



INSIDE HONORS: Ratings and Reviews of Sixty Public University Honors Programs

John Willingham

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How does a parent or prospective student have any idea about the true quality of an honors program, assuming that the students enrolled have met high admission standards? Understanding what makes a program substantive must begin with an analysis of the “ground game,” the graduation requirements, the specific mix of classes by discipline, the total number of honors sections, actual class sizes, honors grad rates—and, yes, the availability of special housing and perks, including priority registration for all courses. These factors and others are rated for the 50 honors colleges and programs listed below. Another 10 programs receive unrated, summary reviews. Find out if honors programs are really a combination of a “liberal arts college in the midst of a prominent research university, with all the advantages of both”? This typical description of public honors programs is sometimes true, sometimes misleading, and fairly often offset by equivalent values that are not mentioned in the hype. College choice almost always involves money. Is that private college that your National Merit Scholar has always dreamed of attending really worth an extra \$30,000 a year, since all merit aid at the private college is need-based, and your income, even with a family of four, leaves such a big balance? What, then, might make a public honors option truly competitive? It might be those eight honors math sections, or those interdisciplinary seminars at every class level, or that study-abroad stipend to attend Oxford in the summer, or that (mostly) quiet honors dorm with on-site dining, mentors, and study lounges on every floor, or the combination of writing, rhetoric, and honors business classes that will make your student a well-rounded success in life. And, often, it will be that merit award worth \$10,000 a year, to go with a waiver of out-of-state tuition. Yes, honors programs are complicated, but so are your college choice decisions. To understand exactly what these programs offer, parents and prospective students need to look inside honors. Rated Programs: Alabama, Arizona, Arizona State, Arkansas, Auburn, Clemson, Colorado State, Connecticut, CUNY Macaulay, Delaware, Georgia, Georgia State, Houston, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, LSU, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, New Jersey Inst Tech, New Mexico, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oklahoma State, Oregon, Oregon State, Penn State, Purdue, South Carolina, South Dakota, Temple, Tennessee, Texas A&M, Texas Tech, UC Irvine, Univ of Central Florida, UT Austin, Utah, Vermont, Virginia Commonwealth, Virginia Tech, Washington, Washington State. Editor John Willingham has spent five years researching and writing about public university honors programs. This is his third book on the subject.

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