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## Chapter 3: The honors college in a two-year college setting: Miami Dade College.(Part II: Alternative Models)

Holloway, Alexandria. "Chapter 3: The honors college in a two-year college setting: Miami Dade College." *The Honors College Phenomenon*. National Collegiate Honors Council, 2008. 45. *Academic OneFile*. Web. 16 Sept. 2010.

Document URL

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### Introduction

Miami Dade College (MDC), like many community colleges, serves a diverse population of students with various needs, skills, and goals. MDC, an urban, multi-campus, non-residential college, is recognized as one of the most outstanding community colleges in the nation. With more than 165,000 students and eight campuses, it is also considered the largest single institution of higher learning in America. The mission of the College is to provide accessible, affordable, high-quality education that keeps the learner's needs at the center of the decision-making process. The College is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) and offers undergraduate study in more than 200 areas and professions. At MDC, student success is a priority.

### History

In 2001, the College President, Dr. Eduardo Padron, proposed a vision initiative that would retool the college's existing honors programs. The purpose of this initiative was to attract academically gifted students who met stringent eligibility requirements comparable to those of Ivy League colleges and who typically pursued education at four-year colleges and universities outside the local community; to provide a focused, nurturing, and challenging academic environment for high-achieving students; and to offer a stimulating alternative for interested faculty. Envisioned as an incubator for greatness, The Honors College in essence, would provide a rigorous and comprehensive curriculum in a supportive environment where goal-oriented, academically gifted students explore new ideas, discuss global and environmental concerns, engage in inspired creativity and intellectual collaborations with experienced faculty members, and participate in study abroad and culturally enriching experiences. As an end result, this new initiative would bring about a perceptual change of the College by students as well as the community at large. A dean was appointed to lead the establishment of The Honors College, and immediately, several committees and academic councils began extensive research and review of best educational practices.

The task was now to set this vision in motion. With consultants from the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), a college-wide faculty Curriculum Committee designed a two-year curriculum for The Honors College that would allow students to engage in challenging, creative, and analytical work. An Admissions Committee determined entry, retention, and graduation requirements for students in The

Honors College. Entry requirements were established: a combined SAT score of at least 1200 (Verbal/Critical Reading and Math) or a composite ACT score of 26, or a grade point average of 3.70 weighted or un-weighted with assessment scores at college-level skills as evidenced by the SAT, ACT or Computerized Placement Test (CPT). At least a 3.5 grade point average and completion of 60 credits with a minimum of 36 credits in honors-designated courses would be required for graduation from The Honors College.

As The Honors College was set to admit its inaugural class in the fall of 2002 and the curriculum was being developed, student recruitment strategies, requests for budgets for scholarship and operational allocations, marketing plans, faculty assignments, and logistics were being implemented simultaneously. To facilitate an aggressive recruitment effort, college recruiters were asked to forward directly to The Honors College the names of any new applicants who met eligibility requirements. Testing officers and college advisors referred potential honors college students to The Honors College. In addition, a list of high school graduating seniors who held a 3.7 grade point average and above was purchased from the College Board. Application packages, including a letter of introduction, the application, and a brochure, were mailed to each potential student. High school counselors from local public and private schools were invited to a luncheon program. There, a detailed description of The Honors College, its curriculum, benefits, personnel, and long-term objectives were introduced. Each counselor received application packages and a promotional item from The Honors College.

To promote the program in the community, The Honors College executed a strong marketing campaign, which included print and media coverage. Other marketing strategies included interviews on various local television and radio programs, newspaper ads, posters, banners, and signs, along with frequent visits to honors and Advanced Placement (AP) classes at feeder high schools.

Finally, faculty were recruited and required to complete an eight-hour Faculty Certification Workshop prior to teaching in The Honors College. The workshop was designed to familiarize faculty with the honors mystique and characteristics of the honors student; to clarify the academic foundations upon which The Honors College was established; to describe and apply characteristics of honors within specific courses; to discuss supplementary strategies and enrichment opportunities to augment learning; to analyze, observe, and articulate student performance; and to build collaborative communities among colleagues to foster scholarly discussions, shared resources, and repositories for faculty enrichment. The workshop, averaging approximately fifty new faculty participants annually, continues to be offered each semester for interested faculty.

The application process was more involved than the standard MDC application. In addition to the MDC application, a separate application to The Honors College, an official high school transcript, three letters of recommendation, and an essay were required. All qualified students were invited to interview before an admissions committee. A team of faculty, staff, and The Honors College directors representing all the MDC campuses completed a series of assessments and interviews that resulted in the selection of the inaugural class of The Honors College. This pilot group was located at the Wolfson Campus and consisted of 75 students, an equal distribution of recent graduates from local public and private high schools and second-year students who were currently enrolled in MDC. Among this inaugural group were international students from Latin America, Europe, Asia, and Africa.

In its second year of operation, The Honors College retained the sophomore students and admitted 75 new freshmen at Wolfson Campus. Seventy-five new freshmen were also admitted at two other campuses, the North Campus and the Kendall Campus. By 2005, The Honors College had a presence on three of Miami Dade College's eight campuses (Wolfson, Kendall, and North) with a total enrollment of

400 students.

The most recent addition to The Honors College was the dual language program in Spanish and English, which was launched on a fourth campus, InterAmerican, in the fall of 2006. Designed in response to industry demands, the dual language program would ensure that students are truly bilingual in their ability to write, read, and speak proficiently in both languages. Each semester, some courses are taught entirely in English and some, entirely in Spanish. Colloquia programs and leadership courses are presented in Spanish. Faculty members who teach in the honors dual language program are required to be proficient in Spanish and use appropriate textbooks and resources.

As exciting as it is to work primarily with The Honors College students, it became obvious that other bright students were, for various reasons, choosing to remain in the regular academic environment. Demands of work and family, an inability to devote the necessary time to the honors community, or other issues placed limitations on some of these students. Therefore, additional honors courses were made available through The Honors College to provide an opportunity for non-honors college students to participate in rigorous coursework and graduate with honors. Interested students must meet eligibility requirements and obtain authorization from the campus honors director or department chair. Similarly, the Honors Option Projects (HOPS), although limited, is an individual contractual agreement between the student and the professor that describes the level of intensive work worthy of honors credit that is to be conducted during the course of the semester. The students must attend all classes and complete the terms of the agreement.

## Structure

The Miami Dade College's Board of Trustees demonstrated its support and enthusiasm by approving the reorganized structure of The Honors College and the appointment of a Dean to oversee and lead the work of the College. An honors director is assigned to each campus and reports directly to the Dean of The Honors College. Each director manages one of the location sites and works collaboratively to ensure college-wide consistency. The directors have responsibility for the academic, student, and administrative affairs on their individual campus and work with the campus leadership teams on their campus to promote student success, visibility, and inclusion in campus programs and activities. Directors communicate with department chairpersons to develop course schedules and to finalize faculty selections for courses. Together, with The Honors College faculty, plans for college-wide initiatives, programs, colloquia speakers, and enrichment opportunities are devised. Independently, directors advise students on academic, career, and transfer options; register students for courses; monitor students' academic eligibility status; and convene honors faculty meetings. In most cases, the directors also serve as co-advisors to the campus chapters of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society and as coordinators of the Honors Recognition Awards Program ceremony for that campus.

Historically, Miami Dade College is organized by disciplines and schools. Each discipline is headed by a discipline convener or school director who reports to one academic dean and, thus, one campus president. Each discipline or school is under the auspices of one campus so that all faculty within specific disciplines, college wide, have input in defining program needs, competencies, and learning outcomes assessment procedures. This structure ensures that students experience consistency in resources and standards. Similarly, The Honors College is housed at the Wolfson Campus and is under the auspices of the Wolfson Campus President. Faculty who teach for The Honors College remain in their primary department and are allowed to select up to one-fifth of their load from The Honors College schedule. They must select honors courses prior to selecting courses in their assigned discipline department. Annually, two faculty members per campus are assigned to serve as Lead Faculty, and they

act as liaisons between faculty and the campus director. They program speakers and presentations for campus colloquia and special events, initiate discussions with students and faculty regarding student performance, listen to student concerns, and chaperone student travel when necessary.

The general education curriculum is offered through a series of linked learning communities. Where applicable, honors college students are grouped into one of three cohort communities that foster collegiality, enhance the scholarly dynamics within the group, and establish a format for effective cooperative learning. Students are required to take six credits in leadership courses: three credits are designed to enhance their leadership qualities, to augment the development of personal skills, and to participate in one or more community service projects; and three credits are to research, review, and complete documents needed for the preparation of transfer applications to baccalaureate-granting institutions.

### Budget

The Honors College has a complex and substantial budget that includes funding designated for student scholarships, operational expenses, and student enrichment. The budget is administered in several different ways. Operational funds are dispensed from institutional funds and are allocated like those to other College departments. The Dean of The Honors College administers the funds and distributes them among the directors of the four campus locations.

The Honors Fellows Award is available to students admitted to The Honors College. This award is one of the College's most prestigious scholarships, covering the full cost of in-state tuition, fees, books, and a stipend. The Fellows Award is renewable for one additional year if The Honors College requirements are met.

### Recruitment

Several recruitment strategies are utilized by The Honors College to attract qualified first-year students. Directors at each campus are assigned to public and private high schools within the feeder pattern from which they recruit students. Directors have established relationships with high school counselors, and they schedule school visits each semester to speak with high school administrators, faculty, honors classes, and AP classes in auditoria setting or individually. Directors also attend community-sponsored college fairs for major universities, where they showcase The Honors College to students who may be considering other colleges and universities.

In addition, Miami Dade College has a team of recruiters that also visits high schools. The recruiters are very much aware of The Honors College. They promote it during recruitment campaigns and encourage interested students to apply. The Testing Departments maintain publicity materials, posters, and applications in their area. Students who score within the range of eligibility are referred to The Honors College.

The Honors College now recruits only first-time college students and emphasizes retention of the first-year students by encouraging them to maintain positive relationships with faculty members and by providing leadership roles on campus. The second-year students also serve as mentors for the first-year students.

### Facilities

Every effort is made to maintain uniformity throughout The Honors College because it functions as a

unified entity that sustains a presence on four campuses. Because of the uniformity of the programming and the facilities and because MDC is a non-residential institution, students typically enroll at the campus most readily accessible from their residence.

Each campus has a designated suite for The Honors College that includes a reception area, campus director's office, a computer laboratory with approximately twenty computer stations, a peer-tutoring classroom, and a designated conference room. The conference room is used for applicant interviews, faculty meetings, advisement, registration, preparation of small-group projects, and presentations by university recruiters and community service agents. While the dean's office is officially located on the Wolfson Campus, each of the campuses has an office area designated for the dean as well as for visiting or itinerant faculty to hold counseling sessions with students and faculty.

#### Administrivia

The Honors College is centralized through one campus, the Wolfson Campus. The program is administered by the Wolfson Campus President, The Honors College Dean, and the four directors who are housed individually on the four participating campuses. The support personnel on the campuses include a full-time secretary, part-time clerical workers, and one or more student assistants.

The Dean of The Honors College, as a member of the college's Academic Leadership Council comprised of all academic deans and the College Provost for Academic and Student Affairs, participates in the academic decision-making process for college-wide and campus matters. The Dean has college-wide responsibility for The Honors College and is the internal and external representative for The Honors College. Campus Directors report directly to the Dean of The Honors College. Each director works collaboratively with the campus administrators to ensure visibility and inclusion at that location. Campus directors cooperatively manage the campus programs and plan and implement honors curriculum, course schedules, and activities. Directors perform a myriad of tasks: coordination of curricular changes, development of course schedules each term, advisement and registration of students, and participation in campus events and programs as warranted.

Almost every department has some interaction with the students, faculty, and staff of The Honors College. For example, the Student Services area is involved in recruitment, financial aid, registration, admissions, testing, and student life. The administrative areas maintain equipment and remodel facilities, perform campus service functions, and expedite contracts. Media Relations and Public Affairs assist in marketing and promotional packaging. Community Service departments provide activities and contacts for service-learning projects. The list is endless. The Honors College staff maintains administrative relationships with the college and campus communities. The directors attend management meetings and organize the annual academic honors awards day on their respective campuses. Communication with the individual department chairs on a regular basis is an essential part of the director's responsibilities. This aids the smooth coordination of annual course offerings and faculty selections.

The Honors Advisory Committee consists of the Lead Faculty members, leadership instructors, directors, and dean. This group meets annually to review curriculum, evaluate the program, and discuss areas for improvement. A campus subgroup of this committee meets monthly during the academic year with faculty members to discuss curriculum, student progress, and areas for improvement. The only permanent members of this group are the dean and directors.

The Honors College is affiliated with several honors organizations, including the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC), the Southern Regional Honors Council (SRHC), the Florida Collegiate

Honors Council, and the National African American Honors Program. Student organizations affiliated with The Honors College include four chapters of Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society, Phi Beta Lambda (PBL) Business organization, and Model United Nations. Honors students demonstrate exemplary leadership skills as presidents of many campus organizations, such as Student Government Associations, local chapters of Phi Theta Kappa and Phi Beta Lambda for business majors, Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers Computer Society, Psi Beta National Honor Society in Psychology, Service for Peace, and the LIT Club. In addition, they are editors and writers for Miami Dade College's award-winning literary magazines (Miambiance, Urbano, and Metromorphosis) and the school newspapers (Catalyst, Metropolis, and Falcon Times).

Of notable mention is The Honors College's affiliation with the Intensive Study Program of the Salzburg Seminars in Austria. Annually, forty students, along with the presidents of campus student government associations, participate in a ten-day intensive symposium on global citizenship or the environment. Another twenty students travel to Washington, DC, to participate in the Honors Leaders on Leadership Seminar sponsored by the Washington Center, and yet another twenty travel to the natural environment of Narrow Ridge, Tennessee, for a weeklong residential program on sustainability and earth literacy.

One of the most significant aspects of The Honors College is the personalized attention given to students. Students are advised about their academic choices, progress, career goals, and transfer options. Each semester, the director guides students individually through the course selection process, approves schedule changes, and discusses post-Miami Dade College plans and possibilities.

### Demographics

In fall 2007, The Honors College admitted 300 freshmen, an increase of about 5% over the previous year. The office of Institutional Research prepared a demographic profile of those entering students, who were joining the nearly 200 sophomores continuing in the program. A complete report is currently posted on the Miami Dade College web site; however, highlights taken from that report are included here:

- \* A majority of students are Hispanic (79%), followed by Black Non-Hispanic (11%) and White Non-Hispanic (16%); sixty-five percent are female;
- \* The average age is 19; the youngest is 15 years old, and the oldest is 28 years old;
- \* Spanish is the native language of half of the students (51%);
- \* Students reported speaking over 22 different languages;
- \* More than half of the students are U.S. Citizens (59%); the remaining are from 23 different countries, with Cuba, Peru, Venezuela, Argentina, and Colombia being the most common;
- \* Most of the first-time-in-college students continued their education immediately after graduating from high school (96%);
- \* Average high school grade point average for admission is 4.28, and the average SAT score is 1263;
- \* A majority of the new students are graduates from Miami-Dade County public high schools (74%), with 45 different high schools represented; 9% are graduates from Miami-Dade private high schools, with 14 different schools represented, and 17% are graduates from out-of-county schools or were

home-schooled;

\* Students are listed as majoring in 43 different programs, with Pre-Bachelor of Arts (20%), Biology (20%), and Business Administration (10%) most frequently chosen.

## Essential Components of The Honors College

The foundation of The Honors College has six pillars: a challenging curriculum, a community of scholars, personalized counseling and advice on registration, career and transfer opportunities, competitive scholarships, and cultural enrichment. Mirroring the College's curriculum, the successful completion of an Associate in Arts degree requires 60 credits, of which 36 credits are general education courses and 24 credits are electives. The Honors College requires 36 credits in honors-designated courses.

Students in The Honors College enjoy academic and social interactions with college faculty and staff, perform a minimum requirement of twenty hours of community service annually, and attend enumerable cultural arts events. Through required Colloquia and the Miami Business Roundtable forums, they also meet prominent world figures, such as Lech Walesa, Mikhail Gorbachev, and Leonel Fernandez; medical professionals; politicians; and international business and entrepreneurial leaders. Students have attended the Latin Grammys, the Grand Prix, Cirque du Soleil, Miami Book Fair International, Miami International Film Festival, the Bodies Exhibition, the King Tutankhamen exhibit, symphonic concerts, operas, ballets, and art exhibitions. Students have participated in study travel experiences in Spain, France, Thailand, South Korea, Bangladesh, and China and have participated in regional and local honors conferences as well as conferences hosted by the National Collegiate Honors Council, National Institute of Organizational and Staff Development (NISOD), Phi Beta Lambda, and Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society. Students have often served as delegates to the National Model United Nations Conferences in New York, attended Leadership Seminars at the Washington Center in the nation's capital, and received certification for Business and Dining Etiquette Seminars with the Protocol Centre[™]. Over 200 students have completed the Salzburg Seminars in Austria. Individualized plans of study, interactions with mentors and discipline professionals, generous scholarships, travel-study opportunities, transfer counseling, and assistance with completing applications for university admission and scholarships, nationally and internationally, are benefits. While leadership opportunities, enrichment activities, and the Honors Fellows Award, which consists of the financial equivalent of in-state tuition, fees, a book allowance, and stipend, are significant benefits, students cite the scholarly community as the most important attribute of The Honors College.

## Curriculum

The Honors College's curriculum leads to the Associate in Arts degree with a minimum of 60 credits, 36 core and 24 electives. As part of their learning routine, the students investigate, analyze, summarize, persist, practice disciplinary techniques, prioritize their time, and seek help when necessary. Students enrolled in The Honors College must demonstrate mastery of the coursework by having fully comprehended the subject as evidenced through the delivery of oral and written presentations as well as by earned grades.

Revision of content in the leadership courses was undertaken in 2006. After realizing a need for consistency and greater skill development, faculty added specific competencies to the course syllabi that would require students to engage in and further strengthen their individual written, conversational, presentational, and debate skills. Additionally, students are required to complete a minimum of twenty

hours in service learning correlated with a particular instructional subject. Beyond that, many students accumulate additional hours as volunteers. Through classroom discussions, participation in Colloquia, submission of reflection essays and journals, enrichment events, as well as national and international travel, students are given the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of their academic subjects and expected learning outcomes.

Within the 60 credit degree program, students are required to complete at least 36 honors credits that can be earned in one of three ways:

- \* A course offered through The Honors College and available only to Honors College students;
- \* An honors-extended course designed to pair regular students who qualify with a 3.5 GPA and Honors College students, who tend to select this option, particularly in their major disciplines;
- \* A regular MDC class that allows for completion of an Honors Option Project Contract (HOPS).

Students wishing to earn honors credit in a regular course may complete a contractual agreement with the professor within the first few weeks of the class. A mutual agreement describes the project and the terms of the honors assignment and must be approved by the student, professor, department chairperson, and campus honors college director. The student must attend all classes and complete the project.

Students outside The Honors College can only receive honors credit if they have a 3.5 GPA and enroll in an honors-extended course or

request an honors contract (HOPS) from the campus director or course instructor. Honors courses are richer than regular courses because of the nature of the population. The students enrolled in these classes make classes interactive and truly engaging for both the students and the instructor. The sections are not intended to be extra work but more interactive, challenging, and engaging for all. Generally, project-based learning is encouraged for analytical classes.

### Learning Outcomes

Specific learning outcomes are expected of all students as a result of their matriculation in The Honors College. The outcomes have been identified and developed by a faculty committee, are confirmed through focus groups, and are reevaluated annually. They are consistent with outcomes established by the College. Stated in measurable terms, the expected learning outcomes are provided to faculty to ensure coverage and consistency, and they are assessed regularly. Results of the most recent assessments indicate the following:

- \* Students are meeting the expected outcomes within the two-year period;
- \* Portfolio content requirements should be more clearly defined and adhered to;
- \* Frequent and periodic reviews of portfolio and other forms of presentational skills should be implemented and assessed at designated time periods college wide.

### Retention

Another method of assessment includes an analysis of the retention rates. According to the Annual Report for 2004-2005, a major concern was the sharp attrition rate of students who were dismissed as a

result of grades earned in a particular class on two of the campuses. Those students would have been included in this year's report; however, since they were dismissed before their second year, a significant enrollment decline was reflected in the 2004-2005 report. A management change and subsequent absence of a campus director may have had a negative impact on the retention rate at another campus. Further, factors other than academic grades may have contributed to students' leaving the program. These factors included repatriation; extended work hours; and personal, family, and health issues. The decline in second-year returning students is significant in that the overall retention rate for 2005 was less than in past years. The expectation, however, was that the number of first-year students would remain constant and that the projection of higher retention rate would closely align with past years. The chart below compares retention rates by campus for the past four years.

Four-Year Cumulative Retention Patterns, 2003-2006

Campus	2003	2004	2005	2006
Wolfson	89%	91%	66%	90%
Kendall	85%	92%	81%	92%
North	85%	84%	74%	92%
InterAmerican	N/A	N/A	N/A	87%
Totals	86%	89%	74%	91%

By campus, there appears to be a significant increase in retention as evidenced by the number of returning students in 2006. Wolfson Campus suffered the greatest loss in the number of students returning in 2005 but actually showed the greatest gain in retention in the number of students returning in 2006.

[GRAPHIC OMITTED]

Retention efforts were the focus of the Dean, campus directors, and Honors College faculty on each campus. In an effort to improve student retention, several strategies were implemented, including holding regular meetings to compare and discuss students' progress and intervention strategies. Faculty are more involved and provide greater support. For example, monthly faculty meetings are held to give faculty and the director insight into the progress of individual students. Both positive and negative academic behaviors are included in these discussions. Students identified as having problems academically or socially are discussed in conferences by two or three other professors. In most cases, students having problems with one professor or in one course also had problems in another. This strategy allows faculty to better determine the problem, to isolate the problem earlier, and to work in conjunction with the campus director in offering appropriate solutions to reverse the situation. Further, lab hour schedules are extensive, and peer tutors are assigned to help students. Students are also encouraged to visit faculty more frequently during office hours to discuss their academic progress and projects.

In addition to the positive student feedback provided by students to faculty, students also participate in focus group surveys that are conducted on each campus to ascertain the level of student satisfaction with The Honors College. Results of required student feedback questionnaires are analyzed, typically revealing that students are satisfied with the level of academic rigor and the environment, the context and content of course assignments, and the fact that faculty are knowledgeable about their subjects and demonstrate the relevance and relationships of the subject to life and learning. Students indicate appreciation for the out-of-classroom experiences, student/teacher interactions, and the personalized advisement and support extended through The Honors College.

According to focus group surveys held on each campus, students in general are pleased with their experience at The Honors College. They are especially pleased with the sense of community and family, with administrators and other students, and with the scholarship package.

### Orientation, Colloquia and Certification

Each year, a two-day Orientation Program is conducted for the incoming freshmen students. The program familiarizes students with the College and its operations and prepares them for a new and challenging experience. Students interact with faculty, directors, and community leaders and are paired with sophomores who serve as peer mentors.

Biweekly colloquia are scheduled on each campus. They consist of lecture demonstrations on global issues or programs that feature interactive sessions for self-development. Each faculty group, along with the campus director, solicits input from students and identifies topics and speakers for the colloquia. Further, at least three events during the year are planned for college-wide gatherings of students: a Sports Field Day, the Holiday Gala, and one major program featuring a keynote speaker or showcasing exemplary presentations, research projects, or performances by students.

The Honors College continues to offer Faculty Certification workshops each term for faculty who desire to teach honors courses. Certified faculty members represent all disciplines and all campuses. Currently, nearly 280 faculty are certified college wide. Faculty may and do select courses on campuses other than their home campus. A biannual faculty retreat brings the MDC-wide honors faculty together in order to review and to plan curricular, programmatic, and creative initiatives for The Honors College. One example of an innovation resulting from these workshops is the "I Have a Dream" Project at Phillis Wheatley Elementary School in Miami's inner-city community. Honors College students enrolled in an English 1101 course are taught off campus at the local elementary school. In addition to meeting the competencies and learning outcomes of this course, Honors College students serve as mentors and tutors to the elementary students in this urban school. After school, the elementary students are also allowed to observe the college classroom in session. The rewards of this exchange have generated enormous benefits to both groups.

While MDC honors students begin in a community college, they all plan to transfer to a four-year institution. Our records show that MDC Honors College students have transferred to and successfully graduated from Amherst College, Barnard College, Boston College, Columbia University, Cornell University, Georgetown University, Georgia Institute of Technology, Howard University, Middlebury College, New York University, Northwestern University, Savannah College of Art and Design, Smith College, Stanford University, Tufts University, University of Chicago, University of Texas at Austin, University of Virginia, University of Wisconsin at Madison, Wesleyan University, Yale University, and all the universities in the state of Florida.

### Challenges and Benefits of Becoming an Honors College

Overcoming the negative perceptions of the general public continues to be one of the most serious challenges faced by honors administrators. High school counselors and some high school students believe that a community college education is second rate. An increasing number of community leaders, including public servants, government officials, doctors, judges, teachers, bank presidents, and public school administrators, have self-identified themselves as community college graduates, thus giving credibility to the positive experiences to be had in a community college. Further, graduating students who transferred from The Honors College to universities serve as successful models for the community

college. The College also faces the challenge of retention with regard to the perception that some freshmen students have about the community college experience. Ignoring the transition process from high school, some students believe this to be the equivalent of a 13th grade and fail to perform academically and with seriousness of purpose.

Notwithstanding its challenges and ups and downs, creating an honors college program can be perhaps one of the most rewarding experiences in one's professional career. The benefits are innumerable and are enjoyed by all constituents. For the student, the primary benefits will be the financial scholarships awarded; the small, interactive classes; the scholarly community; and the enrichment opportunities. For faculty, the benefits include the assurance of an engaged student population, the challenge to apply new knowledge, and the additional opportunity for collegial interactions with other faculty. Administrators benefit with the return on investments or by having a proven number of successful graduates over a short period of time, a contented faculty, and exemplary student representatives. The entire community benefits from receiving over 10,000 hours in cumulative service-learning projects. Ultimately, the advantage to The Honors College and the community is the prestige of having provided accessibility to a local institution that prepares its academically gifted students at an affordable cost.

#### APPENDIX:

##### Miami Dade Honors College and the NCHC Guidelines on the Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College

A quality honors educational experience can occur in a wide variety of institutional settings. When institutions embark on a transition from program to college, they face a transformational moment. Although no one model defines this transformation, the National Collegiate Honors Council recognizes the following characteristics as typical of a successful honors college.

\* A fully developed honors college should incorporate the relevant characteristics of a fully developed honors program. Yes. Based on the criteria established by NCHC, The Honors College at MDC incorporates a challenging curriculum, smaller classes, substantial budget for operation and scholarships, impressive facilities, extensive extracurricular opportunities, sufficient staffing, collegial faculty, comprehensive recruitment and marketing initiatives, and other fundamental characteristics of a fully developed honors college.

\* A fully developed honors college should exist as an equal collegiate unit within a multi-collegiate university structure. Yes. The Honors College at MDC, just as many other academic programs, is viewed as a separate school. With a presence on four campuses, it is a single unit reporting to a single dean at a single campus. Every effort is made to ensure consistency in its operation, curriculum, facilities, budgets, staffing, programs, and enrichment activities.

\* The head of a fully developed honors college should be a dean, reporting directly to the chief academic officer of the institution and serving as a full member of the Council of Deans, if one exists. The dean should be a fulltime, 12-month appointment. Yes. The Honors College is headed by a dean who serves with all deans as a full member of the College-wide Academic Leadership Council. All deans hold a 12-month appointment and report to a campus president.

\* The operational and staff budgets of a fully developed honors college should provide resources at least comparable to other collegiate units of equivalent size. Yes. The Honors College's operational budget, compared to other college-wide units of equivalent size, may be perceived as greater because it provides

operational costs for four sites, scholarships, enrichment activities, study travel, public relations, recruitment, and task points for faculty development. Based on the size of The Honors College, the budget for staff is considered comparable.

\* A fully developed honors college should exercise increased coordination and control of departmental honors where the college has emerged out of such a decentralized system. Yes. All honors-designated courses, including honors college courses, courses for non-honors college students, honors contract courses, and honors recognition programs are coordinated through The Honors College. In almost every instance, campus directors are responsible for their individual campus Honors Day Convocation Programs and serve as co-advisors to Phi Theta Kappa International Honor Society.

\* A fully developed honors college should exercise considerable control over honors recruitment and admissions including the appropriate size of the incoming class. Admission to the honors college should be by separate application. Yes. The admissions process, which consists of a separate application and an interview, is handled through the main office of The Honors College at Wolfson Campus. While supported by the offices of the registrar, financial aid, admissions, testing, international students, and new student center, applicants are referred for admission. Annually, enrollment is limited to 75 students per campus.

\* An honors college should exercise considerable control over its policies, curriculum, and selection of faculty. Yes. The Honors College controls its policies and curriculum; however, while all honors faculty must complete The Honors College's faculty certification workshop, the faculty selection process is conducted by the United Faculty of Miami Dade College (Union).

\* The curriculum of a fully developed honors college should offer significant course opportunities across all four years of study. Not applicable. The Honors College of MDC is only available in the Associate in Arts Degree. The complete curriculum requires a minimum of 36 general education credits and 24 electives. Of the 60 credits necessary for graduation, students in The Honors College are required to complete a minimum of 36 (55%) credits in honors-designated courses, usually general education courses completed via nine credits per term. All students are required to maintain a portfolio.

\* Where the home university has a significant residential component, the fully developed honors college should offer substantial honors residential opportunities. Not applicable. While MDC is a large, non-residential, eight-campus institution, it is considered a single institution with a single mission. There are, however, many opportunities in The Honors College, through involvement in study travel, enrichment, service learning, and organizational memberships to realize the benefits of a scholarly community.

\* The distinction awarded by a fully developed honors college should be announced at commencement, noted on the diploma, and featured on the student's final transcript. Yes. The Honors College graduates at each of the four different campuses lead the processional and receive regal recognition during the commencement ceremony. They are donned in purple stoles, medallions, honors cords, and additional paraphernalia (PTK, Jack Kent Cooke, All USA, New Century Scholars, and Rangel Scholars) where appropriate.

\* Like other colleges within the university, a fully developed honors college should be involved in alumni affairs and development and should have an external advisory board. Not applicable. The Honors College does not have an external advisory board. Generally, ideas and recommendations are sanctioned by, generated from, and approved by the College President and the MDC Board of Trustees. The Honors

College is currently involved in alumni affairs and development through the MDC Foundation. Students in The Honors College are frequently tapped for public relations and marketing campaigns. Additionally, second-year honors college students are invited to attend as guests, and simultaneously, first-year students are asked to serve as volunteers for the annual MDC HALL of FAME Alumni Gala. The Foundation Board has consented to sponsor an Alumni Speakers Series for colloquia throughout the year, featuring alumni who have achieved prominence around the globe in their field.

\* The establishment of an Honors College should entail a significant enhancement of core physical facilities. Yes. The Honors College is headquartered at the Wolfson Campus; however, each campus has The Honors College located in a prominent and visible area with adequate facilities that include reception areas, offices, computer labs, peer-tutoring room, and a conference room.

\* A fully developed honors college should offer an opportunity for an interdisciplinary degree program to supplement standard departmental majors. Not applicable. The Associate in Arts Degree is the only degree offered to The Honors College students at Miami Dade College. Students are exposed to a liberal arts curriculum and in addition, are allowed to complete courses suggested within areas of concentration that will allow for a seamless university transfer.

ALEXANDRIA HOLLOWAY

MIAMI DADE COLLEGE

**Gale Document Number:**A207227994

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