

COMPREHENSIVE EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT OF FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE HONORS COURSES TO PROMOTE HOLISTIC LEARNING

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BACKGROUND

- Two contrasting courses are offered for Honors Freshman
 - Honors 101 and Honors section of University 101
 - Result: varying first-year which can influence students' perceptions and experiences within the Honors program.

A survey conducted by Holliday (2014) concluded that honors students enjoyed their first-year seminar because it made their transition to college easier by providing them stress relief through academic and social support. The small class size and importance on goal setting helped ease the academic transition while the resources discussed and offered (campus resources, learning resources) helped ease the social transition by the end of the first semester (Johnson, 2009).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this project is to analyze the current program and present a proposal for modification of the Honors first-year experience influenced by increasing student satisfaction and program retention rates.

- Create a cohesive, holistic first-year experience
- Propose a sequential model instead of synchronous courses
 - UNIV101 HON101

HON101

- 1-credit hour
- Introduce students to Honors-program culture
- Heavy emphasis on problem solving

Academia-based
Critical thinking
Peer mentors

Honors Section UNIV101

- 3-credit hours
- Extra emphasis on student support
- Goal setting, research, metacognition

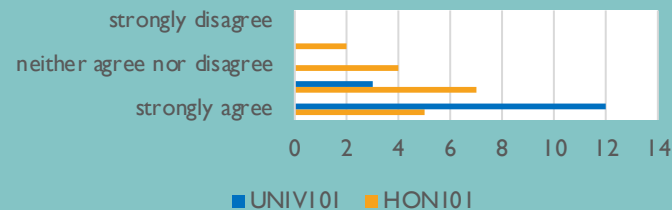
RESULTS & CONCLUSIONS

Themes from Interviews

University Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social integration Cohort dynamics Faculty and staff relationships Program communication
Academic Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student participation Curriculum rigor Academic freedom Research
Classroom Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Welcoming environment Opportunity to share lived experiences Consistent student population

During my research, I have found that students enjoy both HON101 and UNIV101 as courses. However, there are contrasting views on how each course relates to their Honors Program experience. Students were more satisfied with UNIV101 as an Honors introductory course because it provided them with academic concepts that were more relevant, timely, and helpful for their college transition. Students felt more connected to the program after taking UNIV101 and enjoyed Honors-level work and discussions. This supports my proposal to move from a synchronous 2-course model to a sequential model in which students would take the Honors section of UNIV101 in their first fall semester followed by HON101 in the spring semester.

"I am satisfied with this course as an Honors introductory course"



QUESTIONS

What is the influence of the current first-year experience on student satisfaction and retention within the Honors Interdisciplinary program at the University of Northern Colorado?

What changes can be proposed to increase the current student satisfaction and retention rates within the Honors Interdisciplinary Program?

METHODS

Using an annual cyclical model and secondary data, the current first-year experience will be analyzed and modified to improve retention and student satisfaction within the Honors Program. Next, individual interviews will be conducted.

University Experience	Praise	Criticism
HON101	"I definitely got overwhelming support from my teachers and peer mentors."	"My instructor was great, but I didn't have a connection to the people in my class."
UNIV101	"We were able to create those relationships from the first day of class with our teacher, with [our peer mentor], and with other students in the class."	"This course wasn't super heavy on Honors information. They didn't really talk about Honors a lot or the requirements."