

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

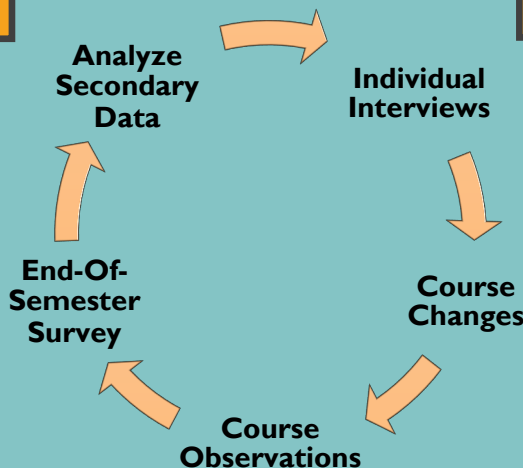
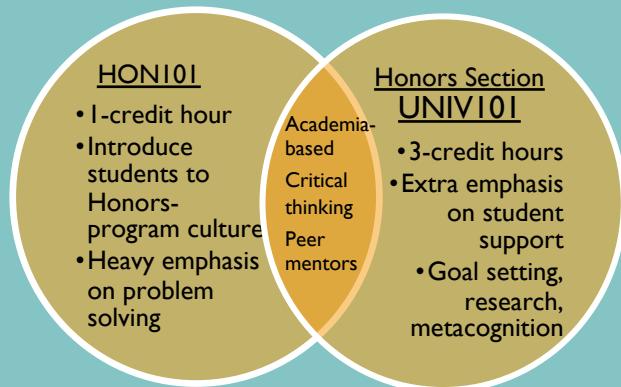
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BACKGROUND

UNC's Honors Program currently offers two contrasting first-year experience courses that have different curriculum and philosophy. The two courses offered are Honors 101 and the honors-specific section of University 101. The result of having two different courses is varying first-year experiences for honors students which can influence their perceptions and experiences within the program. The purpose of this project is to analyze and modify the current first-year experience and its impacts on student satisfaction and program retention to help support honors students throughout their college transition.

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

As the Honors Program is moving to a more holistic view, modifying the current first-year experience to mirror that mission will help students be more supported while still getting the connection to the Honors Program that they need.



QUESTIONS

- What is the influence of the current first-year experience on student satisfaction and retention within the Honors Interdisciplinary program at the University of Northern Colorado?
- How do the implemented changes affect the current student satisfaction and retention rates within the Honors Interdisciplinary Program?

References:



METHODS

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

Methods Description

Analyze Secondary Data	Course Evaluations, Peer Mentor Evaluations, Honors Withdraw Survey
Individual Interviews	Used to identify areas of student satisfaction and course weaknesses. Zoom call transcribed into text with identifiers removed 5 students per course per semester, including Fall 2018 and 2019 semesters.
Implement Course Changes	To reflect course evaluations and student interview responses
In-Class Observations	2 per class per semester to observe effectiveness of changes Notes made on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• class participation• involvedness of the instructor and peer mentors• characteristics of the classroom atmosphere (including classroom set up)
End-Of-Semester Survey	In-person anonymous paper survey to measure effectiveness of changes from the students' perspective Used to track student satisfaction and intent to retain