They Come But WHY Do They Finish? Early Career Factors Related to Honors Program Completion

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Background

- UConn Honors is 2+2 program:
  - Sophomore Honors: Honors academics and involvement
  - Honors Scholar Graduation: Honors academics and thesis in the major
- Students earning Sophomore Honors 3x as likely to graduate as Honors Scholars
- Programmatic changes in 2003 connected to increased completion rates for both awards (Goodstein & Szarek, 2003)
What components of the Sophomore Honors award contribute to Honors retention and graduation?
Literature Review

• Fairly low Honors graduation rates: 35% (McKay, 2009); 25% (Cosgrove, 2004); less than 20% (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008)

• Factors related to Honors retention and graduation:
  – High school academic performance & gender (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008; Coursol & Wagner, 1986; McKay, 2009)
  – First semester GPA; Honors housing (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008)

• Developmental effects of Honors differed by gender and race (Seifert et al., 2007)
Theoretical Frameworks

• Tinto’s Model of Student Departure (1993)
  – Student / environment interaction during transition to college
  – Uses both personal and institutional attributes

• Astin’s Theory of Student Involvement (1984)
  – Students invest energy into college experience
  – Observable behaviors as evidence of involvement
1,760 students entered UConn Honors Program as freshmen 2006-2010

- 809 female (46%); 951 male (54%)
- 1,056 White (60%); 227 Asian (13%); 91 Hispanic (5%); 59 Black (3%); 327 other or unknown (19%)
- 908 earned Sophomore Honors (52%)
- 915 graduated as Honors Scholars (52%); 697 graduated as non-Honors (40%)
### Population

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduated as Honors Scholar</th>
<th>Graduated as non-Honors</th>
<th>Did not graduate</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore Honors</td>
<td>690 (76%)</td>
<td>206 (23%)</td>
<td>12 (1%)</td>
<td>908</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Sophomore Honors</td>
<td>225 (26%)</td>
<td>491 (58%)</td>
<td>136 (16%)</td>
<td>852</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>915</strong></td>
<td><strong>697</strong></td>
<td><strong>148</strong></td>
<td><strong>1760</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Variables: Personal Attributes

- Gender
- Ethnicity
- Academic ability:
  - SAT (or ACT equivalent)
  - Scholarship awarded at entry
- Academic experience:
  - Earned credits at end of first year
Variables: Honors Involvement

• Academic performance:
  – Cumulative GPA after second year

• Curricular engagement:
  – Enrollment in Honors First Year Seminar
  – Number of Honors courses in first two years
  – Enrollment in interdisciplinary Honors Core Course
  – Attendance at thesis workshop

• Honors community:
  – Number of Honors events attended
### Analysis: Personal Attributes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>-0.558</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>29.042</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>0.572</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity_Asian</td>
<td>-0.300</td>
<td>0.154</td>
<td>3.783</td>
<td>.052</td>
<td>0.741</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity_Black</td>
<td>-0.190</td>
<td>0.298</td>
<td>0.408</td>
<td>.523</td>
<td>0.827</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity_Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.391</td>
<td>0.234</td>
<td>2.802</td>
<td>.094</td>
<td>0.676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scholarship_HIGH</td>
<td>0.541</td>
<td>0.156</td>
<td>12.114</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>1.718</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr1EarnedCredit</td>
<td>0.030</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>50.095</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.923</td>
<td>0.214</td>
<td>18.586</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\( n = 1,657 \)

Model \( \chi^2(6) = 116.997 \) (\( p < .000 \))

Pseudo \( R^2 = 0.091 \)

Correctly classified = 62.3%

47.3% not Honors grad; 74.5% Honors grad
## Analysis: Honors Involvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>Wald</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yr2GPA</td>
<td>3.379</td>
<td>0.258</td>
<td>172.120</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>29.355</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HonClassesYr1Yr2</td>
<td>0.117</td>
<td>0.037</td>
<td>9.945</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>1.124</td>
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<tr>
<td>EventsYr1Yr2</td>
<td>0.172</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>25.098</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian * HonClassesYr1Yr2</td>
<td>-0.168</td>
<td>0.089</td>
<td>3.551</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>0.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black * HonClassesYr1Yr2</td>
<td>0.422</td>
<td>0.251</td>
<td>2.828</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>1.525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-12.970</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td>198.483</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</table>

n = 1,530
Step $\chi^2(5) = 380.055$ ($p < .000$)  
Model $\chi^2(11) = 442.290$ ($p < .000$)
$\Delta$ pseudo $R^2 = 0.285$  
Model pseudo $R^2 = 0.339$
Correctly classified = 73.1%

57.5% not Honors grad; 83.6% Honors grad
## Analysis: No Sophomore Honors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
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<th>Wald</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>0.329</td>
<td>0.169</td>
<td>3.797</td>
<td>.051</td>
<td>1.389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity_Asian</td>
<td>-0.114</td>
<td>0.235</td>
<td>0.233</td>
<td>.629</td>
<td>0.893</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity_Black</td>
<td>-0.765</td>
<td>0.524</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ethnicity_Hispanic</td>
<td>-0.305</td>
<td>0.369</td>
<td>0.685</td>
<td>.408</td>
<td>0.737</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scholarship_HIGH</td>
<td>0.654</td>
<td>0.255</td>
<td>6.602</td>
<td>.010</td>
<td>1.924</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yr1EarnedCredit</td>
<td>0.026</td>
<td>0.006</td>
<td>18.540</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>1.026</td>
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<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
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<td>0.301</td>
<td>52.223</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**n = 749**

Model $\chi^2(6) = 37.993$ ($p < .000$)

Pseudo $R^2 = 0.070$

Correctly classified = 69.6%

96.4% not Honors grad; 7.1% Honors grad
## Analysis: No Sophomore Honors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>β</th>
<th>S.E.</th>
<th>Wald</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
<th>Odds</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yr2GPA</td>
<td>3.788</td>
<td>0.384</td>
<td>97.447</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>44.174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HonorsCoreCourse</td>
<td>0.441</td>
<td>0.216</td>
<td>4.168</td>
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<td>1.554</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EventsYr1Yr2</td>
<td>0.104</td>
<td>0.057</td>
<td>3.384</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>1.110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-13.644</td>
<td>1.325</td>
<td>105.960</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ n = 625 \]

\[ \text{Step } \chi^2(3) = 138.291 \ (p < .000) \]

\[ \Delta \text{ pseudo } R^2 = 0.265 \]

Correctly classified = 71.5%

84.5% not Honors grad; 48.2% Honors grad

Model \[ \chi^2(9) = 155.966 \ (p < .000) \]

Model pseudo \[ R^2 = 0.303 \]
What components of the Sophomore Honors award contribute to Honors retention and graduation?
1. Early academic performance
Early Academic Performance

- GPA after year 2 always related to Honors graduation rates

- SAT scores are not, and this is after including scholarship, so this is unlikely to be solely due to academic ability

- Firm cutoffs at early years may not be necessary; 23% of those with < 3.4 after year 2 still graduated with Honors
2. Early curricular engagement
Early Curricular Engagement

- Number of Honors courses or whether they took an interdisciplinary Honors Core affected Honors graduation rates
- Honors courses taken in first 2 years generally not counted toward Honors graduation
3. Honors community
Honors Community

• Almost all first-year Honors students live in the Honors residential learning community

• Attending Honors events in first 2 years related to Honors graduation


