

challenger

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College Honors
Society

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YOUR HONORS SOCIETY

The Honors program at Harper College has been in existence for five years. In 1989 Betty Hull began the program with the intent of creating an organization which would foster intellectual growth and excellence. Today the Honors Society has more than 200 diverse members, sponsors weekly meetings and offers several classes each semester in a variety of disciplines.

One of the strengths of the Honors Society is the variety of students involved. Members range from students who are just beginning their college careers immediately after completing high school to some who have already received master's degrees. Other members include retired people who want to learn about new fields, grandparents who wish to continue their educations, mothers and fathers who wish to complete degrees and workers who want to change careers. Pat Fitzsimmons, past president of the Honors Society, emphasizes there

is no stereotypical honors student. She feels the Society's diversity is its most positive attribute. Currently she is working on a study of the Society's demographics for a presentation she will make at the na-

tional meeting of Honors Societies in St. Louis. Students become involved in the Honors Society for various reasons. Some initially become involved because they think it will look good on their records. Students want to be able to say they did something in college besides going to class. Most, however, want more challenging coursework, and honors courses are the perfect place to find this. In both cases students find there are many more benefits to being involved in the Honors Society.

Honors classes are different than regular classes. First, fewer students than in regular sections enable instructors to make the material more personal. Barbara Hickey, who teaches introduction to fiction, is able to include more sophisticated readings in her syllabus for her honors section because honor students are often more mature and insightful. Hickey also changes the

focus of her honors section to include more student presentations and leadership.

The different atmosphere of an honors class fosters a unique student/teacher relationship. Instructors and students gain a personal respect for each other and their abilities, making a much more comfortable learning environment for the students.

"The Society's diversity is its most positive attribute."

- Pat Fitzsimmons

inside

- page 2 From the Desk of Dr. Hull
- page 3 President's Corner
- page 4 As We See It - Creativity
- page 6 Honors Geology
- page 7 Harper Activities
- page 8 Honors Activities

Honors, continued on page 6

Honestly, Do You Really Want to Know?

Just before classes began this fall, I attended the Great Teachers' Seminar at Starved Rock for two days. It was an intense experience, devoted to the practical sharing of teaching methodology that works and asking for help with continuing problems for which we are still seeking solutions. We also explored issues which concern us as teachers, such as grade inflation and building self esteem in our students.

My own concern started with the specific problem of getting students to be honest in their peer evaluations in writing workshops. This is a continuing problem, because the majority of people (both students and teachers) do not want to be the bearers of bad news, especially to those they like and want to be accepted by. A teacher may be able to say, "I'd rather my students learn than be popular," but students don't usually have much incentive to see that their peers do well. In fact, they may feel that if they really help others, they'll "suffer from the curve."

But research shows that students do little rewriting when they receive positive comments; they don't always change when they receive negative, either, but they sometimes do. And to improve, one must change! So we talked about bonding among the students and building trust so they would want to help each other and feel comfortable giving honest responses and suggestions for improvement.

Somewhere in the discussion, we shifted to teachers' relationships with students, and the subject of

evaluating students honestly came up. Should we tell a student that we honestly do not think he or she will be able to succeed in our course?

Most of us admitted that perfect honesty might sometimes be un-

wise if not unkind. We seemed to feel that we should let the students decide for themselves to stop trying, but we felt that grade inflation might delay that recognition and keep students hoping for unrealistic goals when they could be shifting to another field where their chances of success were greater.

But that led me to think of another, related, question. What do grades mean? What do students want them to mean? Do they want, in effect, to be lied to? Do they want an A whether they are outstanding or not? Do they even want a C or D if they really haven't demonstrated understanding and skills expected of someone who receives credit for any given course?

Last weekend I had the occasion to discuss grading with a woman who teaches writing and literature at a university in Ohio. She told me she gives A's to 90% of her students, and B's to what she referred to as "the hopeless cases." She said, "I don't think there's any research to show that high grades hurt a student. If they're turning in really rotten work, they know it and it makes them nervous, so they try harder because they're afraid they'll lose the grade. If they don't type I

give them a B." This sure sounds like a fast way to cut down on the paper grading that burns out so many English teachers, doesn't it! I can't

help wondering how many other teachers do the same.

After talking to my colleague I had a discussion with my freshman composition class regarding grades, what they hoped for and what they expected. Several people thought that they ought to be rewarded with an A (or at least a B) if they had tried their best, no matter how inadequate that was. Aside from a mismatch with the real world expectations of employers, how is an instructor to know for sure whether a student is trying his or her best? One man said he thought the degree he was working for was merely a credential to get him a job interview, and expressed cynical doubts about whether it represented any skills or knowledge that he might be expected to apply on the job once he convinced any employer to hire him.

For purposes of your own self-esteem, what do you want your A or B to represent? If you are not truly better than average, much less outstanding, would you rather be lied to? Considering that you are also a part of the "outside" world, what do you want other students' grades to mean? For instance, do you want to consult a surgeon who graduated without strict standards? Do you want to have your taxes prepared by

FROM THE DESK OF
DR. HULL

Hull, continued on page 3

Thanks for the memories!

President's corner

It was a great year. I learned a lot, became involved in a lot, met a lot of you, and together we accomplished so much.

I had two goals when I took over as President last September. One was to shatter the old image that all honors students are nerds, geeks, bookworms, etc., and that all we do is study and never have any fun. The other goal was to make this organization a real force on campus — to let people know who we are — to be involved. I believe I accomplished these goals. Every time there was an activity at Harper, Honors Society was involved. People began to notice us and to expect us to be there when something was happening.

We did hold a meeting every week, and our salon discussions sometimes could be quite heated. We had guest speakers come and talk to us: Dawn Weston, the first person to use a non-traditional method (art) to communicate with

brain injured children; Dr. Georgi Grechco, the premier Russian cosmonaut; Fred Pohl, world famous science fiction writer.

We took two field trips to Chicago with Russian interns to show them our city and to foster intercultural awareness.

The Environmental Expo was one of the major events at Harper last academic year. We co-sponsored it with Phi Theta Kappa.

The list of activities we were involved in is quite long. When I updated it last month for the Freshman Experience, it took two full pages. It really has been a wonderful trip for me. But my tenure as President is now over. A new school year has begun, and Wednesday, September 8, we elected all new officers.

I hope you will give these new officials the same help and encouragement you gave me. If you are unable to make the weekly meetings, get in touch with Dr. Hull or

one of the officers and volunteer your time for one of the many activities that will be coming up. Your time is very valuable to all of us. You will soon be receiving a survey that you need to fill out and get back either to Dr. Hull or me. (I work evenings in the Registrar's Office.) This survey is the backbone of the presentation I will be giving at the National Honors Society Conference in St. Louis at the end of October. The theme is diversity. Please get these surveys back to me as soon as possible.

Thanks again for all you support and good luck to all of you.



HULL, continued from page 2

an accountant who couldn't pass the CPA exams? As a consumer, are grades and exams your enemy or your friend? Do you want to attend a college that has a reputation for graduating anyone who "sticks it out"?

A sobering report published recently said that nearly half of Americans are functionally illiterate; that is, they cannot read and write well enough to hold a job that pays above the poverty level. And 75% of these

are native-born; 50% are white. This suggests that we are doing a poor job of preparing a large segment of the population for survival in America. The worst part of all is that most of these poor semi-literates reported that they thought they could read fairly well or even very well!

Maybe I don't want to be told if I have a run in my stockings, but how much honesty do we really want to give and receive from each

other? How much false sense of pride and self-esteem can we as a nation afford?



CREATIVITY ...

TRY A GLASS OF CARROT JUICE

Do you gulp down a glass of orange juice every morning out of habit? Tomorrow, taste it. Is it what you really want? If not, try something different. How about carrot juice?

Do you take the same route to school each morning? Tomorrow, turn right instead of left. Notice the different neighborhood—flowers, houses, buildings and trees.

“Creativity,” an anonymous source once wrote, “is Aha! That moment of insight when one sees the world, or a problem, or an idea in a new way.” It’s exciting!

Children spend many hours letting their imaginations run wild when they tell stories to each other, play house with an imaginary friend, design a work of art with finger paints or sculpt a new idea with play dough.

Yet, somewhere between the creative experiences of youth and the mechanical routines of adulthood, this creativity gets smothered.

Adults operate with calendars filled with commitments, appointments and schedules so hectic their lives are mechanical, routine and rigid. Or, if not hectic, they’re comfortable and secure with doing things the “same old way.”

Just how do adults become more

creative? Creativity Crusader Professor Denis R. Berkson of Oakton Community College believes adults need to become more childlike.

Berkson uses humor, music and highly charged participation exercises to train people into new dimensions of thinking and away from routines and patterns.

Creativity is one of the hot topics of the ’90s, and whether the empha-

sis is on creativity for business, education or personal growth, these practitioners believe people will benefit from letting a spark of creativity into their lives.

Creativity isn’t just for geniuses and artists, it’s for everyone. Pablo Picasso sums it up well: “Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”

The Problem With Being Creative

The reason many people haven’t unlocked their creative potential is that society places emphasis on conformity and order. Freeing one’s creative impulse is resisting the pressure to march in step with the rest of the world.

In education, creative thinking is not measurable in the way recalling facts is. Schools with formal structures, fill-in-the-blank workbooks, testing and accountability filter out creative skills.

In business, letting employees learn what they want has never been a high

“Creativity is Aha! That moment of insight when one sees the world, or a problem, or an idea in a new way.”

- Anonymous

AS WE SEE IT

priority in the workplace. The corporate way of doing things has been “do as you’re told.”

In their personal lives, people tend to follow the crowd and are often afraid to leave behind the familiar patterns of thinking and behaving—their comfort zones.

Business

Today, businesses are seeing the value of creativity at work. Pressure on American business to be more productive and innovative has made creative thinking a hot commodity.

In the business world, creative employees are valuable. They are the ones who ask: How can we do it differently, better or more efficiently?

Businesses need people who can use their creative tools to plan, brainstorm, problem-solve and develop high quality ideas.

“When someone says it can’t be done, that’s a challenge,” said Tom Skolar, product manager at a local manufacturing company. “And the only way to meet the challenge is through persistence.”

Skolar explained that someone once told him they needed a new security system, but it wasn’t possible. It was possible; the company designed and implemented a new security system with an innovative locking mechanism. Now sales are booming.

“You have to keep your eyes wide open, and nothing should be overlooked,” Skolar said.

Education

Today, creativity is seen as a way of making education better. Illinois Renewal Institute (IRI) in Palatine believes in putting creativity back in schools and employs more than 50 consultants who work throughout the country showing teachers how to improve teaching skills.

In an increasingly competitive world, students must be challenged to think and learn more in order to develop to their fullest potential.

Programs Manager Bob Wiedmann said the Institute teaches a course called “Pathways to Creativity” that provides teachers with practical ideas they can use with their students.

“We have been very successful

“Every child is an artist. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up.”

- Pablo Picasso

in training teachers to enhance learning environments for students,” he said. “We help them learn strategies that will improve the way they teach.

“I don’t give objective tests, multiple choice, true-false, or anything like that,” said Harper College instructor Barbara Hickey.

Hickey, who taught Honors Course Literature 115, Introduction

to Fiction, said she encourages creative thinking in her classes.

“I like students to think for themselves about the works we are studying and not put too much emphasis on what the experts say,” Hickey said. “Experts can often intimidate students and limit their thinking.”

Hickey tells of a student she had in one of her classes who noticed a detail in a story that she herself had never realized. “It’s interesting to see things in a fresh new way,” she said.

Everyday Life

Alvin Toffler’s “Future Shock” is now a reality. To deal with this age of social and technological change, people will need to find new, creative solutions to the challenges of everyday life.

Individuals have the power to create their own worlds. They can do things as they’ve always done them, or they can try something new and different and potentially more rewarding.

Let creativity into your life! Try a glass of carrot juice. Take a different route to school. Look at an old problem from a new perspective.

Creativity skills learned and practiced in your life today will enhance your life tomorrow in life-long learning, business and personal growth.

People can exist without creativity, but they cannot truly live!

- Sherry Giewald

Honors, continued from page 1

In addition to the Honors Society, there is a fraternal organization, Phi Theta Kappa, for students who excel. Although both serve the same students, their focuses are different. Phi Theta Kappa is a national organization which invites students who have a high grade point average to become involved. It is mainly a community service organization which works on a yearly project designated by the national headquarters. Phi Theta Kappa is the largest student organization at Harper.

In contrast, the Honors Society

is more of an intellectual organization, rather than a service organization. Fitzsimmons, speaking of the Honors Society, said, "We consider ourselves a salon in the classical sense. We get together and talk about contemporary issues on an informal basis." Weekly meetings focus on the group's interests and lively discussion often ensues.

These weekly meetings are a significant aspect of the Honors Society. Although not all of the more than 200 members of the Society attend, those who do participate find the experience worthwhile

and a welcome distraction from daily classes.

The opportunities offered by the Society are as diversified as the student population. Whether it be for the more challenging classes, the intellectual discussions, the academic achievement or the honor student classification, membership in the society has many benefits. It is up to you to take advantage of them.

- Dick Trent

More Than Rocks Around The Clock in Honors Geology

Planning to take an honors course next semester? If you're earth-conscientious, honors geology is the class for you.

Honors geology is not just a study of rocks, but rather a study of the processes of Earth and the materials involved in them.

Lectures often include such topics as volcanos, erosion and earthquakes, but Instructor Larry Knight also tries to focus his discussions on subtle changes in geology, which are most prevalent in this area. One field trip focuses on the

geology in this area, in which students travel to Braidwood Mine to collect samples and to see the effects of stripmining.

Labs, according to Knight, frequently involve "observation, trial and error." Much emphasis is also put into tests of physical characteristics in which students identify specific minerals and

"GEOLOGY: The scientific study of the origin, history, and structure of the earth."

- The American Heritage Dictionary

rocks as well as their general classifications.

What makes honors geology so different from regular geology? According to Knight it's the people,

not the classwork. With an enrollment limit of 15, the small class atmosphere enables the teacher and students to have a more individualistic and more open discussion. Likewise, the genuine interest the students display toward geology makes classes more enriching. In the words of Knight, "It's fun. Non-negative distractions and active learning force me to do more."

If you are looking for a class that enlightens your concept of the world, try honors geology. It's more than just rocks!

- Debbie Maday

Thompson Extends a Warm Welcome

Harper College has continually emphasized academic excellence. The history of success of our graduates is an indication of how well we have done. Clearly, the opportunities provided here include challenges at every level and in every facet of student life. Harper's Honors Program has been attractive to

an increasing number of students. There is diversity in the availability of courses and in the participants. The key to success for students is their willingness to match — through their efforts — the interest and dedication of the faculty members who serve as professors for Honors courses.

Best wishes for a successful and rewarding year!

Sincerely,



President, Harper College

OCTOBER STUDENT ACTIVITIES

- 3 — 28** Artists from the Studio/Gallery at 1117 W. Lake Street Building C and P
- 11 — 15** Intercultural Week — Unity Through Diversity
 - 11 Alyo Children's Dance Company 7 pm, J143
 - 12 Multimedia Presentation — "Footsteps into Change: An African Odyssey" 7:30 pm, J143
 - 13 Multimedia Presentation — Native American Singer/Songwriter/Storyteller Jack Gladstone 7:30 pm, J143
- 14** Concert — Peter Rejto, Cellist 12:15 pm, P205
- 17** Harper Symphony Orchestra 3 pm, J143
- 19** Lecture — Clifford Stoll "Tracking a Spy Through the Maze of Computer Espionage" 7:30 pm, J143
- 22** Poetry Slam 7:30 pm, J143
- 26** Concert — Singer-Songwriter Michael Spiro 12 noon, A242

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Thanks All

We would like to thank everyone who has helped with our first issue of the challenger. Specifically we are indebted to Skip Chidester, Rhea Dawson, Susanne Havlic, Betty Hull, Pat Fitzsimmons, Joan Young, Anne Frost, Peter Gart, and Paul Thompson.

We look forward to producing three more interesting, pertinent issues. If you have any suggestions, please let one of us know. Have a good semester.

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EDITORIAL POLICY

The Challenger is the voice of the Harper College Honors Society. We welcome articles, ideas and letters of interest appropriate for our members. We encourage contributions. Final editorial judgment is the sole responsibility of the editorial staff. For information on possible submissions, call x 2581. Written material should be placed in the Challenger box in the Journalism office.

New Year, New Meeting For Honors Society

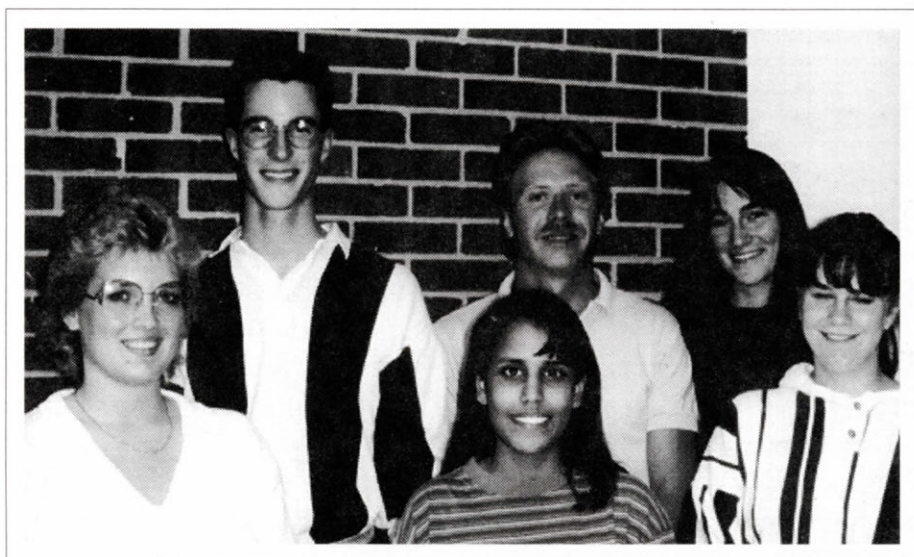
A new school year unfolded at the first Honors Society meeting, September 8. Among issues covered by the meeting were elections for all officers. Officers elected include: Art Weston as president, Larry Vais as vice-president, Shabana Jameel and Debbie Maday as co-secretaries, Teresa Beeksma

as treasurer, and April Lapointe as public relations officer. Also discussed was participation in Intercultural Week activities either by working at exhibits during Intercultural Week, or through Pat Fitzsimmon's multicultural video, which features people of different ethnic backgrounds and their dress

and language.

Get involved! Come attend our meetings, Wednesdays at 2:30 in F325 and participate in some of the lively, thought-provoking discussions listed below!

- Debbie Maday



Honors Society Officers Left to Right: Theresa Beeksma, treasurer; Art Weston, President; Shabana Jameel, secretary; Larry Vais, vice-president; April Lapointe, public relations manager; and Debbie Maday, secretary

Honors Meeting Topics

September 15	Ethics
September 22	Abortion
September 29	Religion
October 6	NAFTA
October 13	Stereotyping
October 20	Sexual Harassment
October 27	Superstition/ Supernatural

**MEETINGS EVERY
WEDNESDAY AT
2:30
ROOM F325**

People are always blaming circumstances for what they are. I don't believe in circumstances. The people who get on in this world are the people who get up and look for the circumstances they want, and if they can't find them, make them.

- George Bernard Shaw

