

Honors Program Induction:  
Fitting into a Community that is Born to Stand-Out

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Watching, waiting, wondering—I knew that in this moment I would either sink or swim in my desire to find my place in this university. I was standing on the sidewalk looking at the open green field; however, this field was not empty. All I had to do was step out onto that grass, but my fear of the unknown held me captive. I really felt like the little freshman I was. Since I had been in college, I had searched for that “home away from home” feeling. I longed to find this feeling, but after searching in the academy . . . I realized that this idea came from something more than my classes, my books, and my studies. A feeling of home comes from finding yourself in others, forming a sense of community, which is what college means to me. So, I decided to

step across the sidewalk onto the grassy field, transitioning from self-isolation towards a sense of belonging.

Groups, clubs, organizations, teams, etc.—the list can probably go on forever—all share a single trait: a sense of belonging. Humans desire secure relationships based on affinity, and such relationships cannot occur without someone else. This desire for a relationship helps us want to be a part of something more extensive than ourselves. Some groups and organizations occasionally fail to foster this need to be needed, and so commitment to membership decreases. At Southern Utah University, the current Honors Program lacks this sense of belonging, this affinity among its members. The program helps students obtain honors credits, while making the most out of their learning environment; however, the students are missing a personal connection to the program, a connection that results from a sense of community. Through an examination of group formation, aspects of belonging, and my personal experience, I will argue that the SUU's Honors Program would benefit from the creation of an induction ritual, a mentorship program, and a symbol of inclusion. As a result of these modifications, members will feel more connected to the program, giving these students their own place on SUU's campus—a place where they truly belong.

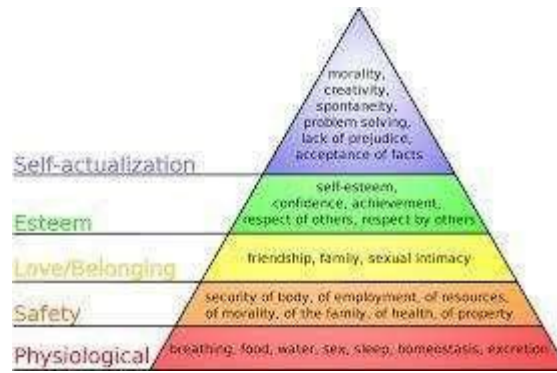


Figure 1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs (Maslow and Frager 25)

Even though this idea of belonging is in terms of groups, the individual's personal desire for acceptance and friendship is one of the basic psychological needs on the way to self-actualization. According to personality theorists, Abraham Maslow and Robert Frager, the need to belong is the third step on a system of personal needs. These two developed a more complex model of this hierarchy, which is depicted in Figure 1. Within this figure, the need of love/belonging is directly in the middle of the established hierarchy, illustrating that this need serves as a transition between the basic physiological and safety needs into the higher personality development stages. Additionally, a person cannot progress to the next step in the hierarchy without attention to the needs in the lower levels. If people do not feel belonging and love, then they will not be able to transcend from this section onto the more advanced levels, leaving them trapped in a lower state of being. Organizations must offer a place for their members to belong, so that the individuals can move towards self-actualization and become well-rounded people.

Many groups form due to common interests; however, the type of commitment from the group to the members must meet a certain level of

expectation to maintain their membership. The group, as a whole, needs a two-fold style of obligation. According to Peter Caws, social group theorist, “the group has to be not only what it shows itself to be (an aggregate of individuals whose behavior is coordinated in some way) but also what its members take it to be” (226). An organization should uphold, at the same time, the values and purposes they have set forward, while appealing to its members’ ideals to keep them engaged in the group itself. Groups, such as Southern Utah University’s Honors Program, may uphold one of the two areas presented by Caw, but this halfway attempt creates a lack within the group. Lacking one of these concepts is a little better than the other, because a group can function slightly longer if the people involved believe in the organization. Whereas, if the group’s basic foundation is being upheld, but the members are not satisfied, then the group will not function as well as it could due to a deficit in commitment. The ideal group formation consists of value and emphasis being placed on both the group itself and the member’s perspective of the group, so both entities are being satisfied.

Moreover, the individual members offer more to a particular organization than a set of ideals about the group, highlighting the success of a group as dependent on its members. Caw further develops his position about an individual’s involvement within a group by examining the parameters of dedicated participants. He expresses, “to have a group in the full sense seems to require the informed and voluntary acquiescence of every individual member, both with respect to the character and purpose of the group as a whole, and with respect to that individual’s place within it, the role he or she plays and his or her relations to the other

members” (Caws 226). In a sense, the functionality of the group needs the people within it to be fully aware of their role in the larger group’s purpose. Someone will only want to be a part of a group if s/he understands the expectations from the group and chooses to meet them. This factor of choice is essential because the person says whether or not s/he wants the group. A successful group places emphasis on the individual, giving the member a place of belonging and in turn makes the group stronger.

Many groups provide terms for membership or even long processes of group initiation; however, the people involved still have the ultimate say in their personal performance in the group. As expressed by Caw’s ideals, these people will only put their full effort in if they find an individual place within the group (226). The choice becomes favorable for the group, since the members feel connected to the organization, resulting in an increased desire to maintain the foundation.

Throughout my five years at Southern Utah University, I was a member of an organization that embodied Caw’s definition of belonging. In the fall 2010 semester, I rushed and was initiated into a local sorority, Delta Psi Omega. The process of developing my place within this group of women resulted in an increase of my desire to give more to the organization. Because of the welcoming feeling Delta Psi Omega provided me in the first year of membership, I decided to hold leadership positions and even sit on the executive council for two years. The initial investment that the sorority put into my security as a member resulted in my willingness to grow within the organization and add my own ideas back into the sorority. I gave my whole heart to the sorority because the women of the organization provided me

with a place where I belonged. Just like Caws highlights, a member is really only willing to become committed to an organization if the existing members make the effort to allow for the individual to find her/his place and truly belong.

Even though groups form for different purposes, they still uphold the ideals expressed by Caws, if considered successful, in terms of membership retention and basic formation principles. For instance, I became a part of a very diverse group of people beginning the winter semester of 2013. Unlike any club or organization I had joined before, the bond created in this small group will last a lifetime. I made the choice to travel to New Zealand as part of a study abroad experience to learn more about J. R. R. Tolkien's and Peter Jackson's Lord of the Rings series. However, those involved in the study abroad trip did not just meet in New Zealand. As a group, we attended monthly meetings in previous semester, where the professors in charge of the program presented various expectations for the courses and the travel regulations within a foreign country. The people in this group represented various majors, walks of life, age groups, and interests, but all of these individuals eventually became one unit with a shared purpose, both in the self and the group. Each of us bought whatever experiences and adventures came our way, giving us a collective place within this group expedition. Personally, I felt extremely connected to the members of this group because I chose to get close to my group members, making the trip a much richer experience. However, this feeling would not have been possible without a set of upfront expectations and my personal choice to belong within the group.

Just as students cross a stage when they graduate, a personal choice to become a part of a group requires people to accept themselves as they are and cross the threshold towards reaching a personal apotheosis. This initiation into the self and the psyche is highly individualized and personal to each person. According to Joseph Campbell, this stage of personal growth is an apotheosis, “where you realize that you are what you are seeking” (118). Within this state, people embrace themselves for who they are, transcending failures in favor of successes. Furthermore, Campbell expresses that to become a hero you must “see people and yourself in terms of what you indeed are, not in terms of all these archetypes that you are projecting around and that have been projected on you” (76). Letting go of other’s expectations frees heroes—even everyday heroes—to be themselves; heroes find comfort within themselves, as individuals. Once people come to terms with a sense of self, then they become the hero within their own life, allowing for a commitment to others to develop within a group setting.

During my experience studying abroad in New Zealand, I was able to see the group itself crossing this threshold and recognize it happening also in myself as an individual. The first major threshold that we crossed involved passing under a sculpted archway in the airport. We had just gotten off a seemingly never-ending flight, and as we were leaving the airport terminal, the group had to walk under a masterfully carved archway of Maori totems. As a group, we passed under this piece of New Zealand art, which marked our transition from a bunch of random travelers into the study abroad fellowship. Additionally, our very first activity as a group was a sacred ritual, the Maori Hongi. Each one of us approached each member of the

elders' council, one after the other, and during each encounter, the two participating in the ritual touched their foreheads together before pressing their noses together to share a breath. We completed this ritual individually; however, every member of the group underwent this experience. This act served as our group's induction into our little fellowship of travelers, as well as New Zealand culture. The simple act of going through a ritual together allowed the group as a whole to become a collective, highlighting that some type of threshold crossing leads to group unification.

In addition to this collective threshold crossing, acceptance of the individual is vital to group cohesion. While Caw highlights the importance of the member in terms of the group, he fails to acknowledge the group's choice in terms of recognizing a member as part of the group. However, this issue is explored in Susanna Federici-Nebbiosi's article about types of acceptance in various group contexts. She believes that "the group is the main arena in which a person who is accepted and has a role is 'someone for others and for himself or herself' and a person not accepted and without a role is 'nobody' in a most desperate and annihilating way" (715). The group, as a whole, obtains the ability to embrace or reject an individual's efforts for inclusion within the collective, regardless of how much effort one puts into the group. The lack of acceptance forces that particular individual into an ostracized state of being within the group, which reverses any feelings of belonging. If the group accepts the members' efforts, then the person gains acknowledgement for her/his role, creating a purpose for that member. This purpose grows within the member into a secure feeling of belonging, established through the act of group acceptance.



In my study abroad experience, I witnessed both the acceptance and rejection from the group that Federici-Nebbiosi mentions and the results of the group's and each individual's actions. From the beginning of the trip, all of the students and professors appeared to get along and attempted to include every member of the group. However, as the trip progressed, the group formed miniature cliques within the larger structure of the group, due to commonalities and interests. The level of acceptance varied from sub-group to sub-group, but one student, I'll call him Chris, seemed to not be a part of any smaller group. He would go between groups seeking acceptance, but kept finding isolation. Many of the groups would accept Chris temporarily as to try to include him, but eventually they would slowly start to exclude him. This constant "almost acceptance," followed by rejection, resulted in Chris choosing isolation over belonging, making his experience not as rewarding in terms of lasting relationships with the group. Through this example, I feel that in the future I need to look out for signs of rejection and attempt to change these events so that everyone can experience a sense of accepted belonging.

Luckily, this potential for group rejection is avoidable by establishing a source of commonality and sameness among all group members. These group similarities add a level of collectiveness to a group, which fosters a sense of belonging. Sharing interests in common allows for an initial bond, creating the steps towards a deeper closeness. In Pilwon Kim's study in homogeneous groupings, he realized that "people tend to feel safe and comfortable when staying with similar people. This implies that homogeneity of the group is a factor that positively affects a sense of belonging. It is also natural that, under the same level of homogeneity, the

emotion is stronger when the group size is larger” (2). Feeling the same as others more quickly establishes a stronger place within a group because the interests set a clear source of commonality. Someone will feel more connected to a group if s/he feels safe to trust the other group members. Additionally, “people feel more intimacy when they share what they like and what they do not with the other group members” (Kim 2). The simple intimacy of having interest in common builds a foundation of trust within the constructs of the group. The initial steps towards a deeper trust give the member security, which in turn results in a more willing and open group member. If the foundation for trust is established, then a person will be more likely to reveal more, developing a more solidified place. A spot within an organization gained through trust leads to a stronger sense of belonging in the commonality of the group.

To create such an intimacy, members of the group need to develop the various shared interests. Within my study abroad experience, I thought that this group would just be a group of people who loved hobbits. However, I was surprised to find that these members grew into some of my dearest friends in a short time span of two weeks. We all started off as strangers, but we had more things in common than just our majors. At our core, this group of people shared a desire to travel and experience the world in a new way. All of us had this internal wish to try new things and explore the beauty that was New Zealand. This source of similarity served as the formation of our deeper bonds. Throughout the trip, I have various opportunities to talk to each individual group member, where we would develop our relationship into a richer sense of belonging. These conversations would all

start with talking about the trip, but slowly would transform into discussing more meaningful issues such as love, religion, and beliefs. These intimate moments are my most treasured memories from my study abroad to New Zealand, because in these moments I felt myself growing into a better person. My deep bonding conversations would have never happened if the group did not have a set of common interests that were later developed into a source of connectedness and belonging.

Once members find their place within the group, the organization transforms for its individuals from a club into a home—a true place of belonging. As humans, we look for inclusion and connections. These types of deep feelings allow for one to be at ease, causing true personalities to come out, as with one's family. Montserrat Guibernau, political theorist, presents claims about the strength in belonging and the impact of the group in terms of the individual. She highlights that “belonging fosters an emotional attachment; it prompts the expansion of the individual's personality to embrace the attributes of the group, to be loyal and obedient to it” (28). This connection through emotions results in a deeper desire to commit to the organization than mere superficial gains such as SWAG, resume-building experiences, or priority registration. An attachment to the actual members who make up the group leaves each member with an emotional familiarity with the organization. In turn, “the group offers a ‘home,’ a familiar space—physical, virtual or imagined—where individuals share common interests, values, and principles, or a project. Belonging provides them with access to an environment within which they belong” (Guibernau 28). The emotional ties one can gain towards the members and the organization allow the group to become a home, causing members to achieve a

higher level of commitment. An organization or group is a unique space, as it has the potential to serve as a chosen family, if the members are accepted and embrace belonging.

An organization or group of people appearing as a family or a home may appear a little odd; however, I have personally experienced this phenomenon in my sorority, Delta Psi Omega. This organization brings a new group of women into its folds every semester, but never fails to push its members into discovering where they fit in the larger sorority unit. Members are inducted into the program, which presents them to other Greek members as a part of Delta Psi Omega. Through this process, they are given a symbol, a necklace or bracelet, which is later replaced with a pin upon initiation, to serve as a personal reminder of their membership. The induction process gives the members a place in the sorority, but what I have found is that the home-feeling grows from a personal desire to connect to the organization. The sorority became a true home for me when I decided to commit to the organization and give all of my love to every single member. The closeness gained through forming emotional bonds to the members and the organization as a whole truly made Delta Psi my home away from home.

College offers students a period of transition between high school and adulthood, where students can discover their answer to the age-old question: Who am I? The need to belong and the way in which a person discovers this feeling changes along with the individual. According to Guibernau, "individual identities are not clear-cut; rather they are subject to transformations emerging from their intrinsic dynamic nature" (2). People are transitioning, especially during key life

moments, such as moving away from home. In terms of organizations, the members are constantly changing as individuals, which in turn forces the group to adapt to meet the new needs of its members. If these needs are no longer being met, then the members are not growing or gaining new experiences from their membership, and thus will not be as committed to the organization.

Due to the ever-changing individual, some groups and organizations serve a purpose to the members, and while they may later lose that level of necessity, they may still leave a life-long impact. This type of group is the ideal of college-style situations because it provides a temporary source of belonging. This temporariness allows for students to rely on the organization during their college years, but not beyond, while maintaining the memories and skills gained during their time spent in school. In his research in the bonds found in Greek life, Caws states that

there emerges what Sartre calls a “group-in-fusion,” a vigorous but generally short-lived collaboration for some immediate end. Because groups-in-fusion are short-lived but give a taste of fellowship, they sometimes determine to prolong their existence even after the immediate end is achieved; they swear comradeship to one another and a “sworn group” emerges. (221)

Even though a group is not for forever, the members can still create an experience of bonding and belonging. The amount of connectedness people feel within the group will impact their willingness to remain in contact with the members after an ending point, such as graduation. A group-in-fusion style is what the current honors program at SUU needs as the students are transitioning through different points so much during their years at school.

After understanding the factors and effects of a person's need to belong, I argue Southern Utah University's Honors Program must adapt their current approach to the program's function to one based on instilling in its members a desire to belong. However, the basic ideals and principles of SUU's Honors Program are not all detrimental; in fact, the program offers students many benefits academically and serves a particular purpose for university students. For instance, the Honors Program clearly lists the benefits of membership on their website, which highlights the small class sizes, in-depth courses, and higher academic rigor. The program's academic focus is essential for a well-functioning honors program as the main purpose is to provide a more enriched educational experience.

In terms of the basics, SUU's Honors Program offers a strong start to a program, which can be used as a starting point for changes. The program presents a motto, which provides a source of connection to both students and faculty. According to the program's website, the motto states, "It's not what you HAVE to do, but what you GET to do." By having a motto in place, the program is taking steps towards igniting bonds between the program and a group of people. This small statement allows those inside and outside of the program to gain a glimpse of the type of members this organization attracts; namely, passionate, driven students who want to make the most out of their own learning. However, this mere motto is not enough to foster a sense of belonging within its membership.



Figure 2: Honors Program Logo (“SUU Honors Program”)

In addition to the motto, the Honors Program attempts to gain a collective grouping through the development of a branding or logo; unfortunately, the logo does not have the same effect as the motto. Southern Utah University’s Honors Program developed a logo featuring a human head from the neck upward. Within Figure 2, the logo depicts many different thoughts, with the word “honors” presented clearly in the center. Even though this logo is extremely stimulating to the eye, the picture’s busyness sets the viewer on edge, making it not the ideal choice in a logo. The lack of visual pleasantries results in members failing to identify with the logo, causing a rift between the program and individuals. Through utilizing a more simplistic and classy logo, the honors program would find more fluidity between the motto and their logo, allowing for a stronger picture of the SUU honors student.

Beyond the motto and the logo, more changes to the activities of the Honors Program would result in a cohesive feeling of belonging among the members. Currently, the Honors Program consists of a faculty director as well as a student-run and elected honors council. The members of the honors council facilitate interactions between the business aspects of the program and the social activities

for the members. This set-up allows for leadership opportunities and a higher level of responsibility for students, but a problem lies in the approach to the social activities. The SUU Honors Program works more like a club than an academic program, and leaves students desiring more. This void causes students to not buy into the program with their full efforts, and instead places value on other items of importance—such as social gatherings, free food, and fun and games—not the Honors Program and its academic rigors.

This past semester, the SUU Honors Program presented various activities, all with their positive and negative qualities. At the beginning of every semester, the program organizes an opening social event, consisting of get-to-know-you activities, food, and a presentation by the current honors director. This activity opens the door for the first bonding experience for the members; however, with the honors housing community, the social dynamic shifts from the experience being new for everyone to the students in the honors housing versus those who are not a part of the housing. This social event causes the housing students to appear superior to the other members in terms of connections and belong, forcing other members into feeling socially other-ed. Other activities throughout the semester include various movie nights, ice skating, professor “MAD” lectures, and murder mystery nights. All of these activities are great for peer interactions in a more social atmosphere, but propels the program into a more club-like style, opposed to the academic program that the Honors Program strives to embody.

An essential activity, which could easily mark the transition between inclusion and exclusion, is the honors Charge. The Charge (named such because



honors students don't "retreat") involves honors students traveling up a mountain to the University's cabin, located in a remote area outside of phone reception. This event offers the opportunity for the members to grow together and solidify that feeling of belonging. However, the exclusive feelings created during the opening social continue into this potential bonding experience. The Charge provides students with more get-to-know-you activities and other games. If the opening social and other activities leading up to the Charge dealt with all of these basic games, then the Charge could be used to break down the walls between the program's members, which would result in a stronger idea of belonging. As explored through various theories dealing with belonging, when the members of an organization feel connected, then they will care more about the program, making it a priority within their lives. The Honors Program needs this type of commitment from its members, but it will only receive this dedication by establishing a source of connection and belonging.

In my own experience in SUU's Honors Program, I tried to connect through its activity-focused nature, but I was left feeling even more like an outsider. As a member of a sorority, I understand what it is like to put myself out there in the hopes of acceptance and what can be gained through belonging. Through my five years within the Honors Program, I attempted to go to the social activities and the lectures, and I took various honors classes. I found more potential of gaining connections through the courses over anything else, but true belonging in the program could not be achieved due to the amount of ground that needed to be made up. Within the honors classes, students from all majors, backgrounds, and ages come

together for a particular theme. This approach creates a sense of purpose within the classes, causing unification. However, this unity does not cross over into something more because basic personal knowledge is missing from the beginning. If the opening activities are driven more towards group connections, then the classes will transcend the learning-about-each-other phases, propelling the experience into a deeper bonding moment. Through my various involvements on campus, I know that true belonging is possible within a program, such as the Honors Program, so I believe that a conscious effort towards fostering belonging will allow Southern Utah University's Honors Program to achieve its true potential.

Presently, I am not alone in my feelings towards the standing of the Honors Program, as evident through various interviews with current honors students. These students constitute a variety of class standings and ages, representing a view of the collective whole. Additionally, some of these students will be completing the requirements for an honors diploma and some will not, but all of these students have taken honors course and participated in program-sponsored activities. When asked if she felt like she had a place within the honors program, Kelsey Watnes, a junior, stated that "yes, in the sense that I have the grades and I've always felt like I should be in this sort of thing. But no in the sense that I don't feel like I'm part of the honors community. I really don't feel comfortable attending any of the honors events because I only know a few people in the Honors Program and I can just hang out with them outside of something like that."

Kelsey expresses that the lack of closeness to her peers causes a feeling of discomfort because of a missing sense of belonging. Additionally, a senior student,

Madi Day, articulates that “I don't personally feel like I have a place, but I was informed of activities.” Merely being informed of activities does not lend itself to belonging. A place within the large unit of the Honors Program needs to be established to give members a connected feeling towards the program itself, which in turn will produce more committed members.

Additionally, I notice a difference in belonging from the interviews of students who lived in the honors community and those who do not, just like in my experiences. Two students, Joe Argyle (sophomore) and Chelsea Burkholder (senior), both lived in the honors specific dorms and appear to have a stronger connection to the program due to their immersion. When asked why he feels like he belongs, Joe answers with “I feel the biggest contributor to this feeling is the fact I lived in Honors Hall in the dorms last year so more of the people around me were also honors students.” Living with students who are so similar creates an environment for deeper connections in a quicker way. This experience is beneficial for some members of the program, but if one does not live in the honors community, then the member becomes an outsider. According to Kelsey, who did not live in the honors housing, the program does not foster belonging because “I never have felt the sense of community that I've seen that there should be. And I always felt left out since I didn't live in the honors communities and didn't know everyone from day one.” The honors housing leaves the program in a particular situation as those who participate feel overly connected and those who do not are left on the fringe of the program, making a collective sense of belonging rather difficult to achieve. With a developed middle ground between the two extremes, the Honors Program may be

able to achieve a place where everyone can find their home away from home while attending Southern Utah University.

I will present a solution to this issue through additional interviews, highlighting the honors students' desire to change the program. In my selection of interviewees, I wanted a member of the honors community who was highly involved, in order to gain a perspective of this type of student. Joe attends as many activities as he can, in addition to living in honors housing. Joe reveals that "I feel that there is a community feeling for honors, but it doesn't just happen. You kind of have to really put yourself out there to be included into the honors community," which is exactly correct. The Honors Program, itself, needs to offer opportunities for meaningful interactions because if a member is expected to go out of her/his way all of the time, then the willingness to do so diminishes over a long period of time. Beyond Joe's solution to the issue, Chelsea claims, "I find that I personally feel very close with honors students that entered the program around the same time I did, or those who have been in the program longer than I have. I tend to feel disconnected to younger students." The closeness Chelsea feels towards her age-level peers is due to similarities in interests, ambitions, and fears, which can only be developed through time around the members. Even though both Joe and Chelsea found a small sense of belonging, these feelings of connectedness could be amplified with changes to the social aspects of the program.

In terms of belonging, some members within SUU's Honors Program are not getting enough out of the program to justify devoting their full commitment. This idea is justified through Guibernau's view on the importance of buying into the

program. He explains that “after becoming group members, some individuals may not feel fully satisfied with the consequences of belonging: maybe their material or nonmaterial benefits are not being fulfilled; or they underestimate the personal sacrifices expected from them. . . . [D]oubt and ambivalence about the value of belonging may emerge” (30). Belonging within a program requires a delicate balance between giving and taking within the organization, so that all the members feel their efforts are not in vain. Through my interviews with various honors students and my own personal experience, I realize that this reason is the driving force behind the lack of participation in the Honors Program. The program needs to ensure its members that the time and other consequences will be worth their energy in the long run.

Having effective, committed members is the ultimate goal of a well-developed program, as well as creating a more dynamic organization. Through my examination of the benefits and shortcomings of Southern Utah University’s Honors Program, I find that an induction ceremony would easily fit into the existing structure of the established program. The members of the program need public recognition that they are part of something bigger than themselves. An induction ceremony can serve this purpose as the members can be presented to the school as a member of the Honors Program. Also, an induction ceremony would be new to all members, allowing for the rift between the honors community students and the non-community students to close. If each member starts off her/his journey in the Honors Program on the same ground, such as at an induction ceremony, then everyone will be equal, which eliminates exclusion. By the creation of such a ritual,

the members will grow to accept their membership as students within an honors program and no longer see this membership as a source of embarrassment. A public induction ceremony pushes the members towards a sense of pride for their honors program, developing the beginning steps of commitment and even belonging.

The initial process of developing an effective induction ceremony may appear daunting, but using the existing structures of the program eliminates this issue. Currently, SUU's Honors

Program has the social activities in place and the tools to create a beneficial induction program to further bonding opportunities. The induction program could be placed between the open social and the Charge, as students need some familiarity with each other before the ceremony and more connections before they head up the mountain. This placement allows for the induction program to serve as the transition between the socially awkward opening social and the in-depth Charge.

#### Our Mission → Honors Student Pledge

**We, as** [The Honors Program, **will strive to** provide] enrichment opportunities for exceptionally talented, creative and academically committed students, **like yourself**, in a friendly, informal and interdisciplinary undergraduate experience. **We promise to** [The program connects **you/students** with SUU's best faculty through small classes and participation in out-of-class activities. **As a Southern Utah University Honors student(s), you will** learn in a collaborative environment where **your/their** ideas and research carry respect.

Now, I will ask all the induction members to please stand and repeat the honors student pledge after me.

As a **member of a** community of scholars, **students and faculty**

I **will** work enthusiastically **in my courses**, to achieve the following objectives:

**To-I will** understand complex issues from diverse perspectives.

**To-I will** process similarities and differences of how scholars in science, fine arts, humanities or social science see their world.

**To-I will** develop skills in self-expression, critical thinking, information gathering and problem solving.

**To-I will** write analytical or scientific papers of substantial length and depth.

**To-I will** volunteer for service projects both on campus and in the community.

**To provide/ will embrace** a competitive advantage **for students s(ill) a** desiring to pursue graduate education.

Figure 3: Honors Student Pledge (Developed from “SUU Honors Program)

Additionally, the mission statement from the Honors Program could be quickly adapted into an Honors Student Pledge, as featured above in Figure 3. Simple changes allows for an existing statement to be applicable to the ceremony in terms of a promise. The induction ceremony requires a level of commitment from the students, so the perks do not come without a cost. A pledge or promise forces honors students to take ownership of their personal obligations to the program. Without such a promise, students will not realize the need to give to the program as much, if not more, than what they take from it.

In terms of material gains from the program, the SUU Honors Program needs to offer students an item that is worth their efforts and will serve as a means of identification. During the actual induction ceremony, students need to transition from a group of people into a collective membership. This act is achieved through a symbol or mark of inclusion into the program. As the students take the pledge and become inducted, they need a physical reminder of their promise to the program. Without such an item, students will not hold themselves personally accountable towards their commitment. This symbol can be anything from a pin, ring, or badge to a flower or certificate. However, the item must be something of value to the members because if the item is a throw-away object—such as a t-shirt, drawstring bag, or rubber bracelet—then it will not carry any significant weight. The item will only serve as a reminder if the members see this item as a representation of their membership in the program.

Once the members have been inducted and introduced as a part of the program, then the true, lasting formations of belonging can occur. If the SUU Honors Program precedes the Charge with an induction ceremony, then the Charge can act as an activity of deep bonding among all members. With the addition of an induction ceremony, this scheduled activity can now serve as a source of membership development. The program can include activities where members share their internal struggles, fears, hopes, and desires to foster a sense of community. The members within an honors community have similar ambitions and fears, so using these items as a source of similarity will allow members to form bonds in a meaningful way. Also, the development of a shared goal will assist in the formation of a team. During this activity, the Charge should feature a section where the members are challenged and must rely on each other. This forced reliance will speed up the foundations of trust-building and establish a place of belonging sooner. By using the Charge as a bonding activity opposed to a social one, the members of the Honors Program will discover and develop a longer and lasting sense of belonging.

Moreover, the Charge should be used to reveal a mentorship program between the new inductees and older honors students. A mentorship program will help all parties involved feel like they belong. Members need to feel they are needed within the larger constructs of the program. Paring an established member with a newer member will allow for the newer member to receive peer guidance. Students desire support from their peers, as this advice serves a different purpose than advice from professors. Additionally, older members occasionally lose their way in



the Honors Program. By requiring them to be a mentor, the older member's interest in the program will increase, because s/he must be the example for another. I believe a mentorship program will further connect the older members to the younger members and would best be revealed during the Charge. If the Charge is going to be a time of deeper bonding, then the newer member would feel more comfortable if s/he has a person who went through the same struggles. Having a mentorship program within the larger constructs of the Honors Program will only enrich a feeling of belonging within new and old members alike.

Overall, Southern Utah University's Honors Program would greatly benefit from an induction program, a symbol of inclusion, and a mentorship program to foster a stronger sense of group cohesion. By understanding various theories of belonging, I have realized that members are only willing to put effort into a program if they have a place, purpose, and particular gains. From this information, I discovered that the Honors Program needs to create a community based on belonging, so members will become more committed to the program itself. My personal experiences within a study abroad fellowship and a local sorority have provided me with the insight that this goal is possible through support and driven members. An induction ritual will provide a source of common ground as well as cause members to make a promise to the Honors Program. Without feeling like one belongs, an individual will never transcend into higher levels of development, making the need for a closer Honors Program essential. Hopefully, with the development of these recommendations, Southern Utah University's Honors

Program will become the perfect home-away-from-home that students, just like me, desire.

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