

Spring 2021

“They at least try”: Examining at-risk students’ perceptions of the BGSU Honors College

Patrick Caniglia
pcanigl@bgsu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/honorsprojects>



Part of the [Education Policy Commons](#), [Social Justice Commons](#), and the [Social Policy Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Caniglia, Patrick, "“They at least try”: Examining at-risk students’ perceptions of the BGSU Honors College" (2021). *Honors Projects*. 579.

<https://scholarworks.bgsu.edu/honorsprojects/579>

This work is brought to you for free and open access by the Honors College at ScholarWorks@BGSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Honors Projects by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@BGSU.

“They at least try”: Examining at-risk students’ perceptions of the BGSU Honors College

Patrick Caniglia

Bowling Green State University

Introduction

My name is Patrick Caniglia, and I am a third-year Honors student at Bowling Green State University (BGSU). I am also an individual with great privilege. I am a white person attending a predominantly white institution within a community widely viewed through a Caucasian lens. I am straight living in a vastly homophobic society. I am a man who lives in a world still plagued by patriarchy. I am Christian in a region that often admires Christianity, for better or for worse. I am a native English speaker who does not struggle with the everyday challenges and fears of being discriminated against for my culture, legal status, or accent. **I bring this proposal to you now not as a mere obligation to enhance diversity and inclusion, but as a student who is driven by empathy and the prospects of increasing equity in an environment that has always welcomed the privileged.**

As a child growing up in rural Ohio, I witnessed firsthand parts of the social inequities that plague communities across the country from an early age. When I was in middle school, I began to join my older brother and father in volunteering for our local church's food pantry. While I stocked shelves and assisted clients with their groceries at the pantry's monthly sessions, I was astonished to see several of my classmates and teammates come through the church's doors to receive services. It was in those moments that I realized that because of little more than the luck of the draw, I was more equipped to succeed than my classmates waiting in the pantry line. After all, in addition to my aforementioned privileged social identities, I also am a product of the middle class. I never had to worry about not having a roof over my head or food in my belly. However, many of my classmates and friends did. This experience particularly resonated with me as I set off to approach a career in public service. I craved social justice and equity, and I could not wait to find it in full swing at BGSU. However, as I began to map out my career path as I was admitted into the BGSU Honors College, I was surprised that I did not leave the inequities of rural Ohio behind when I first walked into Founders Hall as a freshman.

It appeared that the BGSU Honors College was among the most homogeneous branches of BGSU's campus. Walking through the dormitory alone will showcase much of the College's representation. Students are predominantly white, straight, and of a Christian background. Additionally, most of the students' families are within the upper-middle class. Although students of color, students of the LGBTQ+ community, and international students are present in Honors, their numbers appear low enough to feel isolated rather than as a genuine part of a community. In addition to the lack of community numbers, these student groups are disproportionately more at risk of lower attrition and graduation rates while facing both explicit and systemic discrimination (Shultz et al., 2001; D'Amico et al., 2016). Without the adequate supports to thrive, these students may merely become casualties of tokenism and visibility politics.

Although I understand that the Honors staff has great empathy, compassion, and education regarding issues pertaining to at-risk students, even these traits cannot be substituted for lived experience. I feel that the Honors College at BGSU must more

efficiently listen to the voices of those who do not share the same privileges and opportunities that I, and many of the Honors staff, have been granted throughout our lives.

At-Risk Students

Historically, many underrepresented groups of college students have been labeled as being at-risk because of the systemic battles that so often face them throughout everyday life. Scholar Craig Vivian (2005) goes as broadly to define the term “at-risk student” as encompassing “...those who are socially, financially, or academically underprepared or under supported.” In short, at-risk individuals lack privilege in specific demographic domains (Castro, 2014). For instance, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender orientation, physical and developmental disabilities, and socioeconomic status commonly separate the privileged from the oppressed in today’s society.

Throughout the course of this project, I refer to my Honors student participants as being “at-risk.” By at-risk Honors students, I am referring to members of historically underrepresented groups such as students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, and international students. These groups of students are considered at-risk because of their substantially greater risk of facing systemic, explicit, and implicit discrimination, in addition to their lower attrition and retention rates in higher education (Shultz et al., 2001; D’Amico et al., 2016; U.S. Poverty Statistics, n.d.).

My decision to primarily focus on students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, and international students in my project is not because of my own ignorance to other demographic variables. Rather, the populations that I am focusing on are simply easier to measure as a part of the qualitative data collection and analysis process. For example, due to both FAFSA protections and ethical implications, a college student’s socioeconomic standing is not nearly as accessible to obtain as a student’s race or international student status. Likewise, issues such as intersectionality ripple through the populations, and participants will be more prone to face discrimination based on more than one demographic (Guinier, 1998). With this in mind, other factors such as socioeconomic status may be included in participant interviews, despite any focus on other social identities.

Affirmative Action

What is Affirmative Action?

Affirmative Action is the first and most well-known equity initiative in American higher education. Specifically, its impact over the decades has provided equity policy in academia with a firm foundation to build from. With this in mind, I understand that I cannot give an extensive, comprehensive history of Affirmative Action within the limits of this Honors Project. However, throughout this introductory overview on Affirmative Action in education, I will provide footnotes containing additional resources for further analysis and review.

In 1967, it appeared that President Lyndon B. Johnson had found the ultimate answer to gender and racial inequity in the workforce. He amended an executive order made two years prior that granted and expected an expansion of job opportunities for individuals of at-risk groups, namely, people of color. Johnson later extended this legislation, also known as Affirmative Action, to include women as beneficiaries of the intentionally inclusive policy (History of Affirmative Action, n.d.). For the first time in history, equity became a priority in the United States workforce. Now almost 54 years old, Affirmative Action continues to be tweaked and amended in order to increase opportunity for the oppressed.

Affirmative Action and Education

Affirmative Action has debatably made its largest influence within the realm of education. Affirmative Action in education levels the playing field for at-risk students by being a liaison for opportunities that may have never previously presented themselves because of the broken United States public education system. Because property and income taxes make up the backbone of public-school funding, many individuals in rural and urban districts are often deprived of resources in the classroom and beyond (Sweetland, 2014). Budget bonuses to schools with high standardized test scores complete this vicious cycle of chronically at-risk school districts (Brigandi et al., 2020). Rural and urban districts that cannot compete with the growing industry and real estate market of the suburbs are often left impoverished. This poverty reflects off of the public schools' student bodies as well. With minimal educational resources and limited financial stability, these students have few options for higher education and occupational paths (Brigandi et al., 2020).

Many of these at-risk students, particularly those of urban school districts, are ethnic or racial minorities, as well. In comparison to the majority of their white, suburban counterparts, their chances at lasting academic success are at a serious disadvantage. Affirmative Action fights to bridge this gap of racial disparity by granting students of color the chance to achieve the same goals as students that would be entitled to such opportunities already. Although this theory may seem to undercut the admission of majority students who may be more qualified on paper than some Affirmative Action beneficiaries, the ending results conclude time and time again that affirmative action students are just as qualified as any student, regardless of prior test scores or academic records. For example, in *Outliers*, author Malcolm Gladwell (2008) explains a study regarding the admissions process of the University of Michigan's law school program. As is standard procedure in many Affirmative Action initiatives, at-risk students such as students of color were selected to participate in the program even though their grades or test scores may not have been as good as those of their white colleagues. Many believe that this is the greatest downfall of Affirmative Action. The students who benefit are deemed as unqualified. However, as Gladwell (2008) elaborates, this is not necessarily the case. After tracking the law students beyond graduation, the study illustrates that those who benefited from Affirmative Action policy showed no difference in job performance when compared to other former students who were once considered to be better qualified. "Because even though the academic credentials of minority students at Michigan aren't as good as those of white students, the quality of students at the law school is high enough that *they're still above the threshold*. They are smart enough.

Knowledge of a law student's test scores is of little help if you are faced with a classroom of clever law students," (Gladwell, 2008).

Inequity in education is a matter of socioeconomic status just as much as it is an issue of race. In fact, ethnic and racial minorities have typically experienced higher rates of poverty throughout the United States' history. Scholar Lani Guinier (1998) has reported that the difference between the wealthy and the impoverished in education is perhaps highlighted the most through standardized testing results. In her *Kentucky Law Journal* article, Guinier (1998) explains that two twins who received perfect scores on the SAT had ultimately been gifted the ability to do so because of their socioeconomic standing. The additional resources that the twin students and their family were able to allocate towards SAT preparation obviously paid off when considering the standardized tests' final results. However, students that do not have access to the same resources are at a major disadvantage (Guinier, 1998).

Students across the country are disadvantaged regarding educational opportunities; particularly when the students are economically unstable¹. However, Affirmative Action and similar policies can fix this problem. By offering equity, at-risk students can be granted the opportunity to thrive while closing the gaps that separate themselves from the privileged.

What Now?

Inequity in education plagues the United States today. However, policies such as Affirmative Action can close socioeconomic gaps and empower the oppressed. Although it is not a flawless policy², Affirmative Action is a springboard of which more equitable policies in higher education can be based upon. Specifically, Affirmative Action's lasting successes in leveling the playing field for high-achieving and at-risk students, bringing opportunity to at-risk students in at-risk school districts, and accounting for individual resources that at-risk students may lack in comparison to more privileged peers confirm Affirmative Action's place as a groundbreaking policy in creating more equitable education reform (Brigandi et al., 2020; Gladwell, 2008; Guinier, 1998). In short, Affirmative Action illustrates that initiatives in education focusing on equity rather than equality will allow at-risk students to be granted opportunities to receive and continue their educations in ways in which they could have only previously dreamed of doing so before.

Through my analysis of collected qualitative data, I have synthesized the ideas of several at-risk Honors students to create recommendations for Honors programming. Though not solely based in admissions policies such as Affirmative Action, these recommendations will also emphasize equity and inclusion in the Honors College.

¹ Wilson, Valerie, and William M. Rodgers. "Black-White Wage Gaps Expand with Rising Wage Inequality." *Economic Policy Institute*, 20 Sept. 2016.
www.epi.org/publication/black-white-wage-gaps-expand-with-rising-wage-inequality/?mc_cid=5897c40ea0&mc_eid=257f5e78b6#epi-toc-4.

² Niederle, Muriel, et al. "How Costly Is Diversity? Affirmative Action in Light of Gender Differences in Competitiveness." *Management Science*, vol. 59, no. 1, Jan. 2013, pp. 1–16., doi:10.3386/w13923.

Recruitment and Retention: The BGSU Honors College

According to a BGSU Honors report, of the 672 admitted applicants in the BGSU Honors College in the 2020-2021 academic year, 97 were students of color. Specifically, this 14.4% rate included 34 Latino students, 27 Black students, 24 Asian students, 9 American Indian/Alaska native students, and three Pacific Islander students. Likewise, of these admitted Honors recruits, 1.08% identified as non-binary, whereas 65% identified as female, followed by 33.92% identifying as male. Although these numbers may not seem too out of the ordinary, these basic recruitment statistics are startling when compared to the 2020-2021 Honors student enrollment data. Of the 339 students enrolled, only 9.7% of students were students of color. Specifically, 9 Latino students, 6 Black students, 6 Asian students, and 4 American Indian/Alaska native students made up this statistic. The final 8 students of color documented their race as “Other/Not Specified.” Finally, 0.9% of the total students enrolled identified as non-binary, in comparison to their 69.39% female and 29.69% male classmates.

With this data in mind, the student yield data is eye-opening. In the 2020-2021 year, yield rates were 26.5% for Latino students, 22.2% for Black students, 25% for Asian students, and 44.4% for American Indian/Alaska Native students. These numbers are miniscule compared to the 53.2% attrition rate experienced by white students in Honors.

These recruitment and enrollment statistics paint a startling picture for at-risk students in Honors. Although many factors undoubtedly play a role in a student’s college selection process, it would be remiss to question why at-risk recruits do not commit to Honors at the same rates in which they are accepted. However, as readers will see upon examining the research reported below, perhaps this differential is based on Honors failing to create a welcoming environment for all. That said, it will be fascinating to explore these same statistics following the implementation of this project’s recommendations. The researcher feels that with the following recommendations in place, enrollment data regarding at-risk students will rise.

Research Questions

The research questions that I would like to address through my Capstone Honors Project are as follows: What resources and support, both academically and via co-curriculars, do at-risk students enrolled in the BGSU Honors College need in order to be successful in their programs of study? And how might the Honors College implement programming in order to meet the needs of those at-risk students?

Literature Review

Literature Review

According to researchers of The Project Forward Leap Program, a positive youth development program for at-risk middle schoolers at Millersville University, there are four primary reasons for depressed academics and increased dropout rates of minority students along the educational pipeline: the home environment, cultural values, discrimination factors, and managerial factors (Fleming, 2012). The same research team determined that up to 30-50% of variance in academic testing is due to differences in the home environment. Additionally, minority students are often expected to reject their own home cultures in order to succeed in school, and poorer public schools are underfunded and leave students unprepared for college (Fleming, 2012). When at-risk students, including students of color, international students, and LGBTQIA+ students, need resources and support the most, they do not receive it. These students are not given the chance to succeed.

Too often, at-risk Honors College students are subject to obstacles that are not faced by their peers on the path to a higher education degree. For instance, first-generation college students are more likely to be students of color and of lower incomes while also being less likely to speak English as their primary language (Brown & Burkhardt, 1999). Also, students in predominantly white schools do not experience the class overcrowding often faced by students in schools predominantly made up of students of color (Darling-Hammond, 1998). In addition to these examples of widespread, systemic barriers faced by the aforementioned groups, they are statistically more likely to come from at-risk school districts, as well. Because of funding policies based on legislation such as the Every Student Succeeds Act and district property and income taxes, rural and urban public-school districts are often left severely underfunded in comparison to their wealthy, suburban counterparts. In fact, in Ohio, this funding system has been deemed unconstitutional since 1997 yet has not been dramatically altered since (Phillis, 2005). Specifically, high achieving students in low achieving schools are not given the resources to maximize their academic and extracurricular potentials or granted the opportunities to be competitive for many higher education scholarships (Brigandi et al, 2020). Because of these pieces of legislation, low achieving schools have been put under the national microscope in recent decades. However, despite new data on struggling student populations, efforts continue to

focus on fixing students rather than addressing the actual school systems that are broken (Montecel et al, 2004). In order to help compensate for these disadvantages, higher education institutions must prioritize providing resources for its at-risk students.

Unfortunately, prioritizing supports for at-risk students to effectively improve outcomes of retention and academic success has proven to be easier said than done. For example, according to Bourdon and colleagues (2020), there is minimal research linking the utilization of on-campus mental health services with ever-growing college student mental health concerns. With up to one in four college students meeting criteria for disorders such as depression or anxiety, it is concerning that there has been such little research illustrating whether the supply of mental health services has been meeting the demand for services that college students face. After studying whether college students in need utilize on-campus mental health services, it is evident that students of color and men are notably less likely to reach out to these available mental health services (Bourdon et al, 2020). Additional studies, such as the one performed by researcher Nicholas D'Amico and colleagues (2016), support this claim in full. Their study, in which college students were surveyed on their mental health literacy and use of their respective institution's services, also concluded that college students widely do not take advantage of provided supports such as mental health services (D'Amico et al, 2016). This supports the notion that perhaps a greater emphasis must be placed in higher education on reducing the stigma surrounding mental health. Although these cases primarily involve the utilization of mental health services in higher education settings, these conclusions should carry weight when considering how other supports may go untouched by at-risk students, as well.

In order to help combat this painful underutilization of resources, higher education institutions are working to implement programming that will benefit all of its constituents, and most notably, cater programming to the demands and needs of their most at-risk students. This includes what scholar Sachi Edwards (2018) has noted within the emerging interfaith movement. Specifically, Edwards (2018) concluded that universities and colleges are making increased efforts to support religiously diverse students in the classroom and beyond. Following years of taboo, institutions are now promoting the importance of religious diversity as a means of combatting Christian privilege or lapses in representation among religious minorities. In promoting on-campus programming such as interfaith dialogue, students of all religions can come together to learn more about one another (Edwards, 2018). Likewise, faith-based student organizations can serve as a foundational source of support for many students, especially among religious minorities. Although religious minorities were not mentioned among the groups of at-risk in the scope of this Honors Project, the parallels between the populations are evident, and therefore should be considered similarly moving forward. Additionally, the literature surrounding programming with students who are religious minorities will assist the project in finding programming strategies that may work for other at-risk Honors students, as well.

Edwards' (2018) takes on the collegiate interfaith movement and its programming benefits opens doors of agreement from fellow scholar Erin L. Castro (2014) and her opinions on the downfall of programming intended to empower at-risk students in higher education. Although Castro (2014) questions the effectiveness of such programs, the statistics certainly

justify their need. Overrepresentation of Caucasian males has been an issue within the fields of STEM for decades. In fact, in 2006, only 17% of STEM students who graduated were students of color, despite massive public efforts to increase diversity and inclusion within the field (Castro, 2014). In questioning the efficiency of these efforts, Castro (2014) found that choices in language can be pivotal. Castro (2014) believes that rather than identifying minority students as “underprepared” or even “at-risk”, language in diversity and inclusion efforts should revolve around more strengths-based language in order to better promote the equity that is intended in the first place.

Gaps in the Literature

In order to learn more about what resources and supports at-risk Honors students need, researchers, policymakers, and educators alike must do a better job of simply asking their students what they feel is needed for success. In producing a study that effectively captures these essential student voices, the aforementioned groups of influencers and administrators can better understand how to provide programming that will both support and be utilized by at-risk students, much to the approval of scholars such as efficiency aficionados Castro (2014) and Edwards (2018) and the social justice oriented Montecel (2004) and Brigandi (2020). Additionally, this kind of study will look to address the major gap in the literature diagnosed by Bourdon and colleagues (2020) that identifies the major discrepancy between the available services in higher education institutions versus their actual utilization rates. Finally, another gap exists in the fact that although the public education system has largely been criticized for its inequities for decades, sustainable solutions have not been made. Although admissions policies have been implemented in states such as Texas with great efficiency thus far, it is evident that change is still needed at the K-12 level of public schooling (Orentlicher, 2019). Unfortunately, this change has largely not come, and therefore, higher education institutions must step up to fill the gaps created by K-12 public schooling’s lack of support for its at-risk students. This Honors Project aims to supplement these effective policies by providing meaningful and sustainable supports for the college students that need them the most.

Implemented Activity

The researcher conducted one-on-one informational interviews with current and former BGSU Honors College students. The researcher then utilized this qualitative research in planning and recommending programming to support at-risk Honors students. By at-risk Honors students, the researcher refers to members of historically underrepresented groups such as students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, and international students. Although the Honors College aims to provide its students with ample resources and opportunities, it must place a greater emphasis on making sure it is properly supporting its at-risk students. With this goal in mind, the researcher feels that this study provides Honors College administrative personnel with the vital insight that is needed in order to make meaningful change to Honors programming. The researcher believes that the interviewees have the perspective and knowledge necessary to make this change, and the

researcher looks forward to integrating their voices into the conversation of increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Honors College at BGSU.

During these one-on-one interviews, the researcher learned from the interviewees what resources and supports they feel that the Honors College should provide its at-risk students in order to promote their inclusion and success within the program. From there, the researcher is recommending programming within the Honors College based on their suggestions and needs. Please see Appendix A. for interview questions.

Methodology

In this study, qualitative data was collected to find solutions to improving the BGSU Honors College's diversity, equity, and inclusion programming by better supporting its at-risk students. Qualitative data collection and thematic analysis was determined to be the strongest method of research for this study because of its detail and the capability to analyze a multitude of participant voices in a direct setting. In order to perform qualitative research, the researcher sought Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. However, the IRB committee at BGSU deemed the study to not require further review.

Beginning in December of 2020, the researcher put out a call out for participants through the BGSU Honors College's weekly newsletter, *The Scroll* (Appendix B.). Likewise, the researcher contacted the Alumni Laureate Scholars program and the BGSU Honors Ambassadors with a similar call to action. The subjects self-selected to participate based on reading this advertisement. This announcement provided readers with an overview of the study's objectives and of the interview process. Additionally, the announcement also mentioned that the researcher encouraged at-risk students to participate, namely, students of color, international students, and students of the LGBTQIA+ community. It emphasized that student identities would be protected in the interview process, as well. Lastly, the researcher provided potential subjects with his contact information for any further questions. A copy of the announcement is attached to this report.

The researcher also engaged in conversations with both current and former members of the BGSU Honors staff, including an Honors recruiter with whom the researcher worked closely on early iterations of this project. These staff members were willing to reach out to advisees that they knew would be relevant representatives of the study.

To protect the confidentiality of the subjects, names and other identifying information have not been included in the results of the study. Instead, common themes expressed by the participants have been recorded. This study is intended to be confidential and gauge the opinions of participants rather than their personal information. The one-on-one interviews were recorded via Zoom for the researcher's analysis following each interview. These Zoom recordings have been stored on his computer only. He is the only person with access to these recordings, and after finalizing his Honors Capstone Project, the recordings will be permanently deleted from his computer. I feel that using Zoom to meet with participants and record interviews will add another

layer of confidentiality to the study. In turn, this increased security may have positively impacted the quality of the study's results, as well.

Before participating in the one-on-one interviews, participants were asked to read over the consent form and fill it out to express their intent to participate (Appendix C.). The consent form was sent to the participants via email (Appendix D.). From there, times and dates for each participant's one-on-one interview were arranged between the subjects and the researcher. Once each one-on-one Zoom interview began, participants were told that they would be welcome to ask any additional questions about the consent form before officially starting the interview. During the interview, participants were asked to answer the questions (Appendix A) based on their own personal thoughts, opinions, and perspectives. The participants were informed that they were not required to answer any questions that they were not comfortable answering and that they could conclude the interview at any time and for any reason. After the interview was completed, subject participation in the study was over. All of the study's participants had the ability to view, alter, or withdraw any of their statements up until the submission of this Honors Capstone Project. Participants were not offered compensation in this study.

Between the dates of January 15, 2021 and March 26, the researcher interviewed five participants. These students were diverse in terms of their international student status, sexual orientation, gender orientation, and race. Specifically, four participants were students of color, two participants were LGBTQIA+ students, and one participant was an international student.

The researcher has supplemented the findings of this study with secondary research. This research consisted of looking into honors colleges and their diversity, equity, and inclusion programming. Specifically, the researcher reviewed the websites of the University of Vermont, Michigan State University, Purdue University, and the University of Maryland. These programs were selected because of their size or location in addition to their Honors programming, and they were discovered through the combination of Google search engine inquiries and an HNRS 2010 Working Group committee meeting. The HNRS 2010 Working Group is a committee devised by the BGSU Honors College to amend its curriculum for one of the two mandatory first-year Honors courses. Specifically, solutions were sought to boost student growth and develop learning outcomes that better encompass the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion. The researcher feels that this secondary research provides this report with several models of which to base the implementation of future diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within the BGSU Honors College.

Results

This study and research framework provides an opportunity to develop a more supportive space for those who need it the most. In performing this study, the BGSU Honors College, its at-risk student participants, and the researcher will not only be promoting BGSU's new strategic initiative, but we will also be acting on it. Furthermore, this action of listening to the voices and needs of at-risk students and transforming that knowledge into **meaningful change** will lead to the increased recruitment, retention, and success for generations of BGSU Honors students to

come. The results of each participant interviews are recorded below by main categories of investigation. Pseudonyms protect the identities of the study's participants.

Jiang

Demographic Information: LGBTQ student, student of color, international student

Common Themes:

- Obstacles Faced
 - o “As an international student in the Honors College, I sometimes have trouble finding financial resources...”
 - o Jiang stressed that international students often are not as competitive in scholarships (if available) because different countries prioritize education in different ways.
- Staff and Faculty
 - o “They try their best...” However, they cannot fully understand at-risk students’ experiences.
 - o Jiang noted hearing that former Honors recruiter began to look into an intersectional committee for student voices to be heard by staff.
 - o Positively speaking, Jiang considered Honors to be very open-minded.
- Classroom/Extracurriculars
 - o “Representation is huge!”
 - o Jiang constantly expressed the need for support in individuals with similar backgrounds and languages.
 - o Jiang also suggested that intergroup dialogue and/or discussions on privilege and intersectionality should become a required part of the Honors curriculum.
 - o The little things go a long way to Jiang: introductions with pronouns, gender-neutral dorms, and conversations addressing topics such as privilege in the classroom are critical.

Juan

Demographic Information: male student of color

Common Themes:

- Obstacles Faced
 - o Juan finds time management and the pandemic’s impact to be particularly challenging.
 - o However, he feels that Honors has done well at expanding students’ skills and mindsets during the current climate.
- Staff and Faculty
 - o He believes that they try not to home in on your differences and look at similarities. He feels that this may raise connection, but he wondered if differences should be embraced, as well.
 - o They know of differences and try to compensate for them.

- Ultimately, Juan feels that Honors staff and faculty cannot relate to the experiences of at-risk Honors students.
- Classroom/Extracurriculars
 - Juan cited programs such as TRIO for including important resources such as tutoring and friend groups of people with similar backgrounds for at-risk students.
 - The counseling Center is essential in addressing mental health needs for at-risk students...“We don’t feel as close with the other people around us because we know how different we are from everybody else.”
 - Juan is very outspoken in class and feels comfortable overall in the classroom setting.
 - Juan explained that Honors courses should incorporate more diverse voices in the Honors curriculum while embracing differences among individuals.
 - “There is always improvement to be found everywhere and in everything!”

Jesse

Demographic Information: female LGBTQ student

Common Themes/Major Takeaways:

- Obstacles Faced
 - Time management and the abstract structure of the Honors Project were both primary challenges in Jesse’s overall college and BGSU Honors experience.
- Staff and Faculty
 - Jesse feels comfortable with Honors professors.
 - Jesse has also felt relatively represented by Honors professors... “It’s fun...and it’s eye-opening.”
 - She also believes that more representation in faculty could make a large impact on other students with at-risk identities.
 - She feels that although staff and faculty can relate, “it may never be 100%.”
- Classroom/Extracurriculars
 - Jesse emphasized that at-risk students face additional “life events” that can hinder time/financial situations... “It all blends together.”
 - i.e., LGBTQ students being financially cut off by family after coming out, etc.
 - She expressed that any events that allow students to “be a part of something and have their voices heard” provides students with a critical sense of community.
 - In her 2010 class, students read their own graphic novels about their individual stories. “It created empathy.”
 - She discussed the importance of teaching intersectionality.
 - She noted that students’ immaturity can derail conversation and make at-risk students uncomfortable.

Tiana

Demographic Information: female student of color

Common Themes/Major Takeaways:

- Obstacles Faced
 - o Obstacles faced in Honors included the extra workload and higher expectations, collaboration with other students, and pop culture references.
 - For example, *Harry Potter* references were something that connected many Honors students, but she could not relate with the series.
- Staff and Faculty
 - o Tiana considers the Honors staff to be very helpful in connecting students with resources and walking them through problems.
 - o “Students from marginalized groups are not always the most tech-savvy...it was definitely easy to walk into the Honors College and get the help that I needed in that moment.”
 - o “They try to make sure that no one is left behind.”
 - o “They are always trying to learn new things.”
 - o “They at least try.”
- Classroom/Extracurriculars
 - o Believes in the emerging Honors Students of Color group. “The initiative is there.”
 - o Tiana sees potential in the Honors Students Association as building community. “It can let people meet each other without having their guards up.”
 - o Expressed that additional events can be targeted for “niche crowds.”

Jasmine**Demographic Information:** female student of color

Common Themes/Major Takeaways:

- Obstacles Faced
 - o Jasmine was disappointed to note that required Honors courses may push back her academic major’s track.
 - o Believes awareness of Honors is a major barrier that should be increased in recruiting at-risk students to Honors.
 - i.e., information sessions for at-risk students
- Staff and Faculty
 - o Faculty “may be understanding, but they have not experienced the same things or microaggressions that people of color have to face.”
 - Classmates often say, “I never thought about that” while in class.
 - Her perspective is considered “unique” by classmates and faculty.
- Classroom/Extracurriculars
 - o Jasmine was adamant in believing that diverse topics should be talked about...believes that there is too much emphasis on obsolete philosophers and philosophies.

- Such low numbers of students with similar backgrounds... “It is a little uncomfortable.”
- Current events are left unaddressed (i.e., AAPI hate crimes).
- Feels supported in classroom
 - However, she also feels pressure to represent all minorities in the classroom.
 - Assignments that are flexible help Jasmine explore underrepresented narratives.

Common Themes

- Obstacles Faced
 - Time management, Honors workload
 - Social identities do not appear to come immediately to mind.
 - This may be a limitation of the research (see limitations section).
- Staff and Faculty
 - “They try.”
 - The majority of Honors faculty and staff cannot truly relate to at-risk Honors students.
- Classroom/Extracurriculars
 - Events in which students can be a part of a community are appreciated.
 - Both targeting specific student populations or not.
 - Students felt supported generally in Honors classroom.
 - Representative texts, flexible assignment topics, and more diverse faculty would help.

Secondary Research: Profiles

The University of Vermont (UVM)

Honors College Mission Statement: “To promote excellence in undergraduate education at UVM by offering a residential learning college that attracts academically talented students and leads them towards superior educational outcomes.”

Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: At the University of Vermont, the voices of its at-risk Honors students are heard and prioritized in programming decisions. Specifically, this representation often comes in the form of their Student Equity Action Committee (SEAC). In their own mission statement, SEAC states, “The Student Equity Action Committee (SEAC) strives to build and maintain an equitable Honors College community of globally responsible and multiculturally competent individuals. We will embrace the knowledge, skills, and voices of

those with diverse experiences to foster an atmosphere of inclusion and excellence in alignment with university-wide efforts.”

In addition to this student-led committee of diverse voices in a representative role, the UVM Honors College also has a separate Committee on Equity and Inclusion. This committee “works to drive institutional change for a stronger, more equitable Honors College community. The CEI informs and assists in the support of students from marginalized identities and works to develop a more socially conscious and culturally competent Honors College.” In order to carry out their mission, the committee looks to creating safer spaces for all within their Honors College, expand diversity within the Honors College, help faculty and students alike “learn to communicate across perceived difference” in multiple contexts, and advise Honors administrators on programming decisions.

Diversity Statistics at UVM:

About 12,000 students are enrolled at UVM. According to College Factual, UVM is low in racial diversity. Specifically, around 80% of its student body is white and 1.3% are African American. This reflects the university’s faculty, as well, as about 83% are Caucasian, too. In terms of gender diversity, UVM is quite unbalanced. For example, about 56% of their student body identifies as female, as opposed to a 43% clip of male students.

Rutgers University

Honors College Mission Statement: Our mission is to “give students a place where intellectual curiosity, hands-on knowledge, interdisciplinary collaboration, service, and compassion for one another are central to their experience. We are committed to advancing a diverse, inclusive, and equitable community where all members have the opportunity, understanding, and support to thrive and to pursue a career with purpose. *Curiosity. Knowledge. Purpose.*”

Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: “We believe that bringing together students from diverse backgrounds with wide-ranging interests not only is the responsibility of a public university but also provides the potential for the best educational opportunities for all students to become effective and empathetic citizens of the world. Working and living together with students and faculty who identify, believe, and behave differently, our students are positioned to learn more deeply about themselves and to imagine and help shape the kind of world they want to create.”

In order to back this philosophy, Rutgers University’s Honors College is enacting change by launching initiatives that emphasize diversity, equity, and inclusion. These include opening up their high school recruiting pipeline to include more students from diverse backgrounds, broadening the Honors curriculum to include information on terminology such as “the savior complex” and “implicit bias”, creating a DEI newsletter, and beginning workshops series to improve inclusive working environments. These progressive agenda items are spearheaded by the Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coalition. This Coalition includes staff members, students, and faculty.

Rutgers Staff Member Testimony: The researcher conducted a brief informational interview with Issata Oluwadare, the Associate Dean of Student Affairs and a member of the Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Coalition at Rutgers University. During this conversation, Oluwadare spoke on her institution's emphasis on DEI training through a holistic lens. This focus on overall student wellness fosters community and does not leave out individuals. Although she noted that student groups based on specific identities are useful and supportive in some settings, she finds that in focusing to provide all students with a welcoming environment, there is a greater sense of unity and effectiveness in Honors programming. Additionally, Oluwadare explained that the student voice is an essential component in every decision that Honors makes regarding DEI work. "I consider everyone a stakeholder." In order for staff members, students, and faculty to prioritize student voices, they must first listen to student voices. To engage these student voices, they allow students to communicate Honors updates while also holding leadership positions to discuss DEI topics regularly with staff members.

Diversity Statistics at Rutgers: College Factual rates Rutgers as being exceptionally diverse. To begin with, 40% of the student body is Caucasian. Likewise, 43% of their faculty identify as white, as well. In addition to these numbers, about half of the student population identifies as male, with about half identifying as female. Rutgers is relatively diverse geographically speaking, too. Although they only have representation from 34 states, they have almost 6,000 international students from nearly 50 countries in their student population.

Auburn University

Honors College Mission Statement: "ENGAGE: We serve others with compassion.

EXPLORE: We pursue truth with courage and conviction.

ELEVATE: We participate in the creation of a more just world.

EXPERIENCE: We value the diversity of the human experience."

Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: "Honoring the diversity of the human experience constitutes the very core of the Auburn University Honors College mission. Diversity is inherent to the Honors College, as it unites students, faculty, and staff from all corners of academia in the pursuit of higher learning and excellence. We embrace a philosophy of inclusive excellence wherein we celebrate our differences while honoring our commonalities. In doing so, we support Auburn University's broader mission to usher in a brighter future through forward-thinking education, life-enhancing research, and selfless service."

In efforts to apply these principles, Auburn University has enacted initiatives such as forming an Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee, prioritizing the diversification of Honors faculty, and actively recruiting students from underrepresented majors and walks of life. In the future, their goals for boosting DEI include emphasizing increased signage in the Honors

College, the use and understanding of gender-inclusive language, and an increased consideration of dietary need and religious food preferences at Honors events.

Diversity Statistics at Auburn: For starters, according to College Factual, Auburn has very low racial diversity, with about 80% of its student body identifying as Caucasian. However, about 47% of the student population identify as male and 52% identify as female. Likewise, they have high diversity regarding geographic location. Specifically, 42 states are represented in addition to an international student population of about 3,000 students.

Purdue University

Honors College Mission Statement: “Our mission is to create and foster well-rounded, well-educated global leaders. We work to create student leaders on campus who impact society from their very first semester. The four pillars, our primary tenets, come together to help us accomplish this mission. They are leadership development, undergraduate research, community and global experiences, and interdisciplinary academics.”

Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: “The Purdue Honors College is committed to supporting the well-being of its students, staff and faculty. We are constantly engaged in devising new, rigorous, and creative means to build a community in which diversity and inclusion thrive, and equity considerations are resolutely addressed. We recognize that this process does not happen automatically, and nor can its success be taken for granted. This is why we work tirelessly on multiple fronts to ensure that each member of our community feels welcome, safe and valued. As an interdisciplinary college, the values of collaboration and mutual respect are integral to what we do in our classrooms, our residential community, and in our programming initiatives.”

In supporting its at-risk students, Purdue University’s Honors College has created the Honors College Diversity and Inclusion team. This team was created with the goal “to advocate for the representation and inclusion of minoritized and vulnerable population groups in the College, as well as in the wider University community.” Their action within the Honors College includes facilitating workshops, film showings, panels, reading groups, and other activities that embrace and promote social justice. The team includes a faculty member, a staff member, and six Student Diversity Officers.

Diversity Statistics at Purdue University: Overall, Purdue University is rated as an excellent university in terms of diversity, according to College Factual. For starters, about 64% of the student body is Caucasian. Likewise, about 58% of the student population identifies as male, with about 41% identifying as female. In addition to these numbers, Purdue has impressive geographic diversity. Students hail from all 50 states, and the student body includes nearly 9,000 international students.

Michigan State University

Honors College Mission Statement: “Members of the Honors College community at Michigan State University value integrity, critical thought, and collaboration. We approach learning with an openness and inclusivity that encourages consideration of diverse perspectives. We aspire to excellence – challenging ourselves and crossing boundaries of disciplines, communities, and cultures as we innovate for tomorrow.”

Honors College Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: “The Honors College takes an active approach to ensure that the College closely mirrors Michigan State University’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. The phrase inclusive excellence is a great way to describe the value we hold true: we are a better and stronger Honors College the more diverse we are in experience and composition. A philosophy of inclusive excellence means that we think about issues of inclusion in everything that we do; that we are necessarily and intentionally thinking about how our actions with regard to academic policy and programs, student services and admissions are inclusive. Whatever stake or role you have in the Honors College, I invite you to join us in our commitment to and role-modeling of inclusive excellence.”

MSU’s Honors College backs this statement up with initiatives ranging from peer mentorship programs for students of color to the Honors Students of Color Coalition to the formation of the Inclusive Excellence Strategic Committee. Between these programs, students, staff, and faculty alike get a voice in the decision-making process within Honors College programming.

MSU Staff Member Testimony: The researcher conducted a brief informational interview with Erika Crews, the Honors College DEI Coordinator and an academic advisor at MSU. When it comes to implementing programs in Honors, Crews and her fellow staff members constantly seek the students’ voices for any support needs. Namely, they do this through launching regular “climate check” surveys that ask students to express any support that they would like to see in Honors. This simple approach is one that easily engages students and ensure that all Honors students have a voice in Honors programming. Likewise, the MSU Honors College also has an Inclusive Excellence Strategic Committee that emphasizes developing DEI programming. This committee is comprised of Honors faculty, staff members, and student representatives from other Honors programs. These student representatives provide the committee with a student perspective while also serving as liaisons between their own organizations and Honors administrators.

Diversity Statistics at MSU: According to College Factual, MSU is a very diverse institution. Their student body is 67% Caucasian, while roughly 50% identify as male and 50% as female. Additionally, 47 states are represented by their students, and their international student population stands at about 6,000 students.

Common Themes

- DEI work from a wellness perspective.
- Prioritizing the student voice in programming decisions.
- Utilizing the student voice in implementing Honors programming.

Recommendations

The Honors Classroom

- Emphasize representative narratives in readings and materials
 - o Have discussions as to why certain narratives and perspectives are used while others are absent.
- Give students assignments with topic flexibility
 - o i.e., Jay Jones final HNRS 2020 assignment, graphic novel assignment
- Encourage students to discuss current events and their impacts on various identities
 - o Part of what makes the Honors classroom so special is its basis in discussion. Use it to the students' advantage by discussing current events that students (especially at-risk students) may be grappling over.
 - i.e., the AAPI hate crimes, the tumultuous election season, etc.

Extracurriculars

- Increase community feel for students
 - o Create a student wellness committee as a subcommittee of the new Honors Students Association
 - Can focus on events that are inclusive to all (i.e., painting rooms/Honors Den, leading study groups, etc.)
- Create a welcoming environment to students in every way possible
 - o Can start with the little things!
 - i.e., how the bulletin board space is used, making mental health resources available, promoting more meaningful discussions in HLC book talks

Staff and Faculty

- Form a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee
 - o Includes staff members, Honors faculty, and student representatives
 - o Provides at-risk students with a voice, especially regarding DEI topics
- Provide students with the personable interaction that they seek
 - o Encourage staff to be open to students about own experiences as a college student, etc.
- Do “the little things” that go a long way in making students feel welcome
 - o Pronouns on email signature/introductions with pronouns
 - o Offer flyers on mental health resources
 - o Begin a student drop-by time in which they can talk to advisers about anything
 - o Attend DEI trainings to better understand students
 - OMA, LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, CWGE

Strengths and Limitations

Limitations

The limitations of this research do not discredit the extent of the data collected but are instead intended to strengthen further and future research in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion that were explored. For starters, one limitation that may have hindered the conclusions of the research was its sample size. Despite advertising the study in HNRS 2020 classes, *The Scroll*, to the Honors Ambassadors, and to the Alumni Laureate Scholars, a total of five participants were interviewed. Although the participants interviewed were very diverse in their identities and experiences, a larger sample size may have warranted additional perspectives or perhaps a more sweeping general consensus of recommendations. In the future, more word-of-mouth advertising may go a long way in gathering more participants. Likewise, a study with compensation, such as a small gift card, may be enough to achieve greater study participation, as well. Finally, “Zoom fatigue” may have also been a factor in the limited number of participants. In the future, interviews may be done in person.

Secondly, a limitation that future researchers may want to be aware of is that surrounding the interview process as a whole. Future researchers should recognize that the interview process takes a great deal of time to schedule, perform, and reflect upon. For example, there were prospective participants who expressed interest in the study yet could not take part in interviews because of communication difficulties or scheduling conflicts. Fortunately, this project shall serve as a model of qualitative research of which future researchers can utilize and learn from in their pursuit of additional data.

Another limitation of this study was the researcher’s social identities. The researcher identifies as white, male, and straight. These majority social identities may have made the at-risk students interviewed too uncomfortable or hesitant to truly open up about their fears of and goals for the BGSU Honors College. Future interviewees would likely benefit from being interviewed by a researcher with a similarly at-risk social identity. Likewise, future researchers should consider presenting their own social identities before meeting the students to interview.

A final limitation regarding the research of other institutions’ honors colleges was their differences from BGSU. The institutions that were listed in the secondary research profiles were often larger, more diverse, and from different areas of the country. Although this may be viewed as a hindrance in that similar schools were not compared, the researcher views it as a strength that vastly different institutions were used for the secondary research profiles. Thanks to this approach, readers can learn about how unfamiliar institutions are bettering their honors colleges through the incorporation of diversity, equity, and inclusion programming. This strategy also avoids perpetuating continuous trends in diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) work among peer institutions. In short, looking beyond peer institutions allows for more progressive proposals and forward-thinking solutions.

Strengths

Although the study has a few aforementioned limitations, this project's research process provided an outlet for the voices of BGSU Honors College's most at-risk students. First and foremost, the need to listen to the voices of at-risk students in Honors is long overdue. This work has not been performed in the past by Honors staff, but it is happening now. The interview process utilized in this project provides Honors administrators and future researchers alike with a framework to build off of when it comes to collecting insight from Honors' at-risk student population. Secondly, the qualitative data collected through this project may be used to inform programming decisions by Honors administrators. As evidenced by a combination of collected interview data and research profiles of other honors colleges, student representation is a critical component in increasing a welcoming environment and engaging students. Incorporating the project's interview results in Honors programming decisions will go a long way in making Honors students feel more at-home than at-risk.

In addition to the strength in the interview process, the approach of researching other institutions and their takes on diversity, equity, and inclusion programming was invaluable to this project. Specifically, by looking into the methods of other institutions, their successes can be modeled in the BGSU Honors College's own future DEI initiatives. Likewise, through this research and in these conversations with other Honors Colleges, BGSU Honors administrators will benefit in learning how to build off of others' successes and learn from their failures, as well.

All in all, this research seeks to make everyone in Honors feel welcome; specifically, at-risk students who have been left underrepresented in the Honors decision-making process for far too long. According to Issata Oluwadare of Rutgers University, this welcoming environment is at the core of DEI work, and it is evident that in listening to the voices of at-risk students through this research, researchers and Honors staff members alike can begin to make informed, represented decisions that will ultimately lead to student empowerment for those who are so often deprived of it the most.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the performed research provided at-risk Honors students with a platform from which to voice their inputs and insights regarding what they deem as essential services in supporting students who share similar social identifiers. In turn, these first-hand accounts will provide Honors administrative staff with invaluable information in developing programming to enhance efforts in supporting at-risk students. These benefits align perfectly with BGSU's new strategic initiative: Focusing on the Future. The initiative's third objective reads "To be a strong, thriving, competitive university, BGSU must ensure that all students, faculty, and staff have the opportunity to achieve excellence in their work. BGSU must be as diverse and inclusive as the communities it serves." Later in the objective's description, it is mentioned that "We will enhance and support a culture that values diversity and inclusion by developing and implementing a comprehensive (detailed and outcomes-orientated), strategic diversity plan that

increases the recruitment, retention, and success of a diverse student body, faculty, staff, and administration.” This study will epitomize BGSU’s strategic initiative.

Promoting a more diverse and inclusive Honors College is a mutually beneficial objective. This study provides an opportunity to develop a more supportive space for those who need it the most. In performing and following up on this study, the BGSU Honors College, its at-risk student participants, and the researcher will not only be promoting BGSU’s new strategic initiative, but they will also be acting on it. Furthermore, this action of listening to the voices and needs of at-risk students and transforming that knowledge into **meaningful change** will lead to the increased recruitment, retention, support, and success for generations of BGSU Honors students to come.

Annotated Bibliography

Bourdon, J. L., Moore, A. A., Long, E. C., Kendler, K. S., & Dick, D. M. (2020). The relationship between on-campus service utilization and common mental health concerns in undergraduate college students. *Psychological Services, 17*(1), 118-126.
doi:10.1037/ser0000296

There is minimal research linking the utilization of on-campus mental health services with ever-growing college student mental health concerns. With up to one in four college students meeting criteria for disorders such as depression or anxiety, it is concerning that there has been such little research illustrating whether the supply of mental health services has been meeting the demand for services that college students face. After studying whether college students in need utilize on-campus mental health services, it is evident that students of color and men are notably less likely to reach out to these available mental health services. This supports the notion that perhaps a greater emphasis must be placed in higher education on reducing the stigma surrounding mental health. In the scope of this Honors Project, this article will be a resource to ensure that not only are at-risk Honors students voicing their needs in the study, but that they are expressing resources that will then be utilized, as well. This article has illustrated that the Honors Project study must focus on the utilization of supports in Honors just as much as their implementation.

Brigandi, C. B., Rambo-Hernandez, K., & Schwartz, J. (2020). First-generation students in rural communities: A study of effective programming components that support closing the excellence gap. *Gifted and Talented International, 35*(1), 3-15.
doi:10.1080/15332276.2020.1774944

Brigandi and colleagues address basic educational inequities in their article on disadvantaged students in rural America. Because of funding policies based on legislation such as the Every Student Succeeds Act and district property and income taxes, rural and urban public-school districts are often left severely underfunded in comparison to their wealthy, suburban counterparts. Specifically, high achieving students in low achieving schools are not given the resources to maximize their academic and extracurricular potentials or granted the opportunities to be competitive for many higher education scholarships. Resources should be put into place within higher education institutions to help these at-risk students reach their fullest potentials, while also noting the inequities that rural students face in the process. For the purposes of this Honors Project, it is essential to understand why some students are disproportionately at-risk in comparison to their more privileged counterparts. This information will provide Honors Project readers with needed background information into the inequities of the K-12 education system and how they may continue into higher education settings.

Brown, H. E., & Burkhardt, R. L. (1999). Predicting Student Success: The Relative Impact of Ethnicity, Income, and Parental Education. *Association for Institutional Research*.

Historically, first-generation college students are often known as being among the most at-risk students in the higher education setting. However, this paper illustrates that parental

involvement does not have as large of an impact on first-generation student outcomes as it was once thought. Rather, it appears that other factors, such as income level, ethnicity, primary language, and high school GPA all contribute more to success in first-generation college students. In short, this study gives insight on just how hard it is to get ahead in higher education. Knowing that other social identifiers more strongly predict outcomes than parental support is a statistic that scars the education system. The paper's results align perfectly with the views of Montecel and colleagues (2004) in that students are too often lost in the education system before they even have the chance to achieve success. In addition to complimenting the other literature in this annotated bibliography, this paper helps this Honors Project in identifying the definitions of what exactly should make a college student deemed "at-risk".

Castro, E. L. (2014). "Underprepared" and "At-Risk": Disrupting deficit discourses in undergraduate STEM recruitment and retention programming. *Journal of Student Affairs Research and Practice*, 51(4), 407-419. doi:10.1515/jsarp-2014-0041

Overrepresentation of Caucasian males has been an issue within the fields of STEM for decades. In fact, in 2006, only 17% of STEM students who graduated were students of color, despite massive public efforts to increase diversity and inclusion within the field. In questioning the efficiency of these efforts, Castro found that choices in language can be pivotal. Castro believes that rather than identifying minority students as "underprepared" or even "at-risk", language in diversity and inclusion efforts should revolve around more strengths-based language in order to better promote the equity that is intended in the first place. This source indicates that the use of language is key in any sort of diversity, inclusion, and equity programming or policy. This article will provide this Honors Project with a point of reference in forming the final proposal's prose.

D'Amico, N., Mechling, B., Kemppainen, J., Ahern, N. R., & Lee, J. (2016). American College Students' Views of Depression and Utilization of On-Campus Counseling Services. *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association*, 22(4), 302-311. doi:10.1177/1078390316648777

D'Amico and colleagues (2016) note that on-campus mental health services are widely underutilized by college students. Particularly, they note that students of color report using the services far less than their Caucasian peers. For example, they reported that Asian American students may be less likely to reach out for help because of the shame that is often associated with mental health needs in Asian cultures. Likewise, other populations of color often heavily stigmatize those in need of mental health assistance; therefore, exposing those who may need help the most in the process. Overall, this article pairs with the information provided by Bourdon and colleagues (2020) in that although resources are often provided by higher education institutions, they are still left unutilized by at-risk students. In order for institution resources to be used by at-risk students, it is evident that bridges must be made to ensure that at-risk students are getting the supports they need. This article serves as inspiration to this Honors Project because the study aims to provide at-risk Honors students with a voice to express how Honors supports can be best implemented.

Darling-Hammond, L. (1998). *Unequal Op.* Retrieved November 27, 2020, from http://maxweber.hunter.cuny.edu/pub/eres/SOC217_PIMENTEL/education.pdf

In addition to the social identifiers that result in discrimination and inequity in education today, another factor brought up by author Linda Darling-Hammond (1998) is the classroom experience itself for at-risk students, especially for students of color. She notes that schools with mostly minority students are up to twice as large as predominantly white schools. Likewise, class sizes for such schools can be up to 15% larger and 80% larger for special education departments than their predominantly white counterparts. Lastly, teachers are often less qualified and have less experience in schools in which the majority of students are of color. Similar to Phillis' (2005) work on Ohio's public-school funding system, this resource serves as a point of reference in discovering what inequities students face that they cannot even see on the micro-level. This is another inequity caused by policy, and it enhances the importance of implementing more meaningful programming for at-risk Honors students to help support students who may never have been offered support in an educational setting before.

Edwards, S. (2018). Critical reflections on the interfaith movement: A social justice perspective. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 11*(2), 164-181. doi:10.1037/dhe0000053

An interfaith movement is occurring among higher education. Specifically, universities and colleges are making increased efforts to support religiously diverse students in the classroom and beyond. Following years of taboo, institutions are now promoting the importance of religious diversity as a means of combatting Christian privilege or lapses in representation among religious minorities. In promoting on-campus programming such as interfaith dialogue, students of all religions can come together to learn more about one another. Likewise, faith-based student organizations can serve as a foundational source of support for many students and faculty members, especially among religious minorities. Going forward, this article will be a resource in implementing Honors programming that is beneficial to all involved. In catering Honors programming to at-risk students, this article illustrates that it is possible to build bridges between at-risk and more privileged students through said programming that educates as well as supports.

Fleming, J. (2012). *Enhancing Minority Student Retention and Academic Performance: What We Can Learn from Program Evaluations*. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated.

In this book, Fleming follows the trials and triumphs of The Project Forward Leap Program, a positive youth development program for at-risk middle schoolers at Millersville University in Millersville, Pennsylvania. During this section of the book, Fleming notes that there are four main reasons why minority students experience higher rates of school dropout and lower rates of academic performance: social class, cultural values, discrimination factors, and managerial factors. In other sections of the book, Fleming describes what the research shows it takes for minority students to get through higher education successfully. However, the overarching narrative is clear: when at-risk students need resources and support the most, they do not receive it. Too often, these students are simply not given the chance to succeed. In identifying the overall lack of supports in at-risk

students, this source can provide this Honors Project with critical background information in the inequities that make students at-risk. This in-depth analysis can be paired with the work of Brigandi and colleagues (2020) to help develop programming to support students who may need additional support in higher education because of their lack of support before college.

Gladwell, M. (2008). *Outliers: The Story of Success*. Little, Brown, and Company.

In *Outliers*, renowned author and scholar Malcolm Gladwell breaks down what it takes to be successful. In this investigation, he delves into theories, case studies, and data revolving around phenomenon such as practice hours, IQ levels, and the influence of affirmative action in higher education. His analysis of a study done at the University of Michigan's law school is particularly interesting. The study shows that affirmative action beneficiaries, although achieving lower overall grades and test scores throughout their academic careers, earn job evaluation marks similar to their more privileged peers. This example shows that above all, at-risk students simply need to be given the chance to succeed in order to be successful. When combined with the information of Brigandi and colleagues (2020), Fleming (2014), and Montecel and colleagues (2004), this book illustrates the great resilience that at-risk students have shown in the literature. This resource should serve as a great motivator through the course of the Honors Project, in addition to serving as evidence that when at-risk students are properly supported, they can thrive.

Montecel, M. R., Cortez, J. D., & Cortez, A. (2004). Dropout-Prevention Programs: Right Intent, Wrong Focus, and Some Suggestions on Where to Go from Here. *Education and Urban Society*, 36(2), 169-188. doi:10.1177/0013124503261327

Although heroic efforts consisting of mammoth resources are used in rescuing children lost in the wilderness, Montecel and colleagues claim that thousands of children are lost every year in our schools and go undetected by the majority of society. Because of legislation such as the No Child Left Behind Act (since replaced by the Every Student Succeeds Act), low achieving schools have been put under the national microscope in recent decades. However, despite new data on struggling student populations, efforts continue to focus on fixing students rather than addressing the actual school systems that are broken. Because public-school funding is based off of ESSA data and the property and income taxes associated with each district, low income students in rural and urban school districts are disproportionately left unprepared for higher education. In order to help compensate for these disadvantages, higher education institutions must prioritize providing resources for its at-risk students. Much like the information provided by Brigandi and colleagues (2020), this work reflects the educational inequity that exists in the United States. However, what also makes this resource valuable to this Honors Project is its age. Made in 2004, its contents are still alarmingly applicable to today's education system, as well. This shows that in order to make meaningful change in the perennially inequitable education system, developing Honors programming catered to the needs of at-risk students may be the most effective way to make these students feel properly supported in their higher education experience.

Orentlicher, D. (2019, August 19). What Harvard can learn from Texas: A solution to the controversy over affirmative action. Retrieved November 27, 2020, from <https://theconversation.com/what-harvard-can-learn-from-texas-a-solution-to-the-controversy-over-affirmative-action-100721>

Many sources of literature shared in this annotated bibliography support the notion that public K-12 education is broken in the United States. However, Orentlicher's article provides an additional component by exploring a potential solution to some of the inequities faced by high achieving students trapped in low achieving schools. Orentlicher discusses the solution that Texas has enacted to increase equity within their public-school districts. No matter the location, size, or overall success of the district, the top-10% of each public high school's graduating class is admitted by Texas' state universities. This policy provides opportunities for at-risk, high achieving students to receive the opportunities that they may not have been granted otherwise. Likewise, the policy does not carry the controversial burden of quota-based affirmative action. This policy enforces the point expressed by Malcolm Gladwell (2008) in that at-risk students simply need to be given a chance in order to be successful. This policy provides these students with that opportunity. Similarly, this Honors Project aims to support at-risk Honors students by providing the necessary resources to give them just as likely of a chance to succeed, as well.

Phillis, W. L. (2005). Ohio's School Funding Litigation Saga: More Money and Some New Buildings but the Same Unconstitutional School Fun. *Journal of Education Finance*, 30(3), 313–320.

In 1997, the state of Ohio first deemed its public-school funding practices to be unconstitutional. The ruling followed a funding system in which property taxes and income taxes dominate funding. Therefore, in school districts with great wealth, such as in many suburban districts, public schools are well-funded and abundant in resources. On the other hand, socioeconomically disadvantaged rural and urban public schools are left without resources to help elevate their at-risk students out of their impoverished communities. Instead of serving as an outlet to empower communities, these schools instead contribute to the cycle of poverty. Over two decades later, this funding system is just as inequitable and remains largely unchanged. Because state governments like Ohio's have not shown K-12 public school funding to be a high enough priority to change it, higher education institutions must step in to support their at-risk students. Throughout the development process, this Honors Project must consider the fact that at-risk Honors students may be getting support for the first time in their education experiences. That said, education must be a priority in administering and advocating for equitable Honors programming.

Snyder, K. (2020, September 11). *Informational Interview*.

Dr. Kacee Snyder is the Director for the Center of Women and Gender Equity (CWGE) at Bowling Green State University. During our conversation, we discussed possible ways in which the Honors College could better promote diversity, inclusion, and equity while

supporting its most at-risk students. Above all, Dr. Snyder believed that the largest problem lied within Honors faculty. There is very little representation among Honors faculty, and Honors faculty members often serve as critical mentors for Honors students. The lack of faculty members that can directly relate to the experiences of at-risk Honors students may negatively influence their Honors experience. Through this conversation, I got a look into the perspective of what a former Honors College administrator and current CWGE Director thought about potential programming for at-risk Honors students. Because of this information, I ultimately decided to research what supports at-risk Honors students would appreciate through informational interviews. I look forward to reporting the results.

Additional References

Guinier, Lani. "Reframing the Affirmative Action Debate." *Kentucky Law Journal*, vol. 86, no. 3, 22 Mar. 1998, pp. 505–525.

"History of Affirmative Action | American Association for Access Equity and Diversity." AAAED, www.aaaed.org/aaaed/history_of_affirmative_action.asp.

Shultz, E. L., Colton, G. M., & Colton, C. (2001). The adventor program: Advisement and mentoring for students of color in higher education. *The Journal of Humanistic Counseling, Education and Development*, 40(2), 208-218. doi:10.1002/j.2164-490x.2001.tb00118.x

"U.S. Poverty Statistics." *Federal Safety Net*, federalsafetynet.com/us-poverty-statistics.html.

Vivian, C. (2005). Advising the at-risk college student. *The Educational Forum*, 69(4), 336-351.

doi:10.1080/00131720508984707

Appendix

A.

Honors Project Interview Questions

1. What does it take to be a successful college student?
2. What does it take to be a successful Honors student?
3. What obstacles prevent you from being a successful student?
4. What obstacles do you face in Honors in particular that prevent you from succeeding?
5. What resources do you feel students of historically underrepresented groups (i.e., students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, international students, etc.) need to be successful Honors students?
6. Do you feel that Honors faculty/staff are supportive of at-risk Honors students? If so, in what ways? If not, what are some ways that Honors faculty/staff have not been supportive of at-risk Honors students?
7. Do you feel that Honors faculty/staff can relate to the barriers faced by at-risk Honors students? If so, how have they shown this? If not, how would you like to see Honors faculty/staff relate to the barriers faced by at-risk Honors students?
8. In what ways do co-curricular opportunities in Honors support at-risk students?
9. How could these co-curricular opportunities be improved in order to better support at-risk students?
10. How well do you feel that your Honors coursework integrates and explores the voices, narratives, and experiences of at-risk populations? How well-represented does your voice, narrative, and experiences feel in your coursework?
11. Do you ever feel unsupported while in an Honors class? If so, what steps do you feel could be taken to ensure that a similar scenario would not happen again to yourself or another student?
12. Is there anything that you would like to add?

B. *The Scroll Announcement*

Hey Honors Students!

Are you interested in enacting meaningful, sustainable change to the Honors College? Would you like to help out a fellow Honors student with his Honors Project? If your answers are “yes” and “yes,” then this announcement is for you!

My name is Patrick Caniglia, and I am a third-year Honors student. For my Capstone Honors Project, I plan to conduct one-on-one informational interviews with current and former BGSU Honors students. I will then utilize this qualitative research in planning and implementing a program to support at-risk Honors students. By at-risk Honors students, I am referring to members of historically underrepresented groups such as students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, and international students. I feel that this study will provide Honors College administrative personnel with the vital insight that is needed in order to make meaningful change to Honors programming. I believe that you have the perspective and knowledge necessary to make this change, and I would love to integrate your voices into the conversation of increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Honors College at BGSU.

If you are interested in making a difference in Honors programming for at-risk students, self-identify as an at-risk Honors student, and would like to be interviewed, please reach out to me at pcanigl@bgsu.edu. I will send you a letter of consent form to fill out and we can set up a time to chat! I’m looking forward to hearing from you!

Best,

Patrick Caniglia

C. Letter of Consent/Participant Outreach

Student Researcher: Patrick Caniglia

Contact: pcanigl@bgsu.edu | 330-242-0043

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Heath Diehl

Contact: williad@bgsu.edu

Institutional Review Board

Contact: orc@bgsu.edu | 419-372-7716

Hello,

My name is Patrick Caniglia, and I am a third-year Honors student at Bowling Green State University (BGSU) in Bowling Green, Ohio. For my Capstone Honors Project, I plan to conduct one-on-one informational interviews with current and former BGSU Honors students. I will then utilize this qualitative research in planning and implementing a program to support at-risk Honors students. By at-risk Honors students, I am referring to members of historically underrepresented groups such as students of color, LGBTQIA+ students, and international students. Although the Honors College aims to provide its students with ample resources and opportunities, I feel that it must place a greater emphasis on making sure it is properly supporting its at-risk students. With this goal in mind, I feel that this study will provide Honors College administrative personnel with the vital insight that is needed in order to make meaningful change to Honors programming. I believe that you have the perspective and knowledge necessary to make this change, and I would love to integrate your voices into the conversation of increasing equity, diversity, and inclusion in the Honors College at BGSU.

The informational interviews will occur over Zoom for approximately 60 minutes. Despite this estimation, interviews that are over or under the allotted time slots will not be omitted. The interviews will be recorded by my own personal computer through Zoom. The risk of interviewing will not be one that is greater than any other life experience. Additionally, your relationships at BGSU will not be impacted no matter if you choose to participate or not participate in the interview. If you do not feel comfortable answering a particular question, you are always welcome to not answer.

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this collection of information. For your protection, the data collected during the interviews will be stored on my listening device and computer. I will also have possession of the signed letters of consent. I will be the only person with access to this data and the letter of consent paperwork. Your time, perspective, and insight are greatly appreciated, and I am looking forward to speaking with you.

Participant's Agreement:

I have been informed that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I have been informed of the intent and purpose of this research. If, for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation. I have been informed that the data will be used in this research project for a HNRS 4990: Honors Project Execution course in which the student-researcher is enrolled at Bowling Green State University. I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the project's submission. The data gathered in this study are confidential with respect to my personal identity. If I have any questions about this study, then I am free to contact the student-researcher or the faculty advisor (contact information given above). If I have any questions about my rights as a participant, I am free to contact the Institutional Review Board. I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference.

I have read the above form and, with the understanding that I can withdraw at any time and for whatever reason, I consent to participate in today's interview.

Signature of Interviewee _____

Date _____

D. IRB Approval

IRBNet ID: 1663996-1
USER PROFILE LOGOUT

Welcome to IRBNet
Patrick Caniglia

[Help](#)

[My Projects](#)

[Create New Project](#)

[My Reminders \(3\)](#)

Project Administration

[Project Overview](#)

[Designer](#)

[Share this Project](#)

[Sign this Package](#)

[Submit this Package](#)

[Delete this Package](#)

[Send Project Mail](#)

[Reviews](#)

[Project History](#)

[Create a New Package](#)

[Messages & Alerts \(3\)](#)

Other Tools

[Forms and Templates](#)

Review Details

[1663996-1] Increasing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in the BGSU Honors College: A Proposal
Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board, Bowling Green, OH

Submission Details

Submitted To Bowling Green State University Institutional Review Board, Bowling Green, OH

Submitted by Patrick Caniglia

Submission Date 10/27/2020

Submission Type New Project

Local Board Reference Number

Review Details:

Agenda	Review Type	Board Action	Effective Date	Project Status	Expiration Date
11/04/2020 03:00 PM	Administrative Review	Not Research	10/27/2020	Not Research	

Board Documents:

Document Type	Description	Last Modified	View
No Approval Needed Letter	No Approval Needed Letter	10/27/2020 01:58 PM	
Other	Email Conversation - Hagemyer & Caniglia.pdf	10/27/2020 01:57 PM	

Copyright © 2002-2020 Research Dataware. All Rights Reserved.