Roundtable Title:
Strengthening the Scholar through Self-Discovery: Considering the Role of Scholar Development Courses in Honors Education

Roundtable Description:
To fully engage with the extraordinary intellectual, ethical, and social demands they will face as leaders, investigators, and creators, our students must strive know themselves as well as they know their disciplines. As a result, programs are making space for self-discovery alongside the intellectual and professional training traditionally invested in by institutions. A brief discussion of the challenges and breakthroughs we experienced as designers of scholar development curricula will open up our discussion of how and why to foster self-awareness through coursework.

Summary:
To fully engage with the extraordinary intellectual, ethical, and social emotional demands they will face as leaders, investigators, and creators, our students must strive know themselves as well as they know their disciplines. Though they may come to us with more privilege, education and experience than past generations, our students struggle to observe and reflect on their own lives. As a result, more Honors programs are making space for purposeful self-discovery alongside the intellectual investigation and professional exploration we have traditionally invested in as individuals and institutions. When we say “scholar development course,” we are describing a formal classroom experience, which challenges students to cultivate self-knowledge through existential exploration and practical experimentation. We will offer quick stories about the challenges and breakthroughs we experienced as designers of a range of scholar development curriculums as a frame for a larger discussion of creative approaches to fostering self-awareness through Honors coursework and program workshops.

Scholar Development Course (SDC) DEFINED: a formal classroom experience, which challenges students to cultivate self-knowledge through existential exploration and practical experimentation.

Participant Profiles:

Lori Adams, Director, Latham Fellows Science Initiative, Honors Advisor, Department of Biology, University of Iowa, 169 Biology Building, 129 East Jefferson St., Iowa City, IA 52242. Email: lori-adams@uiowa.edu Phone: (319) 335-1322.

Institutional Profile: 22,354 undergraduates; 31,387 total. The U of I is a public research university in Iowa City, IA.

SDC Description: Latham Fellows Science Initiative Courses: Science Communication I: Fundamentals of Science Communication Course Description: It is important that science is communicated in an accurate and accessible way to scientists across disciplines and to the public. The goals of this course are to: 1) describe the “sphere” in which science is communicated, 2) explore modes of science communication to science and non-specialist audiences, 3) consider ways that communication styles and goals will vary within the “sphere”, and 4) experience how the integration of the sciences and social engagement can lead to innovative thinking about social issues. This is the first half of a two-semester sequence that culminates in a professional-quality group-presented science program on a topic of global importance, delivered to an audience of nonscientists. Students completing the sequence will also contribute to a print product they can use in future job, graduate school, and fellowship applications. Science Communication II: Science Engagement and Outreach - This 2 semester hour spring course (to be offered through Magid and the University Honors Program and can be used for Honors course credit) will provide guidance to students as they implement one individual and one group outreach project proposed the previous fall. Students will also meet to finalize production of the communication pieces developed in the fall semester. Students will meet once a week for 2 hours.

Laura Damuth, Director of National and International Fellowships, Associate Director of the Honors Program, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Honors Program,118 Neihardt Residence Center, 540 N. 16 Street, Lincoln NE 68588-0659 E-mail: fellowships@unl.edu Phone: (402) 472-5601.

Institutional Profile: 19,000 undergraduates; 24,445 total. UNL is a public land grant research university in Lincoln, NE.
SDC Description: A second path to self-discovery is a non-credit course offered through the University of Nebraska – Lincoln’s Honors Program, Charting Your Path. The course lasts an entire semester and is offered to a select group of twelve-second semester honors students who have been nominated by their first semester freshman seminar instructors. The class is discussion-based and asked students to read a series of books/articles every week with topics centered on: higher education in America, what it is to be an educated person, the “Great Books” approach to General Education, and also on practical matters such as academic planning, career paths, involvement in undergraduate research, completion of the honors thesis, involvement in service and outreach to the community, and leadership development. Another component of the course is learning to write about the self. The class has been so successful that we have been charged to offer it to more students. As a result, the course has changed since its inception and will be offered next semester in three different installments: Comprehensive Academic Planning, Putting Yourself on Paper, and Starting your Honors Thesis.

Lindsay Marshall, Assistant Director, Iowa Center for Research by Undergraduates
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Institutional Profile: 22,354 undergraduates; 31,387 total. The U of I is a public research university in Iowa City, IA.

SDC Description: The ICRU Research Fellows Mentee Training course was developed for the ICRU Research Fellows, a select group of scholarship funded undergraduates engaged in mentored research and creative work. The four-six week course, partially based off materials from the National Research Mentoring Network, is a requirement of the fellowship. The ICRU Fellows represent a wide range of disciplines (for example, the 2015-2016 groups consist of 104 Fellows working in 52 different departments across campus); therefore, the materials cannot be topic specific. Instead, students are asked to think about their work more broadly, in a variety of ways, both professionally and personally. In small mixed-discipline groups, students discuss research relationships, self-awareness and self-advocacy, research communication (especially to a non-specialist audience), visualizing their work, and problem solving, all while garnering a sense of community amongst other their peers. They leave with the ability to not only speak more effectively about their work, but with a more comprehensive view of what research looks like across disciplines.

Dana Schumacher, Assistant Director for Scholarship & Research, University Honors Program, Iowa State University, 2132 Jischke Honors Building, Ames, IA 50011 Email: dschumac@iastate.edu Phone: (515) 294-0172. Institutional Profile 28,000 undergraduates; 34,732 total. ISU is a land-grant research university in Ames, IA.

SDC Description: Writing about your experiences, values and aspirations is a challenging task, and one often more challenging by the stakes involved: admission to a graduate program, securing a research assistantship or winning a scholarship. Personal statements and program applications require writing that is informative, persuasive, compelling and clear. The seminar, Putting Yourself on Paper, offers students experience in preparing personal statements, biographical essays and applications.

Kelly Thornburg, Director of Scholar Development, University of Iowa Honors Program 431 Blank Honors Center, Iowa City, IA 52245 Email: kelly-thornburg@uiowa.edu Phone: 319-335-1874. Institutional Profile: 22,354 undergraduates; 31,387 total. The U of I is a public research university in Iowa City, IA.

SDC Description: The Fellows Project (TFP) was created to engage a select group of undergraduate scholars in the practice of self-observation and reflection in the context of a peer community. The intention is to create a space where students learn how to consciously observe themselves and others without judgement while actively considering how familial, cultural, and personal narratives influence what they see, value and prioritize. By developing this reflex, students will begin to build a knowledge of self that will strengthen their ability to maintain a productive connection to their own history, values, and beliefs and to negotiate and respond to the wide range of intellectual and emotional experiences they will encounter in life.