional relationships. In the long term, I will gain a position as a staff member in an Honors Program. I will become an assistant director, then a director of an Honors Program.

Short-Term Goals

Working in admissions, most of my daily contacts are with people outside of the university, such as prospective students, high school counselors, career services coordinators at other colleges and transfer coordinators at community colleges. While I am still working on my Masters in Higher Education Administration, I would like to establish further professional contacts on my campus. I am volunteering for staff senate. Additionally, I am joining non-professional groups on campus, including the employee fitness center and a training group for a 5k.

In the last semester of my Masters, I must complete a practicum. I would like to complete my practicum in the Honors College here at my home institution, Kennesaw State University. The Honors College offers programs for college students and dual-enrolled high school juniors and seniors (Kennesaw State University, 2014). I would love to be a part of this organization, working with many talented students. Upon completion of my practicum, I will graduate from Georgia Southern University with my Masters in Education on Higher Education Administration.

Long-Term Goals

In two years, upon graduation, I will attain a staff position in an honors college or program. In five years, I would like to have an assistant director position within an honors college or program. In fifteen years, I would like to be an associate director or director of the graduate college or program. At my alma mater, Jacksonville University, we had a Director and Assistant Director of the Honors Program, and I worked closely with both of them. Ideally, I

would also like to work at a smaller college or university. It would give me an opportunity to work one-on-one with most students in the program.

Mastered Skills and Competencies

Working in admissions, I have already mastered many skills and competencies necessary for the previously described positions. The director of an honors program must facilitate everything in the program including recruitment, orientation, advising and graduation. According to the ACPA, successful advisors facilitate problem solving, establish rapport with students, exhibit active listening skills, and many other related skills (2007). I have already mastered many of these skills. One skill I have honed that will help me achieve my goal of becoming a director of an honors college is my excellent customer service skills. I help students every day to the very best of my ability. Another thing I do well is work in a team. I can maintain relationships with students, program coordinators, and faculty. A third competency I have grasped is my communication skills. This is vital to a position in higher education, but especially in the honors college. I need the ability to counsel both groups of students and individual students (Higher Ed Jobs, 2014a). Lastly, I am creative and flexible. Working well while being regularly interrupted is a skill required for working in an honors college (Higher Ed Jobs, 2014d).

Developing Skills and Competencies

To become an associate director of an honors college, leadership training is required (Higher Ed Jobs, 2014b). At Kennesaw State University, we offer a graduate certificate in Leadership and Ethics. This 12 credit hour program provides exponential leadership opportunities that are invaluable for my future. Using the University System of Georgia's

Tuition Assistance Program, I will enroll in this program after I finish my master's degree.

Additionally, fundraising skills are vital and required when leading an honors program (Higher Ed Jobs, 2014c). It is important for honors colleges and programs to fundraise independently of the university, because it offers the program autonomy and self-reliance (Andrews, 2012).

Professional Development

As a student in the honors program, I belonged to the Florida Collegiate Honors Council. As an aspiring honors college staff member, I believe it will be vital for me to join collegiate honors councils. One of these councils is the National Collegiate Honors Council. The mission of this organization is “to support and enhance the community of educational institutions, professionals, and students who participate in collegiate Honors education around the world” (National Collegiate Honors Council, 2014).

Additionally, I would like to join the Southern Regional Honors Council. Their next conference is March 19th - 21st, 2015 in Greenville, SC. I want to attend to network with staff in Honors Programs and Colleges as well as to attend sessions regarding recruitment, retention, and academic affairs in Honors Programs. This will benefit me professionally by re-exposing me to a community of honors students and professionals. The cost to attend this conference is \$200.

Current Literature

In addition to professional conferences, the National Collegiate Honors Council also produces current honors college literature. They publish bi-annual issues about trends, problems, federal agendas, and concerns in honors higher education (Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council, n.d.). One of the most important issues in honors education, as well as higher

education in general, is funding. The Spring/Summer 2012 issue of the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council addresses many financial issues honors programs suffer from.

Additionally, other higher education websites offer literature about honors education. One of these sites is *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. They include articles from colleges and universities from all over the world. They also offer blogs, advice, forums, and numerical research (Chronicle, 2014). A Second forum used for higher education news is *Inside Higher Ed*. In addition to what *The Chronicle of Higher Education* offers, you can also find surveys and webinars (Inside Higher Ed, 2014).

The ideas listed in these literature pieces are appropriate to honors colleges and programs across the country. These pieces include successful practices, best practices, and new ideas for fundraising, orientations, and program development. The most important thing I can do in a role in an honors program is to avoid stagnancy. The concepts spread through literature spawn new ideas that can earnestly aid the growth of an honors program.

Mentor

When I complete my practicum, I hope to do so with the Kennesaw State University Honors College. The director of the Undergraduate Honors Program is Dr. Liza Davis (Honors College, 2014). I hope to work directly with her during my practicum and establish her as a mentor. Having Dr. Davis as a professional contact will help my upcoming career in the Honors College because she is very knowledgeable about honors education.

My past mentor is the Director of the Honors Program at Jacksonville University. I still keep in touch with her and she is supportive of my decision to begin a career in honors education. She has given me a lot of career advice including how to work with honors students,

how to manage my time, and most importantly how to work with the administration at a university. She currently reports directly to the Vice President of Academic Affairs, and like other universities, she is fighting for funding. Dr. Haavisto has been the Director of the Honors Program for many years and has learned a great deal. Working with Dr. Haavisto has given me insight into the realm of honors education. She gushes about how wonderful honors education is, and she is honest about the challenging aspects of it. I have not yet begun my career in honors education and I already have an invaluable resource in my mentor, Dr. Haavisto.

Collaboration

In any profession, relationships are very important. Collaborating with a team of professionals, inside and outside of the university, provides development opportunities for the students. As the director of the honors program, I will work very closely with faculty in many different departments. One of the most important parts of an honors program is creating a well-rounded student through interdisciplinary studies. I will establish an interdisciplinary, first-year experience program that involves multiple disciplines. For example, I could combine freshman English and basic Chemistry to create a forensic literature course. Students will study crime novels in their English class and try to solve the crimes forensically in their chemistry class. The same students will be enrolled in both courses and can create study groups. Using positive collaborative efforts with the faculty in many disciplines will create a well-rounded honors student.

Additionally, I will work with admissions to recruit high-achieving potential honors students. While honors college personnel have the ability to recruit students, admissions officers are the front line for potential students. I will meet with admissions recruiters once a semester to

discuss developments in the honors program and the best way to identify and recruit honors students. Additionally, I will create an on-campus recruiting event in collaboration with the admissions office. Undergraduate admissions is the gateway to potential students, and collaborating with this office is vital to the success of any organization on campus.

I will also establish collaboration with the career services office on campus. An important part of the honors college experience is an internship. Career services is a source of information regarding internships, resume writing, interview techniques, and other important post-graduation skills. I will work with them to create programs for all honors students, appropriate to their year and progress in school.

Lastly, I will create collaborations with external consultants regarding many important topics to honors students and their future. One program I will conduct every year is a leadership retreat, required for our leadership team. This will be a weekend retreat, off campus with a consultant to teach and build leadership skills for our leadership team. I will also conduct a one-day leadership seminar for all honors students on campus. Another outside consultant I will collaborate with is an etiquette consultant. We will host a dinner with an etiquette consultant to teach honors students how to properly conduct themselves during an interview over a meal. Exposure to outside consultants is important to honors education. This will develop a well-rounded and prepared honors student.

Conclusion

My college experience in an honors program has inspired my dream job of a director of an honors program. Within the next two years, I will complete my practicum in the Honors College at Kennesaw State University and graduate with my master's degree. In five years, I

will establish myself as a prominent player in an honors program and within fifteen will become the Director of an honors program. I already communicate well with students, parents, faculty, and administration. I am creative, flexible, and organized. I have already mastered many skills required of the position, but there are skills I still must learn. I will foster my leadership skills through Kennesaw State University's Siegel Leadership Institute. I will join the SRHC and NCHC to advance my understanding of Honors Programs. I will stay abreast of current literature including the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council, Inside Higher Ed, and The Chronicle of Higher Education. I will establish a mentor relationship with the Director of Undergraduate Honors at KSU and continue to foster my mentor relationship with Dr. Haavisto. I will establish collaborations with departments and professionals inside and outside the university to benefit the honors students. Creating a career plan helps me with my goal of becoming the Director of an Honors Program. I have already achieved much, and am aware of everything I still need to do.

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