

# HONORS IN HIGHER EDUCATION

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A journal of proceedings from HERU (Honors Education at Research Universities) published every two years, concurrent with the biennial meeting of the HERU conference.

ISSN: 2379-481X

## **Promoting Diversity in an Honors Curriculum**

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### **Abstract**

This paper explores curriculum diversity at UIC Honors College from four perspectives: (1) range and types of courses that integrate multiple manifestations of diversity themes; (2) process of course solicitation that allows assembly of the best talents of diverse faculty scholarly expertise; (3) course instruction that benefits from and is tailored to the needs of diverse topics and student populations; and (4) additional efforts that sustain vibrant energy in maintaining a diverse environment for the Honors curriculum and beyond. Both qualitative and quantitative data are presented, together with explanations of how each is enriched by Chicago's unique environment.

### **Promoting Diversity in an Honors Curriculum**

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) aims to foster a community of academic excellence by bringing together a diverse group of exceptional undergraduate students, faculty, and staff. As such, it is one of the most diverse colleges in the U.S. (US News & World Report, 2015), with a higher percentage of Latino and African American students than any Big 10 university. UIC has also been federally designated both as a Hispanic Serving Institution (in 2015) as well as an Asian American and Native American/Pacific Islander Serving Institution (in 2010) (UIC Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research, 2015).

The UIC Honors College is no exception, being one of the nation's most diverse. In keeping with the Honors College's (2012) Diversity Strategic Plan, the College has undertaken many measures to strengthen all aspects of its appreciation for and promotion of diversity, defined more broadly than the ethnic and racial backgrounds and identities of students. One area of effort has focused on the Honors learning environment.

After articulating the college's definition of diversity and providing a short history of the recent increase in the diversity of the student body and faculty, this paper focuses specifically on our curriculum, a cornerstone of our commitment to diversity as a scholarly topic, an intellectual principle, and a moral obligation.

### **The UIC Honors College and its Conception of Diversity**

The UIC Honors College is the academic home to 1550 outstanding and diverse students from every discipline (about 9% of UIC's undergraduates). In Fall 2014, for example, the 381 freshmen were 9% African American, 36% Asian American, 18% Hispanic/Latino; 33% White; 2% of two or more races; and 2% unknown. Honors Faculty Fellows are tenure-stream faculty matched to small cohorts of six or fewer student mentees from the sophomore through senior

years. As a result of efforts to recruit Faculty Fellows from underrepresented disciplines and ethnicities, the percentage of underrepresented Faculty Fellows in the Honors College nearly mirrors that of UIC's faculty as a whole. For example, in Fall 2014, the 302 Fellows matched with students were 7% African American, 14% Asian American, 7% Hispanic/Latino, 72% White, and 1% unknown.

It is a top priority for the Honors College to remain at the forefront of diversity efforts on campus and nationally. This work is guided by the College's Diversity Strategic Planning document, a multifaceted plan developed in 2012 by the Diversity Strategic Planning Committee made up of faculty, staff, and students. Following its recommendations, the Honors College revised its bylaws and established a permanent Diversity Committee in December 2012 to plan and recommend diversity-focused actions and assess progress in realizing Honors-specific goals regarding diversity, broadly defined, as related to programs, policies, and procedures, including, for example, matters concerning curriculum, climate, student recruitment and retention, faculty affairs, campus engagement, outreach and visibility, and so on. The plan conceives of the diversity of students, faculty, staff, and administrators in terms of race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, disabilities, socioeconomic status, culture, and religion. The College considers diversity to include majors, colleges, course offerings, and areas of expertise. People at the intersections of these categories, and college programs, policies, procedures, and outreach, are shaped and served by this conception of diversity (UIC Honors College, 2012, 2015).

A centerpiece of the Honors College diversity efforts has been the Presidential Award Program-Honors Scholarship (PAP-H), the campus's most significant scholarship program, providing full tuition and housing, a new laptop computer, and a two-week pre-college summer

enrichment program that orients highly qualified underrepresented students to scholarly disciplines and prepares them for leadership. PAP-H students reside in the Honors living-learning community and benefit from the entirety of an immersive Honors experience, including evening advising and other campus housing programming. The program matches students with their assigned faculty mentor in their second semester as freshmen, as compared to the regular assignment of Fellows in Honors students' sophomore year. This earlier assignment, coupled with Fellow-student relationship workshops, helps PAP-H students to become acclimated to academic culture and interaction and takes advantage of their exceptional high school preparation and academic qualifications. PAP-H students are also required to engage in a series of touchstone activities in all subsequent semesters, prompting their participation in scholarly and community activities. The PAP-H program thus contributes to college-wide and campus-wide diversity through various integral programs including and impacting curricular diversity.

With the 83 inaugural PAP-H recipients in 2012, the Honors College welcomed its most diverse first-year class ever (i.e., one-third Hispanic, African American, or mixed ethnicity students) as well as its strongest in recent years (with a mean ACT score one point higher than last year's -- not that this really matters: At UIC, above an ACT score of 21 or 22, ACT is not correlated with graduation rates, after taking into account membership in the Honors College). We admitted 45 more freshmen into this program each ensuing year. The PAP-H program has successfully advanced the goal of diversifying an already diverse student body in the UIC Honors College, with underrepresented minorities now comprising 20% of the entire College and 30% of the freshman class, approaching the all-campus composition, and matching it for African Americans (8%). The overall 6-year graduation rate is 88% (by far, most Honors students graduate in 4 years) at a campus with a non-Honors rate of 58%, and the achievement gap is

closing (Latinos = 84%, African American = 75%). With the first cohort of students now approaching their senior year, the retention rate is 99.3% and the admissions yield rate is 73%, averaged across all cohorts and years. These students win prestigious national awards (e.g., Truman, Goldwater, Rangel) and have a long list of other accomplishments including high grade point averages, internships, study abroad, research here and across the country. An important part of this success story is the scholarly community and the academic conversation these students have entered and contributed to, especially in Honors courses, described next.

### **Curricular Diversity**

Diversity in higher education is not merely about numbers – numbers of students, staff, or faculty. It is about the infusion of difference and inclusiveness into all aspects of education and an intentional reflection on the very concept of diversity and the reasons to value it in higher education. Working from the assumption that diversity is not a requirement nor a given, but something to be implemented and activated -- a benefit to be reaped -- we have designed our Honors curriculum using variegated aspects of social, racial, and intellectual sophistication unique to the urban public research university.

The UIC Honors College explores curriculum diversity from the following four perspectives, each enriched by and benefiting from Chicago's unique urban environment, and discussed in turn below:

1. range and types of courses that reflect and integrate multiple manifestations of diversity themes,
2. process of course solicitation that assembles the best talents of diverse faculty members with distinct scholarly expertise,

3. course instruction that benefits from and is tailored to the needs of diverse topics and students, and
4. additional efforts that sustain vibrant energy and enthusiasm in maintaining a diverse context for the Honors curriculum and beyond.

### **Range and Types of Courses**

The first perspective concerns the range and types of courses that reflect and integrate multiple manifestations of diversity themes. The Honors College primarily offers two kinds of courses: interdisciplinary Honors Core Courses and Honors Seminars. For the academic year 2014-15, for example, the College offered 33 Honors Freshman Core Courses and 32 Honors Seminars taught by 52 instructors. Honors Core Courses are three-credit-hour courses for freshmen that fulfill general education requirements. These “freshman seminars” are small, with 20 to 24 students, and are taught by faculty who not only challenge students with high-level academic materials, but also understand the challenges of transitioning from high school to college and are supportive in helping students develop into critical thinkers and writers, which lays a firm foundation for their success broadly at the university. Honors Seminars are one-credit, pass/fail courses available to all Honors students. Honors Seminars emphasize discussion and participation and offer unique perspectives on issues that are not addressed elsewhere in UIC’s traditional course offerings. They often bring real world experience into conversation about theory or translate theory into practice.

Honors Cores and Honors Seminars are taught by a diverse faculty from a wide range of disciplines and backgrounds, including humanities, social sciences, natural sciences, engineering, and medicine and health-related disciplines, as well as by industry experts. Interdisciplinary courses build links among different fields.

**Diversity-relevant courses.** The college has been aggressively adding new diversity-relevant courses taught by a more wide-ranging faculty in terms of both specialty and ethnicity.

Diversity in the curriculum is illustrated in this sample list of diversity-relevant courses:

- Diversity and Cultural Experience: An Intergroup Dialogue Experience
- An Introduction to Faculty Research on Diversity
- Common Concerns, Different Responses: A Framework for Explaining Diversity
- Global Health Advocacy
- Race, Racism, Power, and Education in the United States
- Slaves, Convicts, Shameful Beginnings: Writings from the Caribbean and Australia
- The Politics of Public Space
- Race and Ethnicity on the American Stage
- Psychological Adaptations of Immigrants
- Introduction to American Sign Language and Deaf Culture
- Atlantic Slavery: The Strength and Sinews of the New World
- African American Music
- Asian American Popular Culture
- The Sexual and Racial Politics of American Popular Media
- Introduction to American Sign Language and Deaf Culture

A few courses are particularly noteworthy. First, the college regularly offers “Diversity and Cultural Experience: An Intergroup Dialogue Experience,” which is the first on campus to use Intergroup Dialogue (IGD) pedagogical techniques. Honors Faculty offered the course in Fall 2007, and it produced the campus’ first formal Intergroup Dialogue course in 2010, with a teaching manual designed to allow others to replicate its success. The course is a model for other



dialogues-based curricular initiatives on campus, including the UIC First-Year Dialogue Seminar (CC120), a unique 1-credit dialogues seminar offered campus-wide, which grants elective credit for students in all majors and is mandatory for students in the College of Architecture, Design, and the Arts (Thakral, Vasquez, Bottoms, Matthews, Hudson, & Whitley, 2015).

Second, “An Introduction to Faculty Research on Diversity,” established by the dean in conjunction with the first diversity strategic plan in the college, introduces Honors College students to the range of UIC faculty members’ scholarly work on topics related to race, ethnicity, prejudice, discrimination, diversity, and social identity, by featuring guest lectures from faculty across the campus. Aiming at increasing understanding, awareness, and appreciation of diversity-related scholarship (broadly defined), the Seminar has been taught on a yearly basis since Fall 2012. A sample of the faculty contributors and their lecture topics illustrates the range of course offerings:

- *Kevin Kumashiro*, Professor of Asian American Studies. “Approaches to Teaching and Teacher Education that Challenge Different Forms of Oppression in Schools and Society”
- *Chris Boyer*, Associate Professor of History and Latin American and Latino Studies. “Social and Environmental History of Modern Mexico”
- *Bette L. Bottoms*, Professor of Psychology and Dean of the Honors College. “The Influence of Case, Victim, Defendant, and Juror Characteristics (e.g., Race, Ethnicity, and Sexual Orientation) on Juror Decision-Making”
- *Ralph Keen*, Professor and Arthur J. Schmitt Foundation Chair in Catholic Studies. “Religion and Diversity: The ‘Golden Age’ Construction of the Early Church (circa 500) by Counter-Reformation Catholic authors”

- *Rick Kittles*, Associate Professor of Hematology/Oncology. “Tracing the Ancestry of African Americans via DNA Testing”
- *Tanya Berger-Wolf*, Associate Professor of Computer Science. “The Intersection of Population Biology and Computer Science Examining Social Groups (e.g., Sibling Groups), and How These are Reconstructed”
- *David Xavier Marquez*, Assistant Professor of Kinesiology and Nutrition. “Disparities in Physical Activity and Disease/Disability among Latinos”
- *Sharon Haar*, Professor of Art and Architecture. “Role of Entrepreneurship, Design Innovation, and Global Networking in the Transformation of Architectural Practices Devoted to Social Activism and Humanitarian Relief”
- *Michelle Boyd*, Associate Director of Programs for the Institute for Research on Race & Public Policy, and Associate Professor of African American Studies & Political Science. “Combining Documentary Storytelling and Ethnographic Methods to Create Accounts of Social Injustice”
- *Silvia Malagrino*, Professor of Art and Design. “Cataloguing the Experiences of Exiles, Migrants, Refugees, and Other Individuals Exposed to the Impact of Political Events in Their Personal Lives”
- *Karina Reyes*, Associate Professor of Psychology. “Academic Achievement, Success, and Resilience among Inner-City Youth”

The College increases curricular diversity by sometimes employing instructors from outside the Faculty Fellow group. For example, Directors of the Latino Cultural Center and the African American Cultural Center, Drs. Rosa Cabrera and Lori Barcliff Baptista, respectively,

team-taught a special Honors Seminar on cultural issues: “Common Concerns, Different Responses: A Framework for Explaining Diversity.”

**Team-taught and guest-speaker courses.** Another powerful means to bring diversity to the curriculum is to include a range of speakers within individual Honors courses. Beyond the tradition of the single-instructor course, Honors courses often involve guest speakers and teams of instructors who address particular issues that weave together over the fifteen weeks of the semester. Innovative instructional flexibility broadens students’ horizons and allows them to benefit from the expertise and insights of colleagues who might not usually teach undergraduate students. Examples of team-taught courses include seminars such as:

- Current Perspectives in Diabetes and Treatments
- Leadership in Higher Education
- Great Cities: UIC's Metropolitan Commitment
- Global Health Advocacy
- Introduction to Clinical and Translational Sciences, and
- A Decade of Pharmacy Experiences: From Pharmacy Student to Pharmacist in the Workforce.

The Honors Seminar “Global Health Advocacy” is a particularly noteworthy example. It came to life after Honors students Mansi Kathuria and her friends took the initiative in 2011 to bring global health education to the Honors College. They consulted professors about possible course contents, enlightening viewpoints, and interdisciplinary benefits, and explored the logistics of having the seminar offered at the Honors College. Taught by Professor Andrew Dykens of the Department of Family Medicine, “Global Health” is now an established seminar that continues to be well-received and to benefit many students across disciplinary boundaries,

encouraging them to understand the connection between health and culture from a global perspective. The Honors Seminar “Leadership in Higher Education” was led by Bette Bottoms, then Honors College Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Affairs, and Lon Kaufman, UIC’s Provost (and former Honors College Dean), who hosted guest speakers from myriad administrative posts across the campus, giving students a unique “insider’s look” at the administration of a university.

**Community and industry experts.** Finally, a unique feature and benefit of our location in the city of Chicago is the Honors College’s access to a remarkable range of industry experts and accomplished leaders, some UIC Honors alumni/ae. These experts bring their insights from all aspects of life to students and help students integrate theory with practice. Here are some examples of courses they have taught:

- Leadership Seminar
- Introduction to Legal Writing and Advocacy
- Music Therapy and Music Medicine: A Multicultural Examination
- Creative Shakespeare: Finding New and Renewed Life in Old Verse

“Introduction to Legal Writing and Advocacy” and a follow-up “Advocacy” Honors Seminar have been taught by Eric Leafblad, Arunas Buntinas, and Shelley Keane, all Assistant States Attorneys from the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. “Music Therapy” and its various iterations have been taught by Laura Pawuk, a certified music therapist; and “Creative Shakespeare” was taught by Shakespeare expert Rob Clare (internationally recognized educator and Shakespeare specialist from England with O-1 visa for aliens with extraordinary ability), who has also shared his work on the rehabilitative use of drama in the criminal justice system.

**Summary.** In summary, the UIC Honors curriculum welcomes multiple viewpoints.

With roughly 30% new courses every semester and the inclusion of faculty from an expanding array of departments, together with guest speakers from academia or industry, the College curriculum is more diverse than ever. Combined with our efforts in actively soliciting new course proposals, the Honors College curriculum for the past few years has been invigorated, with three to five new Core Courses (out of a total of 15 courses) and five to six new Honors Seminars (out of a total of 15-18 seminars) offered per semester.

### **Process of Course Solicitation**

Our commitment to excellence in teaching and learning is evident from the dynamic strategies used to foster a distinctive and influential curriculum—including implementing course submission policies guided by the college's faculty Educational Policy Committee (EPC). Through both structural and interpersonal efforts, we have been able to recruit the best teachers from the entire campus and beyond and expand the range of offerings.

Specifically, although we have a dedicated group of 350 faculty members from across campus who have 0% appointments as Faculty Fellows and serve as mentors to our students, we do not have a defined set of those who teach for the College. Instead, we solicit course proposals through campus-wide calls-for-proposals each semester, but we also actively study the faculty at UIC and their interests, watching for those who stand out in terms of disciplinary innovation, teaching awards, external and internal research awards (e.g., University Scholars, Distinguished Scholars), major grants, interest in undergraduate education, and so forth. Going beyond the best talents at UIC, the College sometimes also invites community and industry leaders to contribute to Honors curriculum by offering Honors Seminars. The process may appear to be simple, but in fact is a very labor-intensive, yet fruitful and essential, process, sometimes involving extensive dialogue among faculty members proposing courses and the Honors College EPC. As such, each

semester's curriculum design can be said to be a new adventure, with new contributors and course ideas to energize the curriculum. The result is that the Honors College offers Core Courses and Honors Seminars taught by faculty from disciplines such as Anthropology, Art, Architecture, Biology, Communication, Educational Policy Studies, Engineering, English, Geography, Germanic Studies, Music, Ophthalmology and Visual Science, Psychology, Law, and more.

One key to ensuring extraordinary curricular quality and consistency, as well as fairness and openness that encourages a diverse pool of outstanding individuals to participate, is having detailed and clear Core Course and Honors Seminar submission policies and procedures. Our policies detail the character and format of our curricular offerings, submission procedures and deadlines, and evaluation criteria. They are online for ease of access to anyone considering submitting a proposal.

Once proposals are submitted, the Honors College EPC members carefully evaluate every course proposal and provide feedback to prospective instructors. Composed of five faculty members representing natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities, and led by an Honors Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, this interdisciplinary committee guards standard of quality through a rigorous review process. The EPC also serves as a "think tank" for the Honors curriculum, taking on tasks including (a) continual evaluating, planning, and reinventing of Honors curriculum; (b) evaluating the feasibility of on-line or blended courses; (c) measuring the quality of offerings, and (d) helping faculty to improve their courses. The EPC helps the College review its curriculum periodically and eliminates, adds, and modifies courses as needed.

## **Course Instruction**

The third perspective on curricular diversity involves methods of course instruction. The leadership of the College and its EPC members work with instructors to ensure that elements of diversity are embedded within all Honors courses. The Honors College has focused on many ways of infusing issues related to diversity into its curriculum and courses, including offering an Instructors' Roundtable Luncheon every semester, incorporating diversity elements in Honors freshmen seminars, and promoting community involvement as a site of instruction.

**“Instructors' Roundtable: Diversity Matters.”** The UIC Honors College has hosted an Instructors' Roundtable Luncheon every semester since 2011 to provide the opportunity for instructors to share their ideas about diversity, and beyond, with each other. The nature of the event is captured in this invitation sent to all Honors course instructors from the Associate Dean (Chang) who handles curriculum:

Given that diversity is a defining feature of UIC, allowing us to reap benefits in so many different ways, for this semester's roundtable, I think it is a good time for us to discuss diversity issues to help further enrich Honors College curriculum. This is, in fact, consistent with one of the recommendations recently put forth by the Honors College Diversity Strategic Planning Committee. The point is that every Honors College course can and should have elements of diversity appreciation embedded within it. I would like to invite you to share your ideas about diversity issues in our upcoming Instructors' Roundtable... We will start with a brief introduction and then move to presentation/discussion; for the second hour, we will enjoy a light lunch while continuing to discuss/entertain ideas about your course! Every one of our invited instructors will be able to participate and respond to questions such as: What do you see as “diversity,” what

are some of its manifestations, and what should or can we do about it in our courses?

From both a philosophical and practical perspective, is focusing on diversity likely to be seen as divisive, or can it lead to an enriched teaching and learning environment, or both?

How can some of the different aspects of diversity be integrated into your teaching and in what ways? What are some pedagogical tools that we can use to enrich our teaching,

specifically, and the curriculum as a whole? Of course, you are most welcome to bring your own questions and/or share your ideas with other instructors. During the meeting,

we will also share many interesting class exercises that help address issues of diversity.

Here are a few good examples: Ask students to complete 10 sentences beginning, “I

am...” to explore the linkage between culture and identity. Ask students to write, “I am

[an adjective],” and “I am NOT [an adjective],” to explore their perceptions of

stereotypes. Sample students’ diverse languages by asking them to talk so others can hear

different voices. Of course, how diversity should be integrated depends on the nature of

the course, and this is why the Roundtable discussion is important.

In this roundtable discussion, instructors are invited to share ideas about diversity issues, including what they see as “diversity,” their reflections on its manifestations, and their ideas for

how instructors should or can benefit from diversity in their courses. Instructors discuss

philosophical as well as practical concerns confronting classes and students, and they talk about

how different disciplines may approach diversity from different angles, their best pedagogical

tools, and so on.

The Instructors’ Luncheon has become a standard calendar item, held at the beginning of every semester, and the instructors continue to share ideas about diversity in their courses

beyond the luncheon. In this way, the Honors College provides a rare opportunity for instructors



to encounter a diverse range of topics and teaching methods from other disciplines, because most faculty interact only with colleagues in their home disciplines and departments. By exchanging ideas with those outside one's disciplines, one not only benefits from alternative expertise and viewpoints but also unexpectedly find commonalities across disciplinary boundaries. Faculty members are uniformly positive about this opportunity. Like the Honors College leaders, they realize that diversity is not just a concept, but is actualized in the process of cross-disciplinary dialogue. The luncheon provides an excellent forum for instructors to share ideas with each other. Encouraging and promoting teacher exchange and sharing are top priorities for the College, as interaction among faculty not only energizes but also allows our instructors to find better ways to enhance student learning. These highly successful gatherings accomplish our mission in diversity in many ways.

**Freshman seminar to incorporate diversity.** The College regularly offers a one-credit HON 101: Freshman Seminar for new freshmen, a classic seminar to help ease students' transition to college. The College has revised it in recent years to incorporate more awareness of and appreciation for diversity throughout the course in terms of readings and assignments, including using tenets of intergroup dialogue methodology and theory when possible. The course helps orient students to college life, informing students how best to reap the benefits of diversity from the very outset and to recognize its great importance, not just for studying at UIC, but for their lives as a whole.

**The community: A site for engaging with diversity.** A third important feature of our curriculum is that it involves Chicago's diverse neighborhoods. One good example is "Think Global, Act Local: Global Health Service Learning Program," a seminar that engages students in a service learning project with a local community organizations, including Lawndale Christian

Health Center, Asian Human Services Family Health Center, Illinois Heart Rescue, ChildLink, and Casa Juan Diego. Students learn to apply global health concepts in local settings by working in teams with one of the community organizations to plan and implement a service learning project that addresses a community-identified health-related need. Students gain real-life experience enhancing their understanding of global health concepts such as the burden of disease, health disparities, and social determinants of health, while building their competencies in cultural exchange, professionalism, communication, project planning and implementation, and teamwork. Most importantly, through their projects, students learned to contribute to improving health in Chicago neighborhoods, and to appreciate the great diversity of an urban city like Chicago as well as of the world in general.

### **Additional Efforts**

We have also increased intellectual and cultural diversity through our Postdoctoral Fellowship in Teaching and Mentoring; co-curricular programming and activities, including Chicago Signature Honors Programming; programs at Honors housing; co-sponsoring activities and events; and the newly launched *Interdisciplinary Undergraduate Research Journal*, each discussed next.

**Honors Postdoctoral Fellows in Teaching and Mentoring.** The dean established a postdoctoral program in 2011 to provide Honors undergraduates with faculty-in-residence for teaching and mentoring resources, and to provide newly minted UIC PhDs with an exceptional opportunity to gain teaching and advising experience under the mentorship of the Dean and Associate Deans, in preparation for quality teaching-oriented tenure-track jobs. The program provides an additional track for young scholars of diverse specialties and disciplines to enter the profession and to shape the Honors experience for our students. Thus far, the position has been

held by one African American man from the field of Education, two native Russians (one from Philosophy, one from Germanic Studies), and one white woman from the discipline of English.

**Chicago Signature Honors Programming.** This extra-curricular initiative, born in 2011, engages UIC Honors students with the cultural and intellectual diversity that the Chicago urban environment provides. It broadens students' sense of cultural and urban citizenship outside the classroom setting. At no cost to them, students experience cultural performances, museums, and city theaters, and are often able to speak with performers, directors, and artists afterward. Their excursions are organized and led by the Honors Postdoctoral Fellows in Teaching and Mentoring. For example, in the 2014-15 academic year, students participate in 19 programs (e.g., Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theatre, United Capoeira Association workshops, the Museum of Contemporary Art, and more) with an average of 18 participants in each program. This is an excellent example of one of the varied ways that an Honors education supports the growth of engaged, curious citizens.

**Faculty visits to Honors housing.** Another initiative involves visits of faculty to Honors housing to engage with students on a more informal level. Honors housing provides a focused college experience, proximity to classes and professors, peer networking, and easy-access advising. The College's partnership with UIC Residence Life has been very strong. About a third of Honors Students live in campus residence halls, with over 250 (including all Presidential Award Programs-Honors scholars) living in one of two Honors-only living communities, the Honors House. Honors College advisors have special evening advising hours there, and one of the Honors Associate Deans, Hui-Ching Chang, is even a Faculty-in-Residence in Honors House. Since Spring 2014, more than twenty UIC faculty members and visiting scholars have visited, from various ethnic and racial backgrounds themselves and from diverse disciplines including

Psychology, English, Mechanical and Industrial Engineering, Clinical Anesthesiology, Dentistry, Biology, Pharmacy Education, Epidemiology, Nursing, and Oral Biology.

**Other activities/lectures.** The Honors College sponsors and co-sponsors many lectures and events focused on the diversity of the university, the city, and beyond. For example, a co-sponsorship of the Department of Political Science's "Future of Chicago" lecture series has brought to students public-sector leaders ranging from former Illinois Governor Jim Edgar and former Chicago Public Schools CEO Barbara Byrd-Bennett. The College has a particularly strong partnership with the university's six Centers for Cultural Understanding and Social Change (i.e., African-American Cultural Center, Asian American Resource and Cultural Center, Disability Resource Center, Gender and Sexuality Center, Latino Cultural Center, and Women's Leadership and Resource Center), and provides funding to co-sponsor many of their events. These include the Annual Lavender Graduation ceremony, "Peers to Allies Leadership Retreat: Bystander Leadership Training," "UIC Heritage Garden," "Reimagining Masculinity Initiative," and "Chicago Families Exhibit and Programs (a project with the Chicago Cultural Alliance)."

A number of other high-impact sponsored events this year celebrated various aspects of the long and difficult history of civil rights in the United States. For example, in November 2014, the Honors College marked the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of civil rights work in the deep south by hosting an event entitled "Freedom Summer: 1964." This panel discussion included five Freedom Riders (Roy DeBerry, Jim Lewis, Aviva Futorian, Peter Orris, and Hollis Watkins) in conversation moderated by Honors Faculty Fellows Natasha Barnes and Johari Jabir from the departments of English and African American Studies. The event drew an impressive community audience. Further, the Diversity Committee and Honors College staff, led by Faculty Fellow Nancy Cirillo, worked with the Richard J. Daley Library to present a film series on the legacy of slavery,

including the Academy Award winning *12 Years a Slave* and the 1927 version of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. To deepen students' understanding, the screenings were hosted by a guest lecturer specializing in the visual culture of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Dr. Rob Obey from Bowling Green State University. Such guest speakers and follow-up discussions provide substantive explanations, grounding them in their historical contexts.

### **Conclusion and Future Directions**

The UIC Honors College promotes diversity within its curriculum in myriad ways. Rigorously and conscientiously following its core standards for excellence in teaching and learning, the Honors College actively develops and communicates challenges and opportunities through Honors-only courses, research, civic engagement, and internships, while providing unique and stimulating experiences through student publications, leadership and professional development, extensive and well-monitored mentoring, and engagement with a community of peer scholars. Honors students succeed not just by excelling in their coursework, but also in their research endeavors and community engagement, cultivating a solid foundation for which a future of success and lifelong learning after graduating.

Building upon this solid foundation and in collaboration with the Honors College Diversity Committee, we continue to work to ensure curriculum diversity, among all other efforts that represent our commitment to diversity. The UIC Honors College is a model program that ensures undergraduate success and a demonstration that there is no end to what our talented faculty, staff, and students can achieve. We continue to endorse the principle that diversity is a benefit to be reaped and something to be actively implemented, and we have successfully designed our Honors curriculum to take advantage of the varied resources of social, racial, and intellectual sophistication that the city of Chicago has to offer.

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