GAVIN KEULKS, WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY

“IF GOLD SHALL RUST...”: DEMYSTIFYING STEREOTYPES IN HONORS ADVISING
SELF, SCHOOL, STUDENTS
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN #1
Dr. Gavin Keulks

17 years at WOU
Professor of English & Irish Literature
7 years as Honors Director
Split appointment (Honors/English) with part-time grad. assistant as Honors Program Specialist
FAST FACTS

- Photo Credit: Melissa Swagerty (heavenlyprincess6 on Flickr)
- Fall 2015 Enrollment: ~5500
- ~ 85% undergrad, 15% grad
- ~ 58% female, 42% male
- ~ 80% in-state, 15% out, 5% international
- NCAA Division II
WESTERN OREGON UNIVERSITY
HONORS PROGRAM
FAST FACTS

- Fall 2015 Enrollment: 155, approx. 3.25% of WOU

- ~80% female, 10% male, 10% LGBTQ+ or transgender

- Top Majors
  - ASL
  - Biology & Chemistry
  - English (Lit, Writing, Linguistics)
  - Psychology
  - Math
CREVASSES

• High “Costs” of Honors in an Age of Dwindling Budgets

• Anti-honors Perceptual Confirmation Bias: Honors as “Elite”

• Sperber, 2000: if everyone can’t enjoy the same beneficial class sizes, attention, and pedagogy, then then no one shall.
KEY SOURCES

- M. McDonald, “Advising high-ability business students” (2003).
- Cheryl Achterberg, "What is an Honors Student?" (2005).
- Samuel Schuman, Beginning in Honors (2006).
What Positive Characteristics are Commonly Associated with this Demographic?
“It is very difficult to draw generalizations about the personality of the typical honors student because the literature is limited (Clark 2000), dated (Rinn and Plucker 2004), and based on small samples drawn from single institutions (Achterberg 2005).

As will become apparent from our review of the literature, it is replete with contradictions, even when the same instrument is used to measure personality.”
“In sum, enough consistencies do emerge [...] to suggest differences between honors and non-honors students in: introversion-extraversion, openness to new experiences, academic self-efficacy, motivation, and conscientiousness. Whether differences exist in other characteristics remains an unresolved issue ...”

-- Roszkowski and Nigro, 2015
What Negative Characteristics are Commonly Associated with this Demographic?
“It is sometimes tempting to envision all honors students as especially well-rounded, balanced, thoughtful, mature, and self-possessed.

This vision does not seem particularly accurate or helpful despite its attractiveness and allure.”
“KNOWN UNKNOWNS”

- Over-reliance on past preparation/study skills
- Over-commitment
- Self-reliant/confident – academic & emotional
- Perfectionism – “stress monkey”
- Multi-potentialism or “over-choice syndrome”
- “Identity foreclosure”
CONCLUSIONS & HYPOTHESES?
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN #3
Advising Honors Students

BEST PRACTICES
“planned happenstance”
- MITCHELL, LEVIN, KRUMBOLTZ, 1999

— Samuel Beckett —
Should Honors Advising Be Separate?

OR DOES THAT FURTHER THE DIVIDE?