

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF FIRST-YEAR, FIRST SEMESTER HONORS COLLEGE
STUDENTS PLACED ON ACADEMIC PROBATION

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to examine the experiences of first-year, traditional aged Honors College students who were placed on academic probation at the conclusion of the first semester and how they perceive their current circumstances, reasons for their inability to meet the honors requirements, and future academic pursuits. A comprehensive literature review was performed, specifically in the areas of first-year college students, retention, Honors Colleges and Honors Programs, high achievers, honors students in trouble, help-seeking behaviors, and academic probation at the collegiate level. A phenomenological research design was employed where participants met with the investigator one-on-one for a semi-structured interview. Ten students participated in the study; six were first-year students on honors probation, and four were in academic good standing following the end of the first semester. Participants described several common experiences, including: difficulty with the high school to college transition, planning and organizational challenges, overconfidence in academic abilities, and poor attendance and class participation. Based on these findings, several recommendations are made.

Keywords: first-year college student(s), Honors Colleges, honors students, Honors Programs, retention, students in trouble, high achievers, academic probation, high school transition

This dissertation is dedicated to my daughter, Ellie, without whom I might not have made the decision to pursue a Ph.D. degree. I also dedicate this to my parents who have been life-long educators and true believers in everything I have undertaken in life. I would not have been able to accomplish this without your love, support, and encouragement. “Thank you” does not begin to cover it.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Traditional aged college students in their first semester are faced with many exciting as well as stressful changes in their lives; such events may include leaving home for the first time, gaining new freedoms and independence, facing a higher level of academic rigor, adjusting to a new environment, developing interpersonal skills, making new friends, trying to “fit in,” career planning, and developing academic autonomy (Corwin & Cintrón, 2011; Emmons, 1991; Gardner, 1989; Gordon & Grites, 1984; Kuep, 2007; Moore, 2006; Pascarella, 1980; Santiago-Rivera, Gard, & Bernstein, 1999). In the case of first-year honors students, they are often “exposed to a highly competitive environment with increased demands to achieve and ‘prove themselves’ to others” (Santiago-Rivera et al., 1999, p. 61). Some students may find that they are unable to adjust as swiftly as others to the many challenges faced in the transition from high school to college and could find themselves in academic jeopardy (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Boretz, 2012; Hutson, 2006; James & Graham, 2010; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Trombley, 2001).

Given the financial interest that colleges and universities have in student retention, they invested a significant amount of time and money in an effort to identify factors that predict academic success, and researchers have attributed a variety of circumstances and features that offer some insight (Moore, 2006; Tinto, 1975; 1993). Most often, predictors of academic success that have been found to correlate to postsecondary achievement include high college entrance exams and exceptional high school grade point averages (Boulter, 2002; Clark & Cundiff, 2011; Moore, 2006); however, these credentials are required for most Honors Colleges and Honors

Programs (Cosgrove, 2004; Keller & Lacy, 2013; Shushok, 2006; Slavin, Coladarci, & Pratt, 2008).

Researchers have discovered that postsecondary students who depart do so before their sophomore year of college, making the freshman year the most precarious in terms of retention (Barefoot, 2000; 2007; Jamelske, 2008; Nora, Barlow, & Crisp, 2012; Porter & Swing, 2006; Tinto, 1987). Some theorists have asserted that the number of college students do leave make that determination based on academic abilities and/or poor grade performance (Altonji, 1993; Carneiro, Hansen, & Heckman, 2003; Cunha, Heckman, & Nevarro, 2005; Manski, 1989; Stinebrickner & Stinebrickner, 2012). Currently, there is a significant lack of information and scholarly literature available to Honors Colleges as to best predicting and managing students who find themselves in on academic probation at the conclusion their first semester following matriculation (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-09; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013).

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to understand the lived experiences of freshmen honors students placed on academic probation following the completion of their first semester. This will be an exploratory investigation as there is scant literature available regarding this topic.

Rationale for the Study

While there is a wealth of academic literature and research findings related to retention of postsecondary students during the first year of college (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Braxton, 2000; Braxton, Doyle, Hartley III, Hirschy, Jones, & McLendon, 2014; Friedman & Mandel, 2009; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005), there has been little effort focused on honors student

retention, specifically for those who encounter academic challenges early in their collegiate career.

Goodstein and Szarek (2013) pointed out that participation in an Honors College or Program is often greatest during the first year as students are routinely enrolled in honors courses as part of their orientation process. Following their recent study of honors student participation, they stated that there is a far-reaching institutional impact when an honors student elects to drop out of school. Goldstein and Szarek (2013) further likened the noninvolvement or negligible participation of honors students as the equivalent of woeful overall university retention and graduation rates for that specific honors college or program. Specifically, they asserted: “Whatever the reasons, low completion rates entail significant costs to the students recruited into the honors program, the faculty who teach in them, and the university that invests resources in creating and sustaining them” (Goodstein & Szarek, 2013, p. 91).

Beyond the honors environment, the struggle of college and universities to retain students during the first year has been well documented. In 2010, the American Institutes for Research (AIR) reported that there is a real cost to states in the form of appropriations designated for full-time first-year students who do not return the following year. In 2003, AIR found the cost to the 50 states and Washington, D.C. was \$1.2 billion. As of 2007, that cost had risen 15% to \$1.35 billion of what may be considered by many to be wasted funding (Schneider, 2010). In addition to the state allocations, there have been significant losses reported at the federal level in the form of grants. Most of these losses have come from the Pell grants, which are intended to assist low-income students and where federal funding has been increased by both the Bush and Obama administrations (Schneider, 2010). This type of negative return on investment has created some

concern at both the state and federal levels, and it has created a greater need for state and federally supported postsecondary institutions to provide evidence of efforts aimed at increasing retention rates during the freshman year of college.

One of the most recognized names in academic literature regarding first-year retention at the collegiate level is Vincent Tinto (Hagedorn, 2005; Kuh & Love, 2000; McCubbin, 2001; McQueen, 2009; Meier & Albrecht, 2003; Morrison & Silverman, 2012; Succi & Cantoni, 2008). Prior to the publication of his first paper focused on student departure in 1975, those students who elected to leave college before obtaining a degree were all categorized as “dropouts” without any differentiation or reasons given for why they made this decision (McCubbin, 2001). Tinto first began theorizing of the reasons students elected to depart during their freshman year in 1975 when he published his Student Integration Model followed by his Model of Institutional Departure in 1993. In his Student Integration Model (SIM), Tinto sought to explain the factors and processes that influenced a person’s decision to prematurely abandon his or her postsecondary education. He posited that there were different types of leaving behavior, including academic failure, voluntary abandonment, permanent dropout, temporary departure, and transfer. He further determined that there were internal and external factors at play in making early departure decisions such as individual attributes (race, gender, academic ability, personality characteristics); precollege experiences (grade point average, academic awards, social integration); and family background (socioeconomic status, value systems, and expectations). Tinto believed that students also viewed their higher education experience by analyzing their costs and benefits: will obtaining a college degree provide a better short-term and/or long-term benefit than available alternatives (Tinto, 1975; McCubbin, 2001)?

John Bean introduced a psychological model that linked the behavior of retention with similar past behavior, attitudes, intentions, and values (Bean, 1990; Bean & Eaton, 2000). It differed from Tinto's in that it included environmental factors (external variables outside of the influence of the postsecondary institution) and the students' intentions. Bean's model influenced the development of Tinto's Model of Student Departure, wherein he revisits the SIM and makes changes according to his continued research findings as well as the criticisms of other scholars (McCubbin, 2003; Tinto, 1993). In this model, Tinto provided another explanation for students' early departure: failure to navigate the collegiate rites of passage. He asserted that students would be more inclined to stay in college if they became more engaged in the processes and values of their university peers and faculty and separated themselves from their family and precollege friends (Tinto, 1993).

Both of Tinto's models have been largely criticized and revised since, yet Tinto still remains one of the foremost experts in this area of scholarship. In 1992, Feldman, who studied students participating in a program for academically talented undergraduates attending SUNY-Buffalo, made the assertion that although the setting from which Tinto devised his initial model was clearly intended to apply to a postsecondary institution in total, previous research might submit that this theory could be applied to an honors program setting as well. In a more recent study performed by Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09), they similarly hypothesized that, "Honors programs exist as sub-environments within a college environment, therefore honors students are influenced by both the honors program environment and the larger institutional environment" (p. 131); however, in their findings, they reported that while the results of their study yielded some support for Tinto's 1993 model when used in an Honors Program, they also indicate that

persistence in an Honors Program or Honors College is inherently different from university persistence in general and that further research was necessary to more accurately address student persistence and completion at the honors level.

Prior research has suggested that the main theory used to explain early student departure from higher education, Tinto's Student Integration Model (1975) and his subsequent Model of Institutional Departure (1993), do not adequately explain the factors that affect honors students. For that reason, this study was designed to more closely examine the experiences of honors students who are placed on academic probation at the end of their first semester.

Research Questions

The main research question being posed for this study was as follows: What are the textual features, if any, among the lived experiences of first-year honors students placed on academic probation?

The following served as sub-questions:

1. What were the students' perspectives of their first year of college and life as an Honors College student prior to the start of their first semester?
2. What do the first-year honors students attribute to their academic status at the completion of the first semester? What experiences do they specifically recall that led to their current circumstances?
3. What meaning do TBHC students attribute to their academic status? How do they plan to maintain or attain good status going forward?

4. How has the experience of being a TBHC student affected their view of postsecondary education and their academic-related future?

Limitations

The participants in this study were limited to first-year, first semester, traditional aged Honors College students with no previous collegiate experience. Six students were on honors academic probation following the end of the Fall 2014 semester; four were in good standing. Those students who were non-traditional aged, who were on academic probation beyond the first semester of their freshman year, and/or who had previous postsecondary experience were excluded.

In addition, the data was collected at the Honors College within one university; therefore, it is possible that honors students' experiences and characteristics may differ from those at other postsecondary institutions.

Finally, the selection process for participants wherein students were solicited to volunteer might also reveal systematic differences in this sample population that may not be reflective of the larger group of their freshmen Honors College peers.

Positionality

It is considered to be standard practice with qualitative studies, particularly in phenomenological investigations, for researchers to explain aspects of their positionality that may have influence on the conceptualization, data collection, data analysis, and reporting of the study (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). In disclosing potential biases, the investigator is more

conscious of these possible influencers and can better mitigate them leading to more trustworthy and reliable results.

As a young child, I underwent a series of tests to determine whether or not I would be allowed to enter the Talented and Gifted (TAG) program offered by my elementary school. Upon receipt of the results of the testing, I participated in advanced-level curriculum through high school including several advanced placement (AP) courses that I successfully completed. In addition, I played junior varsity and varsity sports; I participated in an internationally recognized marching band as well as in the competitive concert and jazz performance bands; and I volunteered at a local hospital in my spare time. I was also named to nationally recognized honor associations.

When I began to consider collegiate opportunities, I was encouraged to apply to Honors Colleges based on my scholarly success and extracurricular interests and accomplishments. During my senior year of high school, I accepted an offer for the upcoming fall semester to attend a large, research-intensive state university in their well-established Honors College. It was described as the best of both worlds – a large university with significant resources available to me, but within a smaller community where I would enjoy smaller classes, more faculty interaction, and be surrounded by peers with similar abilities and interests. I was pleased with my choice, and I felt that I was living up to the expectations set by parents, my teachers, and myself. I was prepared to reap the benefits of all of the hard work I had done.

Then I began my first semester as a first time in college freshmen on my own for the very first time. No longer did I have a strict schedule set by high school administrators, after school programs, and weekend obligations. It was up to me to manage my course schedule, my study

time, my extracurricular interests, my social life, all the while adjusting to a new environment and culture. When what felt like a whirlwind freshman fall semester ended, I had earned the lowest grade point average I had ever had before: a 3.0. Though I was never placed on a formal academic probation, as a 3.0 was the minimum required for honors college freshmen on the graduated scale system that was in place at the time, I did receive a letter informing me that I was just meeting the expectations, and that if I planned to continue in the program, I needed to earn higher marks in subsequent semesters. This letter served its purpose: I was able to manage my time, my course schedule, and my other interests from then out, and I graduated cum laude from the honors college three and a half years later. I had made it, but I was left to wonder about those honors college peers who disappeared over the course of the years. What happened? Why did it happen? Was there anything that could have been done to retain and graduate them?

As a former Honors College student and graduate of such a program, I have potential for personal bias; however, I entered as a freshman over twenty years ago, and since have never held a position where I have worked directly with an Honors Program or College. I recognize that many things have changed over that time, and that the institution being examined in this document is not the same university that I attended. There will be similarities and differences that I will encounter during this research, and I will need to be aware of my role as an impartial observer. My hope is to provide some insights into the lived experiences of students when they are first officially informed that they are not meeting the expectations of the Honors College; how they perceive this situation; and what plans, if any, they have to get back on track.

Summary

Given the significant financial, institutional, and individual stakes related to the topic of honors retention at the collegiate level, specifically during the first and most volatile year, research on the specific instances such as academic probation that create retention challenges is warranted. As Goldstein and Szarek (2013) concluded in their current study related to completion in a collegiate Honors Program, this “is a topic that begs for more empirical research and thoughtful essays as well as more public discourse about what level of completion is reasonable and desirable” (p. 102).

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This study seeks to explore the specific phenomenon of first time in college, first-year honors college students who are placed on academic probation at the conclusion of their first semester. In order to gain a better understanding of this topic, the Honors Programs/Colleges and the honors students themselves must be explored in more detail to serve as a foundational knowledge block on which to build. This chapter is intended to provide an in-depth review of the following topics: gifted students, high school to college transitional challenges, college retention theories and research findings, the purpose and history of Honors Colleges, characteristics of honors students, high-achievers and perfectionism, non-completion of honors, help-seeking behaviors, academic probation at the collegiate level, and current intervention efforts utilized for those in jeopardy.

While much attention has been given to research on gifted students in the kindergarten through high school setting, little focus has been on that same type of student at the postsecondary level (Achterberg, 2005; Frost, 2011; Hébert & McBee, 2007; Long & Lange, 2002; Reihman, Varhus, & Whipple, 1995; Rinn, 2003; Shushok, 2006). As several researchers interested in the experiences of academically gifted collegiate scholars noted, there is a significant lack of research on postsecondary students given the abundance of information available with respect to academically gifted students in the K-12 context (Hébert & McGee, 2007; Rinn & Plucker, 2004; Robinson, 1997). As Frost (2011) asserted, "...I am amazed at how little attention honors typically garners in the larger ongoing conversations about the quality of education today's college students receive, both high and low" (p. 69). Achterberg (2005) remarked that research and literature related to honors education and its students is scarce; this

has also been noted by others in the field (Long & Lange, 2002; Reihman, et al., 1995; Roemer, 1984). Cosgrove (2004) observed that “despite the proliferation in the number of honors programs, they are a relatively unstudied aspect of higher education” (p. 46).

Researchers have also discerned that very few studies have been performed which focus on the characteristics of students who elect to enroll in postsecondary honors programs (Clark, 2000; Edman & Edman, 2004). Castro-Johnson and Wang (2003) further remarked that researchers in this area (specifically, Clark, 2000; Grangaard, 2003; Palmer & Wohl, 1972) have also observed that there is a scant amount of data about the personality characteristics of academically gifted college students. Anecdotal information and rhetoric about what characteristics honors students possess are abundant; although, according to Achterberg (2005), “there is a severe lack of descriptive evidence, comparisons, or empirical data based on respectably-sized samples” (p. 80). There have been studies that have attempted to measure success of honors programs by measuring the GPA of their students over various time periods (Allen, 2002; Pflaum, Pascarella, & Duby, 1985; Phillips, 2004; Roufagalas, 1993; 1994; Shusok, 2002); however, as Campbell and Fuqua (2008-2009) asserted, few have endeavored to determine the characteristics and influences behind honors students’ decision to enroll in, stay in, and/or complete an honors program or degree.

While there are numerous studies that have provided insight with respect to persistence and graduation rates of students in college, few have focused on students in honors. As Cosgrove (2004) stated none of the studies conducted by Pascarella and Terenzini (1991), which provided information about the impact of college on students over the course of 20 years, held any data which focused on honors students or their experiences. As it relates to persistence in and

graduation from honors colleges and programs, very little literature has been published that focuses on these students' experiences to the point where the researchers asserted that information in this specific area of research is "almost nonexistent" (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-2009, p. 135). Goldstein and Szarek (2013) elaborate on this conclusion: "no published studies have explicitly assessed the impact of honors on overall retention and graduation..." (p. 87); yet, they added that some studies have done a comparison between honors and non-honors students as related to graduation rates. Goldstein and Szarek (2013) noted that when other factors are held constant, honors students tend to persist in college longer and graduate at higher levels than do non-honors students; however, the observation of researchers has been consistent with Herbert and McGee's (2007) perception: "in summary, research on the effects of participation in university honors programs is limited" (p. 137).

The Freshman Year of College

There has been significant attention to the study of students in the first year of college, specifically focused on: ensuring a successful transition (Braxton, 2000; Clark, 2005; Gardner, 1986; Kuh, Kenzie, Schuh, & Whitt and Associates, 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975); mitigating adjustment difficulties (Astin, 1984; Braxton, 2000; McCubbin, 2001; Tinto, 1996; Gardner, 1986); providing critical activities geared specifically to newcomers (Gardner, 1986); promoting early campus involvement (Baker, Siryk, & McNeil, 1985; Clark, 2005; Gardner, 1986; Kuh et al., 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1996); establishing faculty, advisor, and/or upper classmen student mentor relationships (Budny, Paul, & Bon, 2006; Clark, 2005; Drew, 1990; Gardner, 1981) offering, and in some cases requiring, a course created

for incoming freshmen to acclimate them to their new environment (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Baker & Siryk, 1984; Braxton, 2000; Brody, Assouline, & Stanley, 1990; Clark, 2005; Gardner, 1986; Kuh et al., 2011; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975; 1996; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989; Upcraft, Gardner & Barefoot, 2005). The phenomenon first described by Stern in 1966 known as the “freshman myth” has also drawn attention from many who study the freshmen year. The freshmen myth is defined by Baker et al. (1985) as follows: “the myth refers to the fact that, on average, entering freshmen have expectations concerning college that are more positively toned than the actual experience of being in college” (p. 94). In addition to Stern (1966), Pervin (1966), Pate (1970), and Herr (1971) also conducted studies during the 1960s which established a trend regarding the need to manage expectations of incoming students; many enter college with unrealistic expectations and soon discover that those grandiose perceptions of the experience pale in comparison to the actual lived experience of the freshmen year which leads to early attrition (Baker & Siryk, 1984; Baker et al., 1985; Cook & Leckey, 1999; Cooper & Robinson, 1988; Pancer, Hunsberger, Pratt, & Alisat, 2000; Smith & Wertlieb, 2005).

What began as a written scholarly discussion centered on the difficulties involved in making the transition from secondary school to institutions of higher education has evolved into a large-scale effort to find ways to retain students during the first critical weeks and months of their matriculation to college (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Braxton et al., 1995; Clark, 2005; Kuh et al., 2011; McCubbin, 2001; Tinto, 1987; Upcraft et al., 2005). Despite the efforts of numerous scholars and researchers, Tinto (1996), pointed out that most of the studies on first-year retention efforts are not useful in that they are limited and often non-transferrable.

In an article addressing the topic of the first year, Tinto (1996) criticized the efforts to date by stating that “most retention programs have done little to change the quality of the academic experience for students, especially during the critical first year of college” (p. 1). Tinto reported in 1996 that more than 40% of all students across the United States enrolled at four-year colleges fail to earn a degree; further, 57% of those students who drop out from four-year institutions do so prior to the start of year two (1996). According to data collected by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) and reported by American Institutes for Research (AIR) from 1,521 four-year colleges and universities from the year 2003 to 2008, the freshman retention rate for postsecondary institutions in the United States whose students receive federal student aid authorized under Title IX of the Higher Education Act of 1965 (reauthorized in 2008), 70% of first-year, full-time students return for the second year; however, at these same institutions, the rate of return for first-year, part-time students is only 50% (Schneider, 2010). Further, in a recent preliminary report published by the National Center for Education Statistics, the IPEDS data collection from 2004 – 2012 revealed that approximately 57% of first-time students enrolled in a full-time status at a four-year Title IV institutions in 2006 seeking a bachelor’s degree or the equivalent of a bachelor’s degree graduated within six years of their original enrollment date (Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2013).

At the heart of the matter for many scholars, researchers, and administrators is why students opt to withdraw before successfully completing the degree requirements (Braxton, 2000; McCubbin, 2001; Tinto, 1975; 1996).

Seven Reasons Students Withdraw from College

While Tinto (1996) stated “there is no one form of behavior, no single prevailing reason for leaving” (p. 1), he does provide seven major reasons that students drop out before obtaining their bachelor’s degree along with proposed strategies to counteract these causes known as his revised interactionist theory. This theory has been debated, elaborated, and accepted to some extent with marked modifications by prominent scholars in the field of higher education (Braxton, 2000; McCubbin, 2001).

The first one most often is an involuntary cause: academic difficulty. The student might be ill prepared for the academic challenges he or she faces in college (Braxton, 2000; Laycock, 1984; McCubbin, 2001; Tinto, 1975); he or she may not demonstrate effective time management skills (McCubbin, 2001; Noldon & Sedlacek, 1998); or the student perhaps is unmotivated to perform well (Braxton et al., 1995; McCubbin, 2001; Noldon & Sedlacek, 1998). The underlying reasons aside, students who leave prior to graduation due to academic difficulty account for approximately 25% of the total drop out population (Tinto, 1996). Colleges and universities have sought to mitigate this attrition factor by proactively offering programs that provide advising, mentoring, and tutoring services. In addition, many have implemented early warning mechanisms to alert administrators and staff when students are encountering academic difficulty; these notifications often occur by the middle of the semester, or in some cases, within the first few weeks of the term (diNovi, 2011; Beck & Davidson, 2001; Pflieger, 2002). This can be challenging to execute at larger research institutions with competing priorities and dwindling resources; however, the investment of time and effort has been accomplished successfully by

institutions with clearly defined processes and objectives (D. Pruitt, personal communication, October 24, 2012).

Given the focus on retention, particularly during the first year, many higher education administrators have implemented some measures to address this issue proactively; one such strategy is known as enrollment management wherein the characteristics of the institution are more often advertised to prospective students so that they have a strong sense of the environment before coming onto the campus (Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1995; Hossler & Bean, 1990); where students who possess characteristics of the type of scholar who has been successful at the institution are targeted during the recruiting process; and where analyses are performed to determine the ideal size of the entering class to better manage retention (Braxton et al., 1995; Kemerer, Baldrige, & Green, 1982).

Another proactive strategy that has been employed at many institutions of higher education is offering an extended orientation or first semester course/seminar designed specifically for freshmen students attending college for the first time. This tactic has been embraced by several influential scholars, including Chickering, Gardner, Barefoot, Upcraft, Fidler, Cuseo, Gordon, and Swing. John Gardner, often credited as the father of the first-year experience, noted the importance of getting to students in a first-year classroom to establish contact with peers, faculty, and the institution itself; to establish an understanding of the academic rigor change from high school to college; and to prepare students for the challenges ahead (Gardner, 1989; Schroeder, 2003). Gordon and Grites (1984) similarly remarked that many incoming freshmen students need a more robust introduction to their institution and its purpose and goals than what can be offered in the typical first semester curriculum.

The focus of this study is on students in their first year in college who are not performing at the academic level expected; however, it is important to briefly describe the other reasons scholars have theorized that students leave early even though these are considered voluntary departures. While academic eligibility may be the primary reason for the state of jeopardy a student finds himself in, researchers have found that there are often underlying issues contributing to the student's status (Baird, 2000; Braxton, 2000; Tinto, 2000; 1996).

A second reason that has been observed to contribute to students leaving college before obtaining a degree is due to adjustment difficulties. In works related to student departure, emphasis has been on this as a shared responsibility between the student and the institutions of higher education (Baird, 2000; Tinto, 1996). The transition from high school to college can be challenging and even overwhelming for many traditional aged students who are often stepping out on their own for the first time in their lives (Braxton, Sullivan, & Johnson, 1997; Braxton, Vesper, & Hossler, 1996; McCubbin, 2001; Tinto, 1996). The third explanation regarding early departure is related to goal-setting. This is further clarified that students' goals may be uncertain, too narrow, or too vague (Tinto, 1996). Many adolescents and young adults begin their collegiate journey with little idea as to why they are truly there, while others may set their sights on very specific and limited options (for example, a professional athlete or an actor). In addition, some students may enroll at an institution as a stepping stone with the intention of transferring to another university, so while they may be continuing their education, they leave before completing their program at the first (Tinto, 1996). A fourth motivation for early student departure at the postsecondary level has to do with the students' commitment to earning their degree in a reasonable time period. Tinto (1996) measured the time to earn a baccalaureate

degree as a four year period; many researchers, data analysts, and postsecondary institutions have elected to use six years as the standard time to graduation in measurements more recently (Ginder & Kelly-Reid, 2013; Schneider, 2010). Whether the expectation is that a degree is completed in four or six years, there is a high level of commitment required on the part of the student to be able to accomplish this task. Though students may have the academic ability to persist, they may lack the dedication. Other students may be devoted to their studies but are adversely impacted by external obligations. In these particular cases, Tinto (1996) referred to them as “stop-outs” (p. 2) rather than drop outs, as many later return to complete their degrees when their responsibilities decrease.

Financial deficiency is a fifth issue that may create a roadblock for students who are working towards a baccalaureate degree (Tinto, 1975; St. John, Cabrera, Nora, & Asker, 2000). There are instances wherein financial aid in the form of scholarships, loans, federal aid, and other monies are not available or enough to cover the cost of higher education, especially in the cases of students from the working class, lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and/or single income families who are unable to make ends meet. Tinto (1996) noted, however, that some students who withdraw for financial reasons do so because they perform a sort of cost-benefit analysis that leaves them feeling that the end gain would not be as valuable as the resources needed to complete the degree program. The sixth reason given for early student departure is due to a lack of congruence between the individual and the university (Tinto, 1996). The student feels as though he or she does not fit in either socially or academically. This rationale along with the seventh motivation for student drop outs, isolation, is linked with the second reason: adjustment difficulties (Bean & Eaton, 2000; Tinto, 1996). Students who feel lonely, alienated, unaccepted,

inadequate, or ill-suited often have not found strong connections with the institution itself, the faculty, fellow students, staff, and/or the surrounding communities are more likely to leave before obtaining their degree than those who feel that they are entrenched in one or more ways into their environment (Baker & Siryk, 1986; Becker, 2008; Read, Archer, & Leathwood, 2003). In a recent dissertation study, Washington (2013) determined that one of the most important factors for positive adjustment to college was whether a student participated in an Honors College. Frank Laycock (1984) noted in an article entitled *Bright Students and Their Adjustment to College* that “just as there is no single ‘college student,’ so there is no simple ‘adjustment to college’” (p. 83).

Honors Colleges

Austin’s 1986 article noted “honors education consists of the total means by which a college or university seeks to meet the education needs of its ablest and most highly motivated students” (p. 5). Rinn’s (2006) perspective seemed to concur as she stated Honors Programs were created to offer a better education for students who exhibited more talent and motivation than a non-honors student might. The purpose of the establishment of Honors Colleges in the United States was to meet the growing demand for a distinctively separate level of academic rigor at the more populous larger colleges and universities to challenge students with greater abilities and desires to receive a distinguished education (Austin, 1986; Aydelotte, 1946; Bratt, 2010; Cohen, 1966; Halveston, 1973; Laycock, 1984; Rinehart, 1978; Rinn, 2006).

Prior to the establishment of Honors Colleges, those pupils who sought a more rigorous curriculum at the postsecondary level matriculated to the academically superior Ivy League

institutions (Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Laycock, 1984). While these highly regarded colleges and universities were able to meet the need for a period of time after they were founded (between 1836 and 1905), they lacked a means to differentiate the needs of their truly exceptional students (Austin, 1986; Brubacher & Rudy, 1997; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Guzy, 2003; Laycock, 1984; Guzy, 2003; Laycock, 1984; Rinn, 2003; 2006). College and universities in the United States had attempted to establish differentiation of the exceptional student from the average student as early as the beginning of the twentieth century (Bratt, 2010; Rinehart, 1978; Rinn, 2006), but it was not until prominent scholar Frank Aydelotte established a distinctively separate honors program at Swarthmore College in 1922 that discussion began in earnest on the idea of establishing Honors Colleges (Bratt, 2010; Rinn, 2003). Those high performing students who were not accepted to the upper echelon academic institutions attended state universities and other postsecondary schools less academically able peers. Students with above average intelligence were finding that they were not challenged at the state universities, and as a result, they began to elect to discontinue their education because they were not challenged intellectually (Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Laycock, 1984). According to Austin (1986):

in any institution in which the student body is intellectually heterogeneous, two groups of students are disadvantaged by the regular curricular offerings: At the one end of the continuum are those whose ability or preparation render them incapable of meeting the challenge of the full program, and at the other extreme are those of such ability and previous achievement that the regular program provides insufficient challenge. (p. 6)

To address this growing concern in the academic community, Halverson published the findings from a committee investigation into Honors Programs entitled *Report and Recommendations of the Ad Hoc Task Force on Honors* which was released in 1973 (Austin, 1986; Halverson, 1973). Austin observed that an Honors Program “is simply a planned set of arrangements to serve the needs of talented students more adequately than if the matter were left entirely to the initiative of interested persons” (1986, p. 7). In this report, Halverson detailed the following educational and institutional objectives: (1) to identify those students whose abilities and motivation to achieve were so high that those academic needs could not be met by existing programs; (2) to provide high caliber academic options where the students would be challenged to realize the highest level of excellence that they were capable of as they strove to become independent learners; (3) to establish an atmosphere that would foster their aspirations achievements; and (4) to gain benefits from the program that would disseminate to the wider academic community, including inspiring focus on quality education and excellence, providing faculty a higher level of satisfaction and engagement that stems from working with highly gifted students, and attracting distinguished scholars and orators to the campuses (Austin, 1986; Halverson, 1973). In essence, the incentives for colleges and universities to incorporate these objectives into Honors Colleges and Programs were that this platform would serve to attract students with outstanding academic ability, aid in recruiting and obtaining distinguished faculty members committed to quality education, attract funding from public and private donors to continue the mission to provide a superior level of academic excellence, and enhance the image of the institution as a champion of outstanding scholarship (Austin, 1986; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). As Carnicom (2013) summarized, “honors was designed to level the playing field,

providing an excellent education to a wider group of students for whom the Ivy League or elite liberal arts colleges might have been out of reach” (p. 37). This purpose has been defined similarly by numerous scholars who have studied Honors Colleges and Programs (Achterburg, 2005; Austin, 1986; Carnicom, 2013; Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Guzy, 1999; Hebert & McBee, 2007; Rinn, 2006; 2003; Weiner, 2009).

“Collegiate honors programs typically offer students enhanced academic challenge in the form of honors course and seminars, smaller classes, more faculty contact, and interdisciplinary classes” (Hebert & McBee, 2007). These principles are summarized and more specific guidance is provided in the National Collegiate Honors Council’s (NCHC) landmark document entitled “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program” which was developed in 1994 (Bratt, 2010; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Hebert & McBee, 2007; NCHC, 2005; Rinn, 2003; 2006; Spurrier, 2008).

Although the concept of honors education within postsecondary schools has been welcomed by many, there has been some concern expressed in the higher education academic community that the presence of Honors Colleges and Programs create an elitist environment within a larger university; the question that often arises is why wouldn’t universities want to aspire to provide this type of educational program to all of its students (Clauss, 2011)? In response to this type of criticism, proponents of Honors Colleges have claimed that there are benefits to both the non-honors students and the institution housing the differentiated program (Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Hebert & McGee, 2007; Rinn & Plucker, 2004). These advantages include the participation of honors students in non-honors courses (Braid, 2008; Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Hebert & McGee, 2007); the assumption of

campus-wide leadership roles by students participating in the Honors College (Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013); the faculty members' ability to experiment with curriculum, technology, and format encouraged by the honors community (Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Guzy, 2012); the impact of honors student participation in learning opportunities outside of the classroom (Badenhausen, 2012; Braid, 2008; Clauss, 2011; Guzy, 2012; Hebert & McGee, 2007); and the ability to synthesize learnings (Clauss, 2011; NCHC, 2005). The guidelines established by the NCHC containing the characteristics associated with well-established Honors Colleges stipulate that the optimal percentage of coursework to be completed within the Honors College is around 20 to 25; this leaves 75% or more time that honors students are dedicating to coursework within the general education and/or major classroom settings (Clauss, 2011; NCHC, 2005; Spurrier, 2008). This means that there are high-achieving academic peers integrated with students who may not be as engaged in the classes; these more assertive students raise the stakes for all of the class members, which has the potential to inspire other students to become more active participants in and outside of the classrooms by provoking a need to search for and gather more knowledge (Clauss, 2011). Another way in which Honors Colleges might benefit all of the universities' students is that high performing students like those involved in an honors program are more likely to assume leadership roles on campus; these student leaders serve as far-reaching mentors and positive examples while also making a difference for all students by effecting a broader impact across the campus (Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). Deans and Directors of Honors Colleges are often encouraged by the institution leadership to allow honors faculty to experiment with new technologies, teaching approaches, and curriculums because they typically enjoy smaller class sizes and more flexible

learners. These experiences could be held inside and outside of the classroom setting. Successful and often innovative pedagogies are then shared across the university to enhance the experience for all students. Finally, the NCHC suggests that Honors Colleges require a culminating project or course to synthesize the knowledge that honors students have gathered during their time in the program (Clauss, 2011; NCHC, 2005). This type of undertaking could take the shape of a capstone project, a thesis, or a formal course. The knowledge gleaned from these assignments can serve as a model for non-honors students, allowing them the opportunity to develop critical thinking skills in the application of their higher education knowledge and be better prepared for the workforce and/or graduate education (Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). As Clauss (2011) summarizes:

Foreign study, community service, student internships, work in faculty labs, leadership roles, and research in support of honors theses serve to underscore the fact that education can exist beyond the formal setting of classes and departments, can teach students that they own their own education, and can set the stage for a life of continuous learning and engagement beyond college. Here, too, honors provides a valuable and useful model for the rest of the college or university. (p. 98)

From a benefit to the institution standpoint, Goodstein and Szarek (2013) note that the presence of an Honors College provides universities with a recruitment tool in that they can offer a first-rate education for a fraction of the cost; given that many high-achieving students often pursue degrees beyond the bachelor's level, attending a more cost effective college would permit them to conserve funds for graduate or professional school. Postsecondary institutions with

Honors Colleges often attract high-caliber and sought after faculty who prefer to work in smaller classroom settings with high ability learners (Guzy, 2012).

Further, the presence of an honors program on a larger university campus may also provide an economic advantage in the form of grants and donations placed in the hands of prestigious honors faculty (Badenhausen, 2012; Guzy, 2012). The existence of an Honors Program situated within a larger higher education institution may benefit non-honors students, faculty, and the university itself in a variety of ways (Austin, 1986; Astin, 1991; Badenhausen, 2012; Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-2009; Carnicom, 2013; Clauss, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Guzy, 2012; Hebert & McBee, 2007; Holman & Banning, 2012).

Birth of the National Collegiate Honors Council

No uniform requirements or stipulations were ever established as a standard for all Honors Colleges and Programs; however, there have been efforts to share ideas across institutions in larger forums (Bratt, 2010; Clauss, 2011; Rinn, 2003; 2006; Sederberg, 2005; Spurrier, 2008). In 1930, Joseph Cohen, who established an honors program at the University of Colorado, and is largely considered to be Adyelotte's successor, convened a group known as the Honors Council which was intended to work through the details that would separate the general curriculum from the honors curriculum to establish a truly separate honors college (Bratt, 2010; Rinn, 2006). Membership in this group expanded to more than 100 member institutions by 1939, though growth efforts stalled following World War II (National Collegiate Honors Council, n.d.a). Following the launch of Sputnik in 1956, the pressure placed on the United States to remain on the cutting edge of new technologies, inventions, and developments led to a grant

from the Rockefeller Foundation given to the University of Colorado to encourage and aid in the expansion of not only its honors college, but to provide the means and opportunity for scholars to travel to other institutions to gather and share knowledge from other similar programs (Guzy, 1999; Carnicom, 2011; Rinn, 2003). In addition, funding was provided by the Carnegie Corporation, The National Science Foundation, and the United States Department of Education (National Collegiate Honors Council, n.d.a). With these grants, Cohen convened the first national conference on honors that would form the group known as the Inter-University Committee on the Superior Student (ICSS) (Guzy, 1999; National Collegiate Honors Council, n.d.a; Rinehart, 1978; Rinn, 2006). The inaugural meeting was comprised of forty-three individuals from twenty-seven separate colleges or universities; in that meeting, the group established the “Sixteen Major Features of a Full Honors Program” (Rinn, 2006, p. 75) that set the informal standards for institutions with an honors curriculum. This document outlined what an Honors Program should and should not include, for example, smaller class sizes, final comprehensive examinations, use of primary sources of information, and more active learning techniques to be used by honors instructors. The ICSS served as a repository of information for use by new and emerging honors programs across the country; it sent members to evaluate existing programs and provide ideas on growth and improvement; and it established a publication forum for honors faculty and administrators known as *The Superior Student* (Guzy, 1999; Rinn, 2006). When the grant funding had been exhausted, the ICSS was disbanded; many felt that there was a need for continued efforts in honors program collaboration, and thus, the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) was founded in 1966 as a self-funded organization (Bratt, 2010; Rinn, 2006).

The NCHC modified the documents established by the ICSS and developed the “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College” (Guzy, 1999; Rinn, 2006; Sederberg, 2005). In 2005, the NCHC felt that a way to differentiate an Honors College from an Honors Program was needed; thus, another document, “Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors College,” was created. For an Honors College or Program to be permitted to join the NCHC, it must possess certain elements such as a mission statement, a designated honors facility, an honors dean or director, specific honors faculty, special academic advising for honors students, and a 20-25% requirement of total course work to be completed in the honors curriculum (Rinn, 2006). The importance of the existence of the NCHC and its work is summarized by Robert Spurrier (2008): “...NCHC’s ‘Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program’... continue[s] to be [an] extremely valuable tool for the development of honors programs and colleges. Having passed the test of time, the ‘Basic Characteristics of a Fully Developed Honors Program’ are something akin to the received wisdom of the national honors community...” (p. 192).

Difference between Honors Programs and Honors Colleges

While this study specifically focuses on the experience of Honors College students, there often exists some confusion around the differences between an Honors College and an Honors Program. As Cosgrove (2004) noted, Honors Programs exist in two forms: general honors and departmental honors. General honors, also known as university-wide honors, are most often based upon final grade point average wherein graduates are awarded academic distinctions such as Magna Cum Laude, Suma Cum Laude and Cum Laude. Departmental honors is most often

termed “honors in the major” in which case students have performed exceptional work most often displayed in the form of a research project and/or capstone thesis. Cosgrove (2004) asserted that Honors Colleges are a third form of honors that a university may offer, which is more comparable to departmental honors than to general honors.

Achterberg (2004) and Lawrence (2000) agreed that Honors Colleges tend to be publically visible (separate building in most cases; marketing); they have more distinct reporting lines than Honors Programs; and their presence on campuses improves of the quality of both the applicants as well as the graduates. Achterberg (2004) further noted that an Honors College provides name recognition, often comes with a space on the faculty senate as well as representation on university-wide committees and is included in resource allocation plans. In most cases, Honors Colleges have a separate Dean, which means the organizational chart is revamped and an external advisory board is created. The presence of an Honors College can also positively impact fundraising efforts in that the number of donors may increase along with the contribution amount, which can lead to a greater number of scholarships available to prospective students. As the typical Honors College is housed in a separate physical space on campus, it can be more centrally located, updated in the form of a new building or a renovated facility, more suitable for the type of student sought to enroll, and more functional (Achterberg, 2004).

From a curricular perspective, Honors Colleges offer closed courses only available to their student population, which tend to be smaller in class size as compared to the larger courses offered within the institutions; the course content tends to be more challenging and often more innovative; and they typically require a capstone project or course be completed prior to graduation (Achterberg, 2005; Frost, 2011). While neither Honors Colleges nor Honors

Programs are regionally or nationally accredited, the National Collegiate Honors Council provides separate guidelines for Honors Programs and Honors Colleges to assist postsecondary institutions in the formation, revision, curriculum development, expansion, and supervision of each form of honors (NCHC, n.d.).

Characteristics of Honors Students

While a plethora of scholarly literature related to the academically gifted and talented students in the K-12 setting, there is a notable lack of research that exists concerning these students at the collegiate level (Hebért & McGee, 2007; Rinn & Plucker, 2004; Robinson, 1997). Specifically, Edman and Edman (2004) proclaim that, “Very little research has been done concerning the characteristics of those who choose to enroll in college or university honors programs” (p. 19). This has also been observed by several previous researchers including Castro-Johnson and Wang in 2003, Grangaard in 2003, Clark in 2000, and even back to Palmer and Wohl in 1972.

Achterberg (2005) noted that while the NCHC has provided guidance with respect to the characteristics of Honors Colleges, it has not offered any such assistance in defining the honors college student. There does exist, however, a certain ideology that honors students are superior to non-honors peers (Achterberg, 2005; Long & Lange, 2002; Mathaisen, 1985); that honors students are the best and brightest (Achterberg, 2005; Badenhausen, 2010; Clauss, 2011); and that these scholars have higher academic abilities than many others in their peer group (Achterberg, 2005; Austin, 1986; Clauss, 2011; Cohen, 1966; Frost, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Hebért & McBee, 2007; Shushok, 2002).

The following Table provides words and phrases that scholars have attributed to honors students:

Table 1: Characteristics of Collegiate Honors Students

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| Able | Driven | Inspired | Self-confident |
| Accelerated | Eager | International Perspective | Self-directed |
| Achieving | Earnest | Introverted | Self-disciplined |
| Advanced | Encouraged | Intuitive | Smarter |
| Ambitious | Exceptional | Non-homogenous | Strategic |
| Appreciative of Diversity | Exploratory | Optimistic | Strong Focus |
| Autonomous | Experienced | Overachieving | Strong Self-control |
| Committed to Causes | High Ability | Patient | Successful |
| Committed to Learning | Highly Motivated | Passionate | Talented |
| Communicative | Hungry (for growth) | Persistent | Varied Interests |
| Conscientious | Imaginative | Reflective Responsible | Well-spoken |
| Creative | Independent Thinkers | Resourceful | |
| Curious | Interested | Searching | |

(Achterberg, 2005; Austin, 1086; Aydelotte, 1925; Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-2009; Cohen, 1966; Cummings, 1986; Edman & Edman, 2004; Freyman, 2005; Frost, 2011; Harte, 1994; Hebert & McGee, 2007; Irwin, 2005; Link, 1994; Long & Lange, 2002; Otero, 2005; Palmer & Wohl, 1972; Pinti, 2005; Randall & Copeland, 1986; Rhode, 1994; Schuman, 1989; Siegle, Rubenstein, Pollard, & Romey, 2010; Younger, 2004).

Honors College students have been contrasted with non-honors peers, and differences have been noted between the two groups. Scholars have asserted that honors students are better critical-thinkers, better academically prepared, more likely to do the assignments and care about the outcomes, have a greater breadth of interest, are more emotionally intelligent, have stronger leadership aspirations, and show something “extra” when compared with their non-honors counterparts (Achterberg, 2005; Frost, 2011; Hebert & McGee, 2007; Long & Lange, 2002; Otero, 2005). Freyman (2005) suggests that honors students approach their studies with the idea of “Learning for living, not just for making a living” (p. 24).

In a study conducted by Mathiasen (1985), it was found that Honors College students differed from their non-honors counterparts most notably in terms of study behaviors, locus of control, academic drive, and personality characteristics. Honors students placed more emphasis on the importance of studying; they reported less of a need for acknowledgement of academic achievement; they demonstrated a greater level of persistence; they were better at coping with anxiety; they held more regard for grades; they were more competitive with peers; they had a greater need for achievement; they experienced a greater passion for knowledge; they exceeded expectations; and they were less likely to be discouraged than non-honors participants (Freyman, 2005; Hebert & McBee, 2007; Mathiasen, 1985; Otero, 2005).

Honor students were also more likely to attribute their successes or failures to the amount of effort put in and the abilities they possessed (Good & Brophy, 1986; Rubenstein, Pollard, & Romey, 2010). Honors students also demonstrated more strategic behaviors in that they tended to plan ahead more often, prepare in advance for classes, and use any and all relevant resources available to them (Achterberg, 2005; Edman & Edman, 2004; Long & Lange, 2002). They were

also less likely than non-honors peers to watch television, drink alcoholic beverages, attend parties, and more likely to work on campus, volunteer, participate in extra- and co-curricular activities, and talk with faculty members outside of the classroom (Achterberg, 2005; Long & Lange, 2002).

Gerrity, Lawrence, and Sedlacek (1993) compared Honors College students to non-honors students on the dimensions of demographics, viewpoints, curiosities, and behaviors (Hebert & McBee, 2007). Gerrity, et al. (1993) determined that collegiate honors students tended to have more highly educated parents than non-honors students; they viewed college as a way to continue learning and/or prepare for advanced education whereas their non-honors peers saw attending a university as a way to increase their financial earnings and improve their standings; and honors students selected careers based on intrinsic interest while the non-honors students more often chose their occupational path based upon earning potential (Hebert & McBee, 2007).

In a study performed by Castro-Johnson and Wang (2003), the results suggested that the more academically talented college freshmen, such as those who often participate in an Honors Program and/or Honors College, tended to exhibit higher levels of Emotional Intelligence (EI) than their non-honors peers. The researchers used the definition that was provided by Mayer and Salovey in 1997; EI is “the ability to perceive and express emotion assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in the self and others” (p. 10). Based upon Castro-Johnson and Wang’s findings, they drew the conclusion that honors students in fact perform at a higher level of EI than non-honors students. The researchers asserted that a higher level of EI leads to a greater ability to manage negative thoughts, such as anxiety around potential academic failure, and, in a sense, re-channel those feelings to obtain

positive outcomes. As a result of possessing a higher functioning EI level, those honors students are more likely to be academically successful (Castro-Johnson & Wang, 2003). In 2004, a similar study was published by Edman and Edman wherein EI was measured via survey to a collegiate honors population, and the researchers found similar results: the honors students scored higher on EI scales than did their non-honors peers. They theorized that the honors students were found to be more motivated and more curious likely as a result of their more advanced abilities to perceive, comprehend, and cope with emotions. They concurred with Castro-Johnson and Wang's (2003) findings that this higher level of emotional intelligence should empower honors students to better regulate and utilize their stress to turn it into an advantage, and they were more apt to use their emotional reactions to heighten their desire to excel academically (Edman & Edman, 2004).

Randall and Copeland (1986-87) used the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) when comparing freshmen honors students with non-honors students at the collegiate level. They determined that honors students differ from non-honors peers in personality type; most honors students were found to be introverted (I) versus extroverted (E), more intuitive (N) than sensing (S), and indicated that they were more thinking (T) than feeling (F). The findings with regards to the final measure, judging (J) or perceiving (P), did not demonstrate any difference between honors and non-honors students. Randall and Copeland (1986-87) concluded that while scholars have evidence that honors freshmen enter college with higher test scores and high school grade point averages than their non-honors peers, there is not as much information available to recognize differences in the way these high-achieving students think, feel, and approach specific situations. Having a greater understanding of the personality types of freshman Honors College

students would serve to help administrators and educators in managing their students' needs beyond their "smart" exteriors (Randall & Copeland, 1986-87).

High-Achievers and Perfectionism

Past evidence suggests that academically gifted students who are among students who experience similar success are more likely to maintain a high level of academic achievement (Pflaum, Pascarella, & Duby, 1985; Long, 2002; Rinn, 2005; Siegle, Rubenstein, Pollard, & Romey, 2009). It has also been found that honors students tend to have greater confidence in their academic abilities, leading to a higher level of academic self-concept than those students who have average scholarly abilities (Mathiasen, 1985; Rinn, 2005; Rinn & Plucker, 2004). While there have not been many studies focused on high-achieving students in postsecondary institutions, there have been many that have been performed in K-12 environments. In those settings, it has been found that a decrease in self-concept can be seen in elementary and secondary students after they join a gifted program as a result of Marsh and Parker's (1984) Big-Fish-Little-Pond Effect (BFLPE), where students who have excelled in general classroom situations now find themselves among peers who have equal academic abilities (Rinn, 2005). This has been found to challenge some students' prior perceptions of scholastic talent and, thus, decrease their level of academic self-concept. Conversely, other studies (Marsh, Kong, & Hau, 2000) have found that gifted students who join an academically elite program experience an increase in academic self-concept because they have been accepted and recognized as having higher scholastic ability.

Many researchers have posed the theory that gifted students, often termed as high achievers such as those who are in talented and gifted programs elementary, secondary, and postsecondary levels, may exhibit a relationship with perfectionism (LoCicero & Ashby, 2000; Neumeister, 2004; Parker & Adkins, 1995). Parker and Adkins (1995) theorized that there are differences between K-12 and postsecondary students in terms of the degree of perfectionism. That is, the typical college student might demonstrate higher levels of perfectionism than K-12 students would, and honors college students would be found to exhibit higher levels of perfectionism than their non-honors counterparts. As Parker and Adkins (1995) reported, however, the ideal of perfectionism may be considered unhealthy when goals are unrealistic and/or unattainable. In addition, they disclosed that perfectionistic strivings have been linked to variety of psychological and physical disorders including OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Personality Disorder as termed in the DSM-IV), anorexia, bulimia, Type A coronary-prone disorder, migraines, psychosomatic disorders, and suicide or suicidal tendencies. When employing the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (FMPS), developed by Frost, Martin, Lahart, and Rosenblate (1990), Parker and Adkins (1995) found that Honors College students had moderately higher scores when asked about the Personal Standards, Concern Over Mistakes, and Parental Expectations dimensions of the FMPS scale. Parker and Adkins (1995) posited that an “implicit syllogism” might be found as a result of their findings in that: “1. The gifted are more perfectionistic, and 2. Perfectionism leads to maladjustment, therefore 3. The gifted are at greater risk to be maladjusted” (p. 306). From these results, they theorized that extreme scores achieved on the FMPS could be related to dysfunctional levels of perfectionism that might be linked to psychological and/or physical disorders such as OCD and maladjustment; however,

there is a belief conveyed by the authors that perhaps a higher score on the perfectionism scale may be more indicative of a more healthy motivation to achieve versus a sign of the presence of physical or psychological disorders (Parker & Adkins, 1995).

Non-empirical authors have argued that perfectionism is a dominant characteristic of academically gifted students; the empirical literature does not afford the same level of support for that assertion. Mendaglio (2007) noted that there are three perspectives of perfectionism in non-empirical literature. The first is of the belief that perfectionism as a characteristic is inherently destructive; the second holds a more positive connotation of perfectionism in that it depicts an individual's desire to achieve excellence; and a third depicts perfectionism as positive in that it may provide energy for extraordinary achievement, yet it can be negative when combined with self-criticism of one's efforts. Greenspon (2000) asserts that there is no such dichotomy that exists with respect to perfectionism in that the term "healthy perfectionism" is an oxymoron. He believes that perfectionism is always negative and that it is something that must be transformed.

Perspectives of perfectionism and giftedness have been provided by three scholarly authors: Burns, Pacht, and Hamachek. Burns (1980) and Pacht (1984) agree that perfectionism holds a negative connotation. Hamachek (1978) believes there is such a thing as a "normal perfectionism" and "neurotic perfectionism" (p. 223).

Guzy (2012) noted that students enrolled in the fall of 2012 in her honors composition course at the University of Southern Alabama had taken the ACT at least twice, with some students admitting to having taken it seven times. The rationale for this was to increase their

scores and try to get as close to perfect as possible, but the students also acknowledged a financial reason: to increase scholarship opportunities (Guzy, 2012).

Gifted Underachievers

Gowan (1955) has described gifted underachievers as “one of the greatest social wastes of our culture” (p. 247). Gifted underachieving students have been found in some cases to not only suffer from receiving poor grades and experiencing disappointment from teachers and parents, they may also perceive themselves as inadequate with respect to extracurricular learning experiences (Emerick, 1992). When these experiences continue to occur, this often creates a negative perception of themselves, their academic capabilities, and learning abilities that may negatively impact the students’ motivation to continue to try to improve.

Boretz (2012) attributes much of the more recent gifted underachiever phenomenon to Millennial Generation, which she defined as “twenty-somethings, known for being sheltered, closely bonded to their parents, heavily pressured to achieve, confident, and overscheduled” (p. 94). She noted that in Twenge’s 2006 survey, it was found that the Millennials attributed their failures to external conditions at an 80% higher rate than students reported in the 1970s. In addition, the members of this newest generation overwhelmingly attached external factors to the determination of their life outcomes. Boretz (2012) cited the phrase first mentioned by George Kuh: “maze smart” (Merrow, 2005), which is characterized by the student’s drive to learn only what is necessary to reach the specified goal set before them.

Siegle et al. (2010) theorized that gifted underachievers may develop a more static view of talent as it relates to the role that ability plays with respect to achievement, while those considered to be gifted achievers do not.

Honors Students in “Trouble”

The term “trouble” in the case of university students can take many forms, for example: anxiety, depression, eating disorders, binge drinking, social pressures, suicidal tendencies, acting out, and academic failure (Salas, 2010; Walsh, 2010). Some of these concerns may lead to others as it might be found that a student in academic jeopardy is also suffering from other ailments that have contributed to a decline in grades. Or, conversely, finding themselves in academic distress can lead honors students to feel depressed and unsuccessful (Irwin, 2010). Each student may handle things differently under such circumstances; with respect to honors students and high-achievers, scholars have noted that this subset of the university population demonstrates different coping skills than their non-honors counterparts (Irwin, 2010; Walsh, 2010).

Owens and Giazzoni (2010) observed that traditional aged students beginning an undergraduate program are not yet acquainted with adulthood as they are new to that status and have not matured in that role yet. When placed in a crisis, however, those same young adults can be forced to view their situation from the perspective of a more mature adult, whether they are truly ready or not for that challenge. Walsh (2010) asserted that even when honors students are aware that they are in trouble, they may hide it well by publically remaining positive and self-confident, making it more challenging for educators, administrators, peers, and parents to know that they are in distress.

Irwin (2010) provided some insight as to why honors students are often ill-equipped to handle academic failure by simply stating that they have never failed before. Throughout their childhood education, these students regularly received A grades with little effort; “the first ‘B’ grade can send such students into a tailspin, leading them to question their abilities and their very identities, which are often wrapped up in their definition of success” (p. 43). These students were the academic stars in high school, and that type of performance paved the way for admission to the honors program at the postsecondary level, but there is no guarantee that once they enter an environment with other successful students they will stay on top. The level of competition is greater, and the expectations and requirements have increased (Irwin, 2010).

Failure itself can be an excellent teacher. As Irwin (2010) stated, when students fail, it teaches them that intrinsic rewards are more important than any form of public recognition. The ability to identify intrinsic rewards requires perspective and a greater level of maturity; the act of failure assists them in acquiring those values. Once students have dealt with failure and understand that it will happen again, they are much more likely to anticipate it, better equipped to avoid it when possible, and more effectively deal with the consequences. As Irwin (2010) summarized:

The pursuit of excellence carries with it both risk and reward, and the discovery of new knowledge may lead to internal and external conflict as students struggle to develop into the productive scholars socially responsible citizens, and lifelong learners our mission statements promise they will become. (p. 43)

Non-completion of Honors

There are a number of reasons honors students fail to complete the honors curriculum at some point along their academic journey (Holland, 2012; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013); however, in the case of underperforming honors students, they are more likely to either drop out or be discharged from the program as a result of their failure to complete the required coursework or, in some cases, a capstone project (Goodstein & Szarek, 2013).

According to Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09), the number of students who do successfully conclude the degree requirements are distressingly small. As they noted, recent data obtained from an Honors College at a large institution in the Midwest has shown that fewer than twenty percent of freshmen entering the program actually completed the requirements to receive honors distinction at graduation. Cosgrove (2004) found that when combining graduation results from three Honors Colleges in Pennsylvania, the total of students who completed the program equaled twenty-seven percent. He concluded that three out of four students who undertake an Honors College education fail to complete the required honors curricula; however, as Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09) stated, leaving the Honors College does not necessarily mean the students left the postsecondary institution.

While this is considered to be a blemish on the retention record for Honors Colleges, non-completion of honors requirements can significantly impact the student (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-09). This type of situation often carries personal as well as societal consequences. Sense of pride and self-worth are associated with their acceptance into an Honors College along with the accompanying classification of honors student. When a student is no longer participating in the Honors College and the honors student label is removed, feelings of inadequacy and

disappointment, not only within the student but also from the student's family and friends network, often result. This is especially the case where the student is dismissed from the program because of failure to maintain the eligibility requirements to remain in the Honors College (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-09).

Honors College Retention

As Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09) stated, "College persistence is a heavily researched topic, and the body of persistence and completion literature is vast" (p. 134). Goodstein and Szarek (2013) credit Campbell and Fuqua for having performed the most comprehensive study of honors students' retention and program completion rates. Their study, consisting of 336 students at a large, Midwestern, public university who entered as first-time students in the fall of 2000, revealed that after five years, only 62 of them completed the honors program requirements (18.46%). The researchers employed a similar modified Tinto (1993) model as their theoretical framework. They found that the most significant factors related to successful honors program completion were GPA after the first semester of college, high school GPA and class ranking, first-semester housing (positive correlation with those who lived in on-campus honors housing), and gender (females were more successful than males). Other significant variables included first-semester credit hours earned, ACT scores, and the number of honors credits earned in the first semester. Of the 16 variables included in the study, the strongest and single most important predictor of honors program success was the students' first semester GPA (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-09).

Before performing their own study, Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09) analyzed and critiqued previous studies exploring retention and honors students. The first study was performed by McDonald and Gawkoski (1979) where 402 students enrolled in the Honors Program at Marquette University were compared quantitatively. They found that there was a significant correlation with high school grade point average and SAT scores and completion of the honors degree requirements. Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09) pointed out that the study was very limited because of the simplistic design utilizing only bivariate correlations and because it only examined two outcomes: honors degree completion or non-completion; partial completion was not examined.

In a second study conducted by Roufagalas (1993), pre-entry variables were also used, but this time it was in an attempt to predict the probability of students' participation in honors courses. This was accomplished by investigating the differences between honors and non-honors students at Radford University; however, in this case, the researcher employed a multiple regression design which included twelve variables in his prediction methodology. He found that of the twelve pre-entry variables, only four were significant predictors of students' collegiate GPA: high school GPA, score on the Test of Standard Written English (TSWE), academic-related activities, and the size (in total population) of the students' high school. Of those four, it was determined that high school GPA had the strongest effect, and of all of the variables, it was the only one that positively correlated to the likelihood that the student would participate in honors courses (Roufagalas, 1993). As Campbell and Fuqua (2008-2009) noted, the study was strengthened when Roufagalas repeated the study in 1994 and found that the high school GPA was as strong a predictor as it was found to be in 1993; however, he discovered that the score on

the TSWE was less significant, and the academic-related activities and high school size were not found to be significant at all in the 1994 analysis.

The third study analyzed by Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09) conducted by Feldman in 1992 focused on the persistence in honors program students at the State University of New York at Buffalo. In this case, the researcher was specifically interested in examining the differences between student who were retained in the honors program and those who were involuntarily removed due to failure to meet the minimum GPA requirements. Feldman (1992) applied a modification of Tinto's (1993) model of institutional departure for her study. The criticism by Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09) was that the sample size of the dismissed students studied was small, especially when further divided by gender. She was also unclear with respect to the definition of crucial terms such as the status of those students who were retained in the honors program; how many honors program hours were being attempted; and whether she considered every student whose GPA did not fall below the specified criteria to be in the honors program regardless of ongoing honors curricular involvement. The results suggested that certain elements of Tinto's (1993) model were helpful in differentiating between dismissed honors students and persistent honors students. The students' academic performance, measured by whether the student had been placed on academic probation at any time while in the program, was found to be the greatest discriminator. This was followed by intentions, determined by the student's reported highest expected degree, and his or her goals and commitments – both at the institutional level as well as within the honors program (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-09). Those variables not found to be significant predictors of honors program success included size and

location of high school and place of residence in college (whether the student lived on campus, in an off-campus dwelling, or at his or her parents' home).

Following their analyses and the completion of their study, Campbell and Fuqua (2008-09) concluded that many of the variables typically associated with persistence in college were not found to contribute to the prediction of honors program persistence. This indicates that the theoretical framework applied to the larger university population is not appropriate for the Honors College environment; however, the pre-entry variables most predictive of honors student success are high school GPA for entering undergraduates and college GPA for returning upperclassmen (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-09).

Honors College Completion Rates

Honors College completion rates are a frequently discussed amongst honors directors and deans at professional meetings (Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). It has been observed that those educators and administrators are willing to discuss their school's rate with colleagues; however, the scarcity of published information about completion rates in honors indicates a reticence to "go on record." Some Honors Colleges have been known to claim higher graduation rates than what can be found in published studies; published data suggests that honors completion rates in the United States falls around 30%. As has been reported in studies, it is widely known that the majority of students who enroll in Honors Colleges do not complete the academic requirements to graduate with honors. Goodstein & Szarek (2013) stated that this lack of congruency between actual Honors College completion rates and published completion rates could be the "'dirty little secret' of honors enrollment management" (p. 91).

As discussed previously, the published completion rates for Honors College students has been found to be dismally low (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-09). Cosgrove's findings from 2004 found that of the 113 total honors students enrolled in three Honors Colleges in Pennsylvania, only 27% (roughly 30 students) completed the honors program requirements. The results of Campbell and Fuqua's (2008-09) study revealed that only 18% of the 662 students who enrolled in the Honors College at a large university in the Midwest graduated with the honors distinction (Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). Similar results were found when McKay (2009) studied students in the Honors College at the University of North Florida; he reported that 35% of the 1,017 students he studied completed the program (Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). As Goodstein and Szarek reflected, "In summary, published findings on honors program completion indicate that a minority of students who begin as honors scholars ultimately graduate as honors scholars" (2013, p. 91).

In contrast, Pflaum et al. (2008) found that when comparing honors students and non-honors students over the course of one year, those students enrolled in honors had a higher retention rate than non-honors students; this was also found to be the case in a similar study also published in 2008 by Slavin, Coladarci, and Pratt (Goodstein, Szarek, & Wunschel, 2013). While this is good news for retention over one year, it was not found to be predictive of honors program completion.

Help-Seeking

Honors students and non-honors students experience many of the same challenges from both a personal and academic perspective (Walsh, 2010), but it seems that the honors students

are more reluctant to ask for help (Badenhausen, 2010). Why is this the case? Badenhausen (2010) asserted that one of the reasons is that because honors students come from academically high-achieving backgrounds, much of their self-concept is centered around that strength; asking for help could be seen as a sign of weakness or failure. To admit that they need assistance in that area might reveal vulnerability and risk their reputation and status as an “honors student.” In many cases, these students believe that their academic imperfections must be hidden (Salas, 2010).

A second reason that honors students are less likely to ask for academic help is that they do not know how – they have never had to do so before (Badenhausen, 2010). Honors Colleges often boast a number of services and resources available to their scholars, but these are only effective if the students actively use what is offered them (Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). In some cases, academically gifted students may not know to ask for help because those who have grown up in an environment where an enabling parent consistently jumped in to solve whatever problems arose have not had experience in overcoming obstacles and solving problems on their own (Badenhausen, 2010).

Goldberger (1988) uses the term “strategic silence” to describe students who have assumed defensive strategies based upon their fear of entering a new environment with different players in positions of authority. To ask for help in that type of setting would demand a significant amount of courage that would be hard for any individual to exhibit, especially if that person is a young adult (Badenhausen, 2010). Badenhausen further noted that an open demonstration of self-destructive behavior guarantees that someone will come to their aid, but those rescue efforts may come too late.

Finally, the epidemic of honors students not seeking academic assistance when they need it may be rooted in the culture of the Honors College itself (Badenhausen, 2010). If such a program celebrates academic accomplishments excessively and encourages a win or lose sense of competition, this would likely add to the problem at hand. Badenhausen (2010) concluded that there is some responsibility on the part of the Honors College or Program in that those in the position to do so must teach students that asking for help is not a sign of weakness or failure as often times these students perceive this not to be the case.

Ultimately, however, seeking help is up to the individual himself. As Goodstein and Szarek (2013) observed, “students who are not fully involved in the curriculum or programming of honors programs cannot obtain all the academic, intellectual, social, or cultural benefits available” (p. 89).

Academic Probation

While sufficient information exists regarding students in the K-12 environment who experience academic probation in the form of remedial classes, grade repetition, and tutoring (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 1986; Darling-Hammond, 1998; DeCicca & Smith, 2013; Griffith, Lloyd, Lane, & Tankersley, 2010; Hossler, Ziskin, & Gross, 2009; Levine & Levine, 2012; Pomplun, 1988; Shapiro, 2010; Toch, 1998; Vandenberg, 2006), there is, by contrast, a much smaller section of literature and research dedicated to examining the postsecondary students who fail to meet the academic requirements of the university, college, and/or program of study (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Henry, 1972; McGrath & Burd, 2012). Specifically, the greatest gap of knowledge in what Arcand and LeBlanc (2011) term “a budding field of

research” (p. 1) is the exploration of the lived experience of those college students who find themselves in an academic probation status. To date, most studies have focused their efforts on defining the characteristics of postsecondary probation students, the explanations behind that status, and the programs that have been put in place to address the needs of this subset (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012), though there has been prompting by researchers for more information related to the experiences and perceptions of the students on academic probation themselves (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Shao, Hufnagel, & Karp, 2009-2010; Ryan & Glenn, 2002-2003; Thomas, 2003; Vander Schee, 2007).

Defining Academic Probation

No current, widely accepted definition of the term “academic probation” exists today in the community of scholars focused on research in this area (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; McGrath & Burd, 2012). In addition, no uniformity regarding what circumstances require placing a college student on academic probation has been reached; each postsecondary institution sets its own standards (Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Arcand, 2012). In reviewing the historical and more current literature, often the author or authors propose the definition of academic probation for the purposes of the study or phenomenon being addressed within. For example, in 1972, Nicholas Henry used the term “faltering” (p. 69) to describe the instance where students were suspended, or even dismissed, due to academic underperformance. Robert Fitch used a very simplistic way to identify this condition: students who earned “F” grades were the subjects targeted for his research in this area (1968). Kelley (1996) noted that the criterion for what constitutes academic probation is often found in the college catalog. James and Graham

(2010) along with Wlazelek and Coulter (1999) agreed that the specific circumstances vary by the institution, but they both added that in most cases, the condition is defined by the student's grade point average falling below a certain threshold. In an effort to combine the definitions offered by numerous researchers and scholars, Arcand and LeBlanc (2011) provided the most comprehensive description of academic probation:

In view of that [no formal definition for academic probation] we have elsewhere proposed a preliminary conceptualization suggesting that a) students were put on academic probation when their grade performance was below a satisfactory threshold; b) those on academic probation could remain in their program of study but must increase their grades; and c) they would be dismissed if not.... (p. 2)

The scholars reiterate this conceptualization in their 2012 publication, and Arcand refers to it in the 2012 publication of her academic probation study analysis.

Characteristics of College Students on Academic Probation

Karabenick and Knapp (1988) found that those students in most need of help are often the least likely to seek assistance. This phenomenon has been uncovered in several other studies over several decades: even though the students are aware of the resources and opportunities available to assist them with academic issues, they do not pursue them in their own (Clark, 2005).

As discussed by Arcand and LeBlanc (2011; 2012) in three qualitative research studies focused on postsecondary students on academic probation, there have been many descriptions offered. Internal and external factors have been attributed to the development of the situation

wherein the student finds himself in a probationary status due to poor academic performance (Boretz, 2012; Hutson, 2006; James & Graham, 2010; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Trombley, 2001). Characteristics of these students have also been organized by academic and nonacademic factors (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Wlazelek & Coulter, 1999). Significant overlap exists when comparing external factors and nonacademic factors; therefore, the table below presents them as one category for simplification purposes.

Table 2: Individual, Environmental, and Academic Factors Leading to Probation

| Individual Factors | Environmental/ Nonacademic Factors | Academic Factors |
|---|--|--|
| Less trusting High level of anxiety Low self-esteem Less ethical Unclear goals Lack of self-discipline Poor time management Easily distracted Unorganized | Socioeconomic Status Poor adaptation to postsecondary school environment Employment obligations Financial issues Family obligations Illness (family member) Little involvement in extracurricular activities | Poor high school GPA Poor SAT/ACT scores Lack of study skills Unwilling to study as much as required Academic rigor exceeds ability/previous high school experience Unwillingness/inability to attend classes |

| Individual Factors | Environmental/ Nonacademic Factors | Academic Factors |
|--|---|------------------|
| Insufficient Motivation Poor interpersonal skills Psychological conditions Physical illness | Negative influence from peer group Transportation difficulties | |

(Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Boretz, 2012; Damashek, 2003; Duffy, 2010; Hutson, 2006; Isaak, Graves, & Mayers, 2006-2007; James & Graham, 2010; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Olson, 1990; Thombs, 1995; Trombley, 2000-2001; Wlazelek & Coulter, 1999).

Current Intervention Efforts for College Students on Academic Probation

Just as there has not been a consistent definition for what the term academic probation means in the collegiate community, there is also significant variation in which postsecondary institutions attempt to assist these students in bringing their academic performance to the independently established standards (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012). Traditional approaches include additional and/or one-on-one academic advising (Cruise, 2002; Damashek, 2003; Higgins, 2003; Kelley, 1996; Vander Shee, 2007); mandatory attendance in seminars or workshops focused on time management, study skills, goal setting, and organization (Boretz, 2012; Damashek, 2003; Kelley, 1996; McGrath & Burd, 2012); and personal support in the form of counseling to address nonacademic concerns (Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; Bland, 1987; Damashek, 2003; Yang et al., 2013). Most often, the programs put into place for academic

probation students fall into either the supplemental courses/workshop based approach or the one-on-one advising and/or counseling approach (Arcand & LeBlanc, 2012; Issak et al., 2006-2007; James & Graham, 2010; Kamphoff, Hutson, Amundsen, & Atwood, 2006-2007).

Supplemental Courses, Seminars, and/or Workshops Approach

Group interventions, workshops, seminars, and programs are some of the strategies institutions of higher education have employed to assist academically struggling students in the effort to increase retention rates (Arcand, 2012; Coleman & Freeman, 1996; Heisserer & Parette, 2002; Humphrey, 2006; Hutson, 2006; Isaak et al., 2006-2007; Mann, Hunt, & Alford, 2004; McGrath & Burd, 2012). One of the programs that combines many of these elements is known as the Monitored Probation (MP) Program (Hutson, 2006; Mann, et al., 2004).

MP is an intensive program that differentiates students' intervention needs by levels, which is measured in GPA: low intervention (GPAs between 1.80 – 1.99), medium intervention (GPAs range from 1.50 – 1.79), and high intervention (for those students whose GPAs fall under 1.49). All students, regardless of their GPAs, attend one-on-one counseling with an assigned academic advisor; thereafter, the required activities are based upon their level. One-hour workshops are one of the intervention methods where a faculty or staff member provide instruction on study skills, note-taking methods, time management, and stress reduction techniques. More in-depth courses were made available to students who required a higher level of support, and some students were provided with tutoring and counseling (Hutson, 2006; Mann, et al., 2004).

One-on-One Advising and/or Counseling Approach

Numerous institutions have implemented what has been termed “intrusive advising” measures (Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; Damashek, 2003; Higgins, 2003; Isaal et al., 2006-2007; Vander Shee, 2007). This approach is often referred to as high involvement advising, and it is characterized by mandatory personal and frequent contact between the advisor and student; a heavier emphasis on student responsibility for grade improvement; the identification of reasons and underlying causes of the current circumstances (both academic and nonacademic); and the presence of a well-defined contract between the advisor and student (Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; Damashek, 2003; Higgins, 2003; Preuss & Switalski, 2008; Vander Shee, 2007).

Mentoring programs have also been embraced by postsecondary institutions as a method of supporting students in raising their grade point averages; studies have demonstrated that pairing a student who is experiencing academic probation for the first time within their program with another student who has successfully navigated the process and returned to good academic standing (Damashek, 2003). This technique is also believed to promote a strong connection with other students as well as with the institution as it instills a sense of belonging and acceptance (Damashek, 2003).

Kamphoff et al. (2006-2007) advocate for what they term a “motivational/empowerment model” that they have applied to academic probationary college students. Under this program, there are four areas that provide its framework: “personal responsibility, positive affirmations, goal setting/life planning, and self-management” (p. 399-400). This approach is likened to a four legged stool as all of the legs (in this case, the four areas of emphasis) are equally critical for student success. This method includes elements from both the group format as well as the one-

on-one support structure, and the researchers stress that in order to be successful, participation in the program must be mandatory (Kamphoff et al., 2006-2007).

Another hybrid approach that encompasses both the workshop tactic and the one-on-one advising strategy that has been put in place at some colleges and universities to assist those students on academic probation has been termed monitored probation (Howard, 1998; Mann, Hunt, & Alford, 2004). In order for students to continue with their institutions, they must participate in academic counseling, tutoring, other forms of supplemental instruction, courses/workshops to improve study habits and time management (Howard, 1998; Mann et al., 2004). This approach incorporates elements of both traditional and invasive techniques, but in mandatory probation, there is heavier involvement on the part of the faculty (Mann et al., 2004); whereas in many other programs of this nature, the advising is largely managed by an academic counselor who is very often not a member of the faculty (Hutson, 2006; Trombley, 2000-2001).

Summary

While significant academic literature and research findings exist with respect to retention of postsecondary students during the first year of college (Alexander & Gardner, 2009; Braxton, 2000; Braxton, Doyle, Hartley III, Hirschy, Jones, & McLendon, 2014; Friedman & Mandel, 2009; Upcraft, Gardner, & Barefoot, 2005), there has been scant information regarding honors student retention, specifically for those who encounter academic challenges during the first year of their postsecondary career (Cosgrove, 2004; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013). Thus, this literature review provided information available in each of the facets of the research: gifted students, secondary to postsecondary transition issues, college retention theories and research findings, the

purpose and background of Honors Colleges, characteristics of honors students, high-achievers and perfectionism, non-completion of honors, help-seeking behaviors, academic probation at the collegiate level, and intervention efforts being employed in postsecondary institutions to retain students in academic jeopardy.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Creswell (2013) asserted that a qualitative research approach was appropriate when the investigator needs to gain a detailed understanding of a complex problem; when he or she wishes to report the findings in a flexible, story-telling manner; and when the researcher is attempting to understand the environment or circumstances of the participants. The intent of this investigation is to better understand the lived experiences of first-year students enrolled in The Burnett Honors College within the University of Central Florida that were notified of their academic probationary status following the completion of their first semester. For this study, the investigator utilized a phenomenological approach by interviewing students who were asked to respond to questions focused on their perceptions of the academic probationary experience in TBHC.

The scholarly literature dedicated to the topic of academic probation at the collegiate level is limited (Bettinger & Long, 2004; Trombley, 1998), and available information dedicated specifically to the honors college student probation experience is even more scarce (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008-2009). In addition, as Cosgrove (2004) noted, “despite the proliferation in the number of honors programs, they are a relatively unstudied aspect of higher education” (p. 46). Researchers who are also interested in the honors population within the higher education community cite a lack of information concerning the honors students themselves (Achterberg, 2005; Clark, 2000; Hébert & McGee, 2007; Long & Lange, 2002). Campbell and Fuqua (2008-2009) further stated that there are very few empirical studies focused on student persistence in and completion of honors colleges and programs.

Research Questions

The main research question for this study is as follows: What are the textural features, if any, among the lived experiences of first-year honors students placed on academic probation?

The following served as sub-questions:

1. What were the students' perspectives of their first year of college and life as an Honors College student prior to the start of their first semester?
2. What do the first-year honors students attribute to their academic status at the completion of the first semester? What experiences do they specifically recall that led to their current circumstances?
3. What meaning do TBHC students attribute to their academic status? How do they plan to maintain or attain good status going forward?
4. How has the experience of being a TBHC student affected their view of postsecondary education and their academic-related future?

Research Design

Phenomenology

“...A phenomenological study describes the common meaning for several individuals of their lived experiences of a concept or a phenomenon” (Creswell, 2013, p. 76). In other words, the phenomenological study seeks to identify a phenomenon, connect the lived experiences, and gather the data from those individuals who have undergone similar events. Finlay (2008) clarifies that “the focus is on the way things appear to us through experience or in our consciousness

where the phenomenological research aims to provide a rich textured description of lived experience” (p. 1).

The purpose of this investigation was to better understand the possible challenges that may lead to an academic probation status for honors students and the ways in which those students perceive the experience. In employing a phenomenological research design, the goal was to determine what the participants who experience a specific phenomenon have in common (Creswell, 2013). The shared activities are then consolidated into an account that is representative of the collective experience. The researcher was responsible for gathering the data from those agents who have experienced the phenomenon and consolidating the information that is characteristic of the experience lived by all of the participants in the study (Moustakas, 1994).

Finlay (2008) asserted that phenomenological approaches change as they are dynamic in nature; as the qualitative field of research experiences continuous development, these variations differ in terms of “theoretical preferences” and “philosophical values” (p. 3). Giorgi (1989) stated that there exist defined core characteristics despite any adaptations that may be employed, specifically that the research is descriptive; that it examines the intentional relationship between the individuals and the circumstances; that it uses phenomenological reductions (often referred to as bracketing); and that it offers knowledge of psychological essences or configurations of meanings inherent in the human existence via imaginative adaptation (Finlay, 2008; Wertz, 2005).

Creswell concurred with Moustakas’ (1994) belief that there are two focused questions a researcher must pose in order to obtain the data necessary for a sound analysis: “What have you experienced in terms of the phenomenon? What contexts or situations have typically influenced

or affected your experience?” (Creswell, 2013, p. 81). Additional open-ended questions also may be solicited, but the aforementioned two will lead to richer and more structural responses with regards to the phenomenon being studied. Finlay (2008) added her agreement that phenomenologists should pose questions such as “‘What is this kind of experience like’, ‘What does the experience mean’, How does the lived world present itself...?’” (p. 2). Finlay (2008) noted that in following this pattern of questioning, the researcher is then challenged as to “how to help participants express their world as directly as possible; and how to explicate these dimensions such that the lived world – the life world - is revealed” (p. 2). These suggestions must be considered in framing the interviews to gain well-founded data.

Finally, Creswell (2013) remarked that performing qualitative research takes time, requires ambitious data gathering and examination, yields extensive reports, and lacks firm guidelines.

Research Setting

University Setting

Information collected for this research is based upon responses from first-year students enrolled at the University of Central Florida (UCF): a large, research intensive university located in Orlando, Florida. UCF is home to a diverse student body: its students are from all 50 states and 145 countries (About UCF, University of Central Florida, n.d.). A robust study abroad program offers scholars the opportunity to study in 37 different institutional programs within 18 countries. UCF houses 12 colleges, including Arts and Humanities, Business, Education, Engineering and Computer Science, Graduate Studies, Health and Public Affairs, Honors,

Hospitality Management, Medicine, Nursing, Optics and Photonics, and Sciences. Its prolific researchers attract more than \$100 million each year in the form of contracts and grants in from federal, state, and industry partners. The UCF library has holdings in excess of 2 million volumes along with 29,000 periodical subscriptions and 23,500 electronic journals. UCF offers a state-of-the-art wellness centers and a comprehensive student health center. UCF is a member of a major I-A athletics program, and it recently completed construction for a new on-campus football stadium and basketball arena. On-campus housing facilities and affiliated residences are home to 11,000 students.

UCF offers more than ninety bachelor degree programs from which the more than 3,300 students who were welcomed as freshmen in the fall of 2013 can select. The average Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) score for incoming students totals 1248; the mean American College Testing (ACT) score is 27.1; and the final average high school Grade Point Average (GPA) is 3.89. The mean age of entering freshmen is 19.5 years old (UCF Current Facts, University of Central Florida, n.d.).

UCF's first-year return rates for those first time students who began attending the institution in the fall of 2011 and enrolled in the fall 2012 semester are 88% for full-time and 72% for part-time students, respectively. For full-time students who initially enrolled in the fall of 2006, 65% graduated within six years; eight percent transferred out of UCF to another postsecondary institution during that time period.

The Honors College within the University

The Burnett Honors College (TBHC) within the University of Central Florida during the spring semester of 2014 serves as the setting for this study. The Burnett Honors College (TBHC) within UCF was established in 1998 to serve the top ten percent of the undergraduate population (“Brief History,” The Burnett Honors College, University of Central Florida, n.d.). TBHC has a dedicated building in a central location of the campus that was completed and dedicated to UCF in 2002. TBHC is known as “the Jewel of UCF” (The Burnett Honors College, “About Us,” 2014, para. 2). The goal of TBHC is to “create a vibrant community of peers with different backgrounds, talents, and interests” (The Burnett Honors College, “Admission to University Honors,” 2014, para. 1). Its mission “is to provide UCF's most academically talented and motivated students with a challenging and unique scholarly experience, creating a strong foundation for future achievements” (The Burnett Honors College, “About Us – Overview of the College,” 2014, para. 2). TBHC boasts a diverse population of exceptional scholars who not only demonstrate academic excellence, but who also possess academic curiosity, intellectual motivation, boundless creativity, and special talents in other areas, for example, languages, art, music, and theater (University of Central Florida, “The Burnett Honors College,” 2014).

TBHC receives approximately 1,500 applications each year, but only admits the upper 10% of freshmen entering UCF each fall, which equates to around 500 students (personal communication, Brandy Christman, February 5, 2014; The Burnett Honors College, “Admission and Review Process for Incoming Freshmen,” 2014). A reciprocal agreement exists between five central Florida area colleges wherein students who earn an Associate of Arts (AA) degree at one of the named institutions’ Honors Colleges and who satisfy all specified requirements can be

admitted to the University Honors Program as academic juniors; these are the only source of transfer students permitted to join TBHC after the freshman year (personal communication, Brandy Christman, February 12, 2014; The Burnett Honors College, “AA Degree Transfer,” 2014).

To be considered for admission to TBHC, applicants must first be accepted to UCF. A separate application is submitted to TBHC wherein the candidates must provide additional information about their interests, awards, and academic distinctions. The average SAT score for the 2014 incoming freshmen class consisting of 506 total students was 1398/ACT = 31.5; and the mean high school GPA was 4.293 (see Appendix A). In order to fulfill the requirements to graduate from UCF with Honors from TBHC, students must satisfy specific curriculum requisites. Each student enrolled in TBHC must successfully pass the Honors Freshmen Symposium which is required for all first time in college (FTIC) students, complete four general education program courses delivered via TBHC faculty, and undertake three or four upper level honors courses specific to the student’s major which must include the interdisciplinary seminar (The Burnett Honors College, “Honors Courses,” 2014).

TBHC has one director of advising who serves as the Honors College academic advisor for all students, which equals approximately 1,700 (personal communication, Rex Roberts, February 6, 2014; The Burnett Honors College, “Staff Profiles – Student Advising,” 2014). Students may meet with the advisor one-on-one to chart their paths over the course of their academic career. To remain in academic good-standing, students must maintain a cumulative 3.2 GPA across all UCF courses, and a 3.0 GPA in the specific TBHC classes (The Burnett Honors College, “University Honors Probation Policy,” 2014). Students whose grade point averages dip

below those thresholds are placed on academic probation. This policy is very visible to students as it is noted during the admissions process, discussed during TBHC orientation, reiterated in an early session of the Freshmen Symposium, and detailed in TBHC web pages under the heading “Honors Policies” (B. Christman, personal communication, February 5, 2014; R. Roberts, personal communication, February 6, 2014; “University Honors Probation Policy,” The Burnett Honors College, 2014).

There are also early warning systems in place as TBHC collects meaningful data at least once per semester for each of its students related to their performance (A. Wang, personal communication, December 2013; R. Roberts, personal communication, February 6, 2014). When a student’s cumulative grade point average falls below one or both of the good academic standing criterion, he or she is notified via a website used exclusively by TBHC named My Honors (R. Roberts, personal communication, February 6, 2014).

All TBHC students receive an email at the conclusion of each semester with a link to their My Honors page to check their status in the program. If a student’s cumulative Honors GPA is under 3.0 and/or his university-wide GPA has fallen under 3.2, he is asked to complete a questionnaire that is intended to assist the student in evaluating the following: why he may have encountered issues; what resources he has used to assist with his studies; whether he is aware of all available resources; and he is asked to come up with an action plan for regaining good academic standing in TBHC (R. Roberts, personal communication, February 6, 2014). In addition, Mr. Roberts encourages students in this situation to meet with him to discuss strategies to reclaim full honors status. The students are further provided with resources that may assist them in regaining good standing in the college such as tutors, peer mentors, and faculty.

Students placed on academic probation in The Burnett Honors College do not have a specified time limit for when their grades must return to or above the required grade point averages imposed on them; rather, they are permitted to remain in TBHC, take honors courses, and participate in all honors-related activities until graduation as long as their grades show continual improvement from semester to semester (R. Roberts, personal communication, February 6, 2014). If the student returns to good standing in the program at any point during his undergraduate academic career, he is removed from probation. If a student is unable to improve his performance and has earned enough credits to graduate from UCF, he will be allowed to graduate with a bachelor's degree, but the student will not have earned the honors distinction.

Population

The population examined in this study consisted of traditional-aged, first time, first-year students who began their first semester at the University of Central Florida in The Burnett Honors College, and after completion of their first semester, were notified that their academic grade point average fell below one or both of TBHC's minimum requirements. A second population was added for comparison purposes consisting of students who met all of the criteria listed above *except* that they were not on academic probation following their first semester.

Participants

The use of a purposeful sampling technique was employed when soliciting volunteers who met the profile necessary for participation in the study. Purposeful sampling is the most commonly used strategy in applied qualitative research (Glesne, 2006; Guest, Bruce, & Johnson, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1994). There are many variations of purposive sampling; however,

“the common element is that participants are selected according to predetermined criteria relevant to a particular research objective” (Guest et al., 2006, p. 61). In this case, for the main sample, that criterion included participation in TBHC during the first year of college and placed on honors probation after their first semester. For the comparison sample, the same conditions were met with the exception of academic probation as the students were all in good standing at the conclusion of their first semester.

The literature on sampling in qualitative research offers diverse views on the appropriate number of participants. Morse (1994) recommended that phenomenological studies engage at least six participants; Creswell (2013) suggested between five and twenty-five interviews; and Kuzel (1992) advocated for six to eight interviews when utilizing a homogeneous sample, but twelve to twenty participants when either attempting to find contradictory evidence or when attempting to obtain maximum variation.

Guest et al. (2006) is quick to point out that none of these scholars, however, provide substantiation for these recommendations. In their research to determine the optimal purposeful sample size, they found that “if the goal is to describe a shared perception, belief, or behavior among a relatively homogeneous group, then a sample of twelve will likely be sufficient...” (Guest et al., 2006, p. 76). However, with respect to homogenous samples for phenomenological studies, Guest et al. (2006) ultimately agreed with Morse’s (1994) recommendation of reaching saturation.

As the researcher for this study, I considered the scholarly suggestions and set a goal with a range that encompasses all of the recommendations, but one that reflects the evidence-based findings of Guest et al. (2006): this study solicited a minimum of six first-year students and a

maximum of twelve to volunteer to be interviewed about their experiences as THBC students who were placed on academic probation following the completion of the first semester. For comparison purposes, five participants who were not placed on academic probation were solicited as well.

The population for the main sample of probationary students was identified via TBHC's database, and emails (see Appendix B) were sent via The Burnett Honors College authored by me as the investigator requesting participation to those students who met the necessary criteria for the study. The first email was sent to students in mid-February of 2015, but responses were only received from two students who had been placed on academic probation and two who were in good standing. A second email was sent from the TBHC Advisor, Mr. Rex Roberts in early March of 2015; this resulted in two more students from the targeted probation population volunteering. The email was sent for the third time in later March of 2015, this time by the Associate Dean of TBHC, Dr. Martin DuPuis, which led to the final two probationary students necessary to reach the minimum of six for this study. TBHC Dean Alvin Wang recommended two additional students in good standing for comparison by asking them to connect with me directly. In total, six students on academic probation and four in academic good standing were interviewed.

Preliminary analysis of the data was performed after each interview and meetings were held to discuss the emerging findings with my dissertation chair. In that process, a stable pattern of findings emerged from the participants indicating that the sample was large enough to justify concluding the data collection.

Demographic Data Reviewed

Following the conclusion of my interview sessions, I met with Dr. Madi Dogariu, Director of Student Services for TBHC, to gather data about the students' pre-entry grades and scores (GPA, SAT/ACT scores, class ranking), years of birth, ethnicities each participate identified with, type of high school attended (public or private), and whether they came in with AP credits and/or participated in Dual Enrollment. I also received each student's GPA from the end of the Fall 2014 semester. The raw data containing this information can be located in Appendix A.

Participant Information and Interview Descriptions

A total of eleven students, six females and four males, were interviewed during this investigation. Ages ranged from 18 to 19, and identified ethnicity demonstrated diversity: four students were Caucasian, three Hispanic, two Asian, and one described herself as being of mixed-race. From the pool of ten, six were placed on academic probation during their first semester in TBHC, while four were in good-standing as measured by current GPAs. In order to protect the participants' confidentiality, each student was provided with an alias; these pseudonyms will be referenced in the results.

Data Collection Procedures

The first-year students attending TBHC who were on academic probation after their first semester were invited to participate in an in-depth interview session. The students who participated in the study were given the opportunity to provide their thoughts and feelings about the circumstances that led to and their perceptions of being on academic probation within TBHC.

These narratives were analyzed by the investigator, and the prominent, recurring themes were extracted. This process was carefully executed in order to allow me as the researcher to determine the elements most important to the students experiencing the phenomenon.

Institutional Review Board

When a researcher proposes a study involving human subjects, the University of Central Florida requires that he obtain written permission from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) (Appendix D). The purpose of this formal review process is to ensure that all human subjects are treated ethically, appropriately, and to safeguard against any potential harm. In addition to this written approval from the IRB, the investigator must have successfully completed series of online coursework (CITI Training) that outlines the requirements and guidelines for researcher conduct, which I have concluded. Finally, each individual who participated in the study was provided with a summary explanation of research (Appendix E) that contained the following elements: information about me as the researcher along with information about my dissertation chair; the title and the purpose of the study; the length of the investigation; my intentions for the data that is collected; how the data would be stored during and after the conclusion of the research; any information related to potential harm to the participants; the benefits that may be gleaned from the study; a detailed confidentiality statement; and how the information obtained during the course of the investigation may be utilized or published in the future. As the researcher of this study, I was obligated to adhere to each of these standards in order to ensure the safety of the participants and the integrity of the study.

Interviews

One of the most common approaches to collecting data employed in qualitative phenomenological studies is the interview method (Creswell, 2013; Finlay, 2008). I solicited six first-year TBHC students on academic probation following their first semester who participated in the first step of the data collection process by allowing me to complete in-depth interviews. These sessions were intended to provide an understanding of the lived experience being examined. A group of five first-year TBHC students who were in good academic standing were also interviewed for comparison purposes.

Interview Protocol

The interview protocol found in Appendix C was developed for this semi-structured approach and utilized during each session to avoid ambiguity and/or misunderstanding of the more complex research questions, as well as for consistency purposes. Common questions were asked of all of the participants, and prompting/guiding questions were used to obtain more information where needed. Participants were encouraged to provide descriptive answers to each of the questions. At the beginning of each session, the participants were asked to take their time in developing responses, and at the conclusion of each session, they were asked to connect back with the researcher if they later recalled another example or idea that might be relevant to this study.

Observational Field Notes

During the interviews, I captured the information from the participants via my audio recorder as well as with a designated notebook where I stored key words and phrases, physical

descriptions, and other observations during the eleven sessions. I noted whether the students arrived on time, early, or late; what attire they chose for the meetings; and overall impressions. From a non-verbal perspective, I noted nervous habits, facial queues, eye contact, and body language. Following the interviews, I took a few moments to reflect back on the sessions and made some additional notes about any comments they made that caught my attention, the comfort level of the students throughout, and their personalities.

Conducting the Interviews

This study utilized a semi-structured interview technique in collecting data from all eleven participants. In order to maintain consistency, as the primary researcher, I brought a clean copy of the Interview Protocol (Appendix C) with me to each session. All of the interviews with the exception of one were conducted in person within a private office located in the Education Complex. The final interview was conducted via phone as the student had been out of town and then ill, so he was unable to meet face-to-face. All interviews were conducted during the months of February and March of 2015.

As a former executive manager, Graduate Teaching Assistant, and Lead Instructor for SLS 1501 (“Strategies for Student Success” – UCF’s freshmen seminar offered to the general population), I felt that I was well-prepared to sit down with 18 and 19 year old Honors College students. While most of the participants seemed unsure and hesitant at the start of the session, each became more animated as he/she began talking about experiences in TBHC to date. By the end of the interviews, I felt that I had made a solid connection with the students and that they had been open and honest with me about their perceptions and experiences during their first

semester. In a few cases, the students interacted with me after the formal interview had been completed, and I was able to assist them by offering ideas and/or resources that might assist them in getting back in good standing academically, ways to gain some career experience along their academic journey, and providing contacts for learning disability accommodations.

Member Checking

Once the data was collected, participant profiles were created for each student who completed an interview. The following information has been included in each profile: demographics, relevant data, physical descriptions, and the perceptions related to their current academic probationary status. Following the compilation of this information, each sketch was provided via email to the student described for review and modifications, if needed. This helped to ensure that the information gathered was authentic and expresses the intended realities of the experience. This process is known as participant validation, and many qualitative researchers have endorsed it; if the subject is in agreement with the researcher, in essence, it provides validity (Ashworth, 1993; Guest et al., 2008). While in agreement with this method, Ashworth (1993) cautioned that the researcher must not take the participants' appraisals too literally as they may wish to preserve the way they present themselves. Ashworth further stated that the procedure of obtaining validation from the participant is still flawed as the "atmosphere of safety" (p. 15) which would allow the subject to lower his defenses and be completely honest about his experiences is not as likely to occur in this type of research encounter.

The participant profiles and interview descriptions were sent to each student individually for their review along with a request for them to reply that this was or was not a true reflection of

their experiences as we discussed at the time of the interviews. In each case, I received responses that they were accurate, and no changes were requested.

Confidentiality

The information that was collected during the course of this proposed investigation was securely stored in a locked office cabinet that resides within a locked, private office. The transcription information was entered and maintained on a secure, password protected personal computer and contained within a password protected file. At the conclusion of the study and following approval by the committee, the information obtained during the course of the investigation will be destroyed. In order to ensure the confidentiality of the individuals participating in the study, pseudonyms were utilized in place of the names of the students. The demographic information and characteristics of each subject provided was nonspecific so as not to inadvertently identify any specific participants.

Data Analysis

Once the interview process was completed, the digital recordings from each session were uploaded on a secure webpage and sent to a transcription service, Transcribe Me <http://transcribeme.com>. Upon receipt of the transcribed material, I reviewed the content to ensure that it matched up with the notes I had taken for each participant. Incorrect spellings and/or acroyms were corrected to avoid any confusion and to ensure the text matched the discussion more precicely. Although I notified students in advance that I would not say their names during the recordings and asked that they adhere to this confidentiality measure, there were instances where the students referred to themselves in the third party; therefore, I removed any

mention of participants' names or version of their names that were present in the transcribed materials. The transcriptions were saved as "Alias_Trans" on a secure, private computer for each student.

The data collected from the interviews was analyzed to provide a thorough account of the students' lived experiences, specifically, how they perceived their academic probation status in TBHC, what factors may have contributed to that circumstance, and the future with respect to their postsecondary education ambitions.

According to Finlay (2008) qualitative data analysis relies on the perspectives and experiences of the research, but qualitative methodologists have developed a number of ways to avoid it becoming entirely subjective or arbitrary. One important method is bracketing, and it should begin before the data collection process commences. Specifically, the researcher endeavors to bracket, or suspend any preconceived assumptions or perceptions so that he is open to the phenomenon as it emerges (Dahlberg, Drew, & Nystrom, 2001; Finlay, 2008; Moustakas, 1994). This process involves setting aside any personal biases to allow the researcher to focus only on how the participants experience the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013; Dahlberg et al., 2008; Finlay, 2008). The phenomenological researcher must be prepared to be open to whatever discoveries may be uncovered (Finlay, 2008). This concept of openness must be maintained during the entire research process – from start to finish – and is realized in the researcher's genuine commitment to listen, observe, and attempt to understand and then to analyze and report the information with the same sincerity. The goal of this level of sensitivity and flexibility is to "allow the phenomenon to present itself to us instead of us imposing preconceived ideas on it" (Finlay, 2008, p. 5).

One potential source of bias for me as the researcher was my prior experience as an honors college student and graduate. While I did not attend TBHC at UCF, I was a member of a large, research-intensive state university during all four years of my undergraduate education. Though this experience took place approximately twenty years ago at a different university, I maintained awareness of the potential bias that experience might bring during the interview and analysis processes. Another bias that might have emerged during the analysis of the interview data was with respect to theoretical frameworks. As a phenomenologist researcher, my intent was not to prove out existing models, but rather to observe what the participants experience and discern from their perspective what the experience truly is.

As Finlay (2008) posited, “when it comes to analysis, phenomenological researchers engage in active and sustained reflection as they ‘dwell’ with the data and interrogate it...” (p. 5). From this process, information linked to existing theoretical frameworks may emerge, or discoveries of new theories may develop (Finlay, 2008). In order to effectively navigate this procedure, I wrote my statement of positionality to raise my awareness of potential biases. During the construction of the interview protocol and the debrief sessions with my dissertation chair, the emerging themes were compared with the positionality statement. In following these steps, my dissertation chair and I tried to ensure that I was not just confirming my personal biases or existing theories.

A second step in analyzing data for phenomenological investigations was termed “horizontalization” by Moustakas (1994). The purpose of this stage was to extract all of the significant statements from the interviews related to the phenomenon being examined and to give each an equal weighting (Moustakas, 1994). After the transcriptions had been reviewed for

accuracy, I printed them out and went through each one to highlight the participants' responses to the major questions. I then wrote the highlighted words and phrases and sorted through them to identify emerging themes. These themes were organized into three categories: themes present in the responses of the students on academic probation, themes for the students not on probation, and themes that both groups had in common regardless of academic standing. Preliminary findings were shared with my dissertation chair as well as the Dean of the Honors College, Dean Wang. Through discussion and review, the themes were confirmed, combined, deleted, or changed to sub-themes which left me with five major themes for the students on academic probation, four major themes for students in good academic standing, and five major themes present in both groups. This step also required me to suspend any potential biases to ensure that they did not impact the findings by including or excluding any possible relevant viewpoints and values.

During the third step proposed by Moustakas (1994), the investigator groups the statements extracted during the second phase into clusters based on their common themes. The purpose is to isolate the specific, recurring themes without providing unnecessary or extraneous information that would detract from the findings (Lemon, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). This step is also critical from a validity perspective as this clustering of the data provides supporting evidence from multiple subjects. While the purpose of the study was to gain insight into the phenomenon being investigated by documenting the unique perspectives of the individuals experiencing it, the clustering process brought those accounts together. Once the data collection process was concluded, I reviewed and analyzed the results; the relevant themes associated with the phenomenon being examined were extracted, synthesized, and reported. The viewpoints

provided by the first-year TBHC students on academic probation provided a clearer understanding of the lived experience of the students enduring these conditions. Quotations used during the interviews were extracted, and in conjunction with my observations, they served as representations of the themes directly related to the objectives of this study.

Finally, the last phase of the analysis requires the researcher to provide rich, textural statements which represent how and in what ways the participants experienced the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). In this phase, I focused on answering the main research question and the sub-questions being examined for this study. In addition, I sought to provide thorough explanations that did not contain any bias, judgments, or inferences about the data being reported. Finlay reminded researchers that "...the best phenomenology highlights the complexity, ambiguity and ambivalence of participants' experiences" (p. 7), and Dahlberg, Dalhberg, and Nystrom (2008) further warned that researchers must be "careful not to make definite what is indefinite" (p. 94).

The use of the four steps for data analysis outlined by Moustakas (1994) provided consistency and depth to this phenomenological study by ensuring a rigorous, impartial description of the experience being examined.

Summary

This investigation intended to gain an understanding of the lived experiences of six first-year, first time in college Burnett Honors College students at UCF who were placed on honors academic probation following the completion of their first semester in the program. This chapter presented information concerning the population of interest, the proposed research questions, the data collection and analysis approach, and other items related the process of gathering data.

Based upon the information provided about the proposal, the research design of phenomenological investigation was the most appropriate model to follow. The outline of this information will assist in replication and will provide a basis for future researchers to build on this specific area of study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS

The purpose of this investigation was to understand the lived experiences of freshmen honors students placed on academic probation with the Honors College following the completion of their first semester. In this chapter, the research question and sub-questions will be addressed first followed by the horizontalization of the data and analysis of the themes. Finally, the detailed descriptions of each participant will be presented.

Participants in the Study

In total, ten first semester, first-year TBHC students participated in the research study. Six students interviewed had been placed on honors academic probation at the conclusion of the Fall 2014 semester as their overall UCF GPA fell below 3.2 and/or their TBHC-specific GPA was lower than 3.0.

The honors probation students, in the order that they were interviewed, were given the following pseudonyms throughout this document to maintain confidentiality: Mia, Sarah, Austin, Chloe, Ethan, and Adam. The students interviewed who finished their first semester in good standing were: Alexis, Michael, Emily, and Audrey.

All students were traditional aged (18-19 years old) and were first-time-in-college freshmen. More specific information about each of the participants can be found in the Participant Profiles section later in this chapter.

Research Question and Sub-Questions Analysis

The data analysis, described in the previous chapter, focused on answering the main research question: What are the textural features, if any, among the lived experiences of first-year honors students placed on academic probation? The four sub-questions were structured to support the data analysis leading to answering the main research question; therefore, the sub-questions will be answered first.

Research Sub-Questions

1. What were the students' perspectives of their first year of college and life as an Honors College student prior to the start of their first semester?

The reality of college life was not quite as expected for many of the students matriculating to the Honors College in the Fall of 2014. While all students experienced some difficulties with the transition, the students on probation reported more significant a difference between their expectations and reality; they were less attentive to their academic progress over the course of their semester; they reacted and made adjustments more slowly than did their peers in good academic standing; and they often utilized less effective strategies when they did make changes.

Ethan, a student on honors academic probation shared, “before I came here, my expectations were different. They were definitely different. I was expecting kind of like a more relaxed setting than high school, with a lot more independence about classes and in class and everything.” Michael, who finished his first semester with a 4.0, felt that “high school was easier; college is different.” Chloe, who ended the semester on academic probation, reflected,

“...looking back on what I expected my first semester would be like, I thought it would be a lot different.”

Only two of the students (one from each group) interviewed were the first in their family to attend college, so they did not have anyone who had made the transition from high school to college to prepare them for the realities. Sarah, from the academic probation group, noted that she relied on pop culture for an accurate description of college life: “...going away to college was not something I really knew anything about so I pretty much had TV shows and movies to go off of.” Once she completed her first semester, she realized she had not used a very accurate measurement tool, “I look at TV shows now and it’s like, ‘That’s not what college is like. I don’t know where you’re going to school, but that’s not real.’”

The majority of both groups of students admitted that their experiences in high school did not prepare them well for what they encountered in their honors classes. Many expected that it would be a continuation of the advanced courses that they participated in prior to starting college: Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB) program, and Dual Enrollment. Most found that was not the case. Per Audrey, “I did the IB program, so I anticipated my classes being somewhat similar to that.” Those on academic probation seemed to struggle more in adjusting to the increased rigor, and they often placed blame on the manner in which the instructor taught the class material they felt they were already familiar with than with their lack of knowledge in the area.

2. What do the first-year honors students attribute to their academic status at the completion of the first semester? What experiences do they specifically recall that led to their current circumstances?

Students attributed change, or lack thereof, in study habits and test preparation to grades earned upon the conclusion of the first semester; in the case of those on academic probation, changes were made too late in the semester to make a positive impact on final grades. For those in academic good standing, changes were made earlier in the semester and, as a result, grades improved leading to a better final result. In the cases of the students on academic probation, they placed some level of blame on themselves for their shortcomings, but they seemed to shift blame as well. Sarah enrolled in more credit hours than recommended in her first semester because of perceived financial pressures on her to complete college as quickly as possible; she noted that as one of the reasons she did not meet the expectations of TBHC during her first semester. Sarah also shared that she fell ill during the course of the semester, but the amount of time and effort she dedicated to her non-academic schedule was part of the reason for decline in physical well-being. Chloe admitted that she could have performed better if she had made adjustments early in the Fall, but she also felt that her professors carried some of the blame. Mia also believed the instructors of the class she faltered in to be largely responsible for her current situation.

Non-probation students also placed blame on themselves for getting lower grades than they wanted in the first semester, but they took more responsibility for what happened. Emily realized that being over-prepared was better than being under-prepared as she found herself after one of her first tests, so she changed her study habits to ensure that she stayed ahead of her assignments.

All participants in the study agreed that the quality of instructor was critical to success; for most, this was a positive experience in honor courses; for others, it was a contributing factor

in falling short of academic goals (as Mia and Chloe shared), and students felt forced to self-teach or seek external help to compensate.

3. What meaning do TBHC students attribute to their academic status? How do they plan to maintain or attain good status going forward?

In response to receiving notification of academic probation status, disappointment and even anger were common reactions. Sarah expressed that she was “completely ashamed of how my grades turned out last semester...” Austin simply stated: “I was very mad at myself, very upset.” Chloe said: “I was actually really shocked because I didn’t know what my grades were at that time.” Even those in academic good standing were disappointed when they fell short of their goals. Audrey was displeased to learn that she received a “B+” as a final grade in one class because she had achieved all “A’s” throughout high school.

As mentioned above, both sets of students made adjustments to their habits in response to receiving disappointing grades. Those who were on academic probation were very optimistic about the changes and felt that these new practices would ensure that they were reinstated at the end of the spring semester. Sarah said that she was becoming more proactive and has taken a step back to focus on the future. Chloe also adopted a proactive approach and realized that she needed to ask for help when and if she found herself struggling academically. Ethan stated, “I started thinking about what I did wrong last semester, where I messed up and how I can fix that to do better next semester... I started going to more group study sessions, and I’ve started organizing more study groups for my classes.” The circumstances of being placed on academic probation did not appear to change the students’ self-perceptions.

4. How has the experience of being a TBHC student affected their view of postsecondary education and their academic-related future?

Almost all of the students expressed confidence in their abilities to regain or maintain good academic status and progress through their majors onto graduate school and/or careers in their chosen fields. Those on academic probation chose to view their circumstances as a “wake up call,” and they were committed to rededicating themselves to their studies.

Main Research Question

Based upon the analysis performed to answer the sub-questions, I applied my findings in those to the main research question to answer what this study sought to understand: What are the textural features, if any, among the lived experiences of first-year honors students placed on academic probation? The six Burnett Honors College students I interviewed who found themselves in this situation revealed that their expectations of what college life would be like, and specifically life in as an honors student, were not consistent with the reality they experienced. Specifically, these students had enjoyed a great deal of academic success in high school even though they spent very little, if any, time studying and preparing for examinations. In most cases, once the participants recognized that they were not meeting the academic expectations of the Honors College, that realization came too late, and even though most of them made adjustments in the attempt to rectify the situation, they were unable to bring their grades up to the minimum required thresholds before the end of the first semester. While each student accepted some level of accountability for their probationary circumstance and vowed to make adjustments in the future to restore their academic status to place them back in good standing

with TBHC, they also shifted some responsibility to external factors including their instructors' shortcomings, lack of resources, class scheduling, and personal concerns. In every case, however, the honors students on academic probation expressed optimism in their abilities to not only be reinstated in the Honors College, but also to successfully complete the requirements of their majors, to graduate, and to move forward in seeking advanced education or professional placement in their desired careers.

Data Analysis

The answers to the research questions provided in the previous section were supported by the data analysis process, specifically the second step in the data analysis process known as horizonatalization (Moustakas, 1994). I identified and narrowed down the major themes present in both groups of TBHC students, in the academic probation group, and in the students who were in good standing at the conclusion of their first semester. This process was accomplished by reviewing the transcriptions in detail. I highlighted words, concepts, and thoughts that were similar across participants and worked with my dissertation chair to determine which major themes and sub-themes were present. Tables 3, 4, and 5 were developed to provide a clearer view of the experiences and meanings that emerged through this data analysis. These tables note the major themes, sub-themes, and frequency of occurrence.

Table 3 Experiences of Ten First Semester, First-Year TBHC Students: Common Themes & Sub-Themes with Associated Frequencies

| MAJOR THEMES | TYPICAL | FREQUENT | VARIANT |
|--|---------|----------|---------|
| <p>1. Were Solicited by TBHC to Apply</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sub-Themes:</p> <p>1. Applied to UCF for general admission; Received communication via mail from TBHC</p> <p>2. Were not knowledgeable about TBHC prior to being contacted</p> | X | 6 | |
| <p>2. Held the Perception that Honors Courses/Environment Impacted Their Experience</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sub-Themes:</p> <p>1. Believed TBHC-student relationship was important to academic success</p> <p>2. Felt instructors enriched Honors experience</p> <p>3. Expressed instructors did not meet expectations of Honors College experience</p> | X | 8 | 2 |
| <p>3. Spent Little to No Time Studying in High School</p> | X | | |
| <p>4. “Independent Learners”</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Sub-Themes:</p> <p>1. Stated they were more comfortable studying on their own/liked to self-teach</p> <p>2. Expressed difficulty reaching out to others</p> | | 6 6 | |
| <p>5. Felt Comfortable Moving Forward in the Honors College and Beyond</p> | | 7 | |

Table 4 Experiences of Six First Semester, First-Year Students on Academic Probation: Major Themes, Sub-Themes, and Frequencies

| MAJOR THEMES | TYPICAL | FREQUENT | VARIANT |
|--|---------|----------|---------|
| <p>6. Blamed Themselves for Academic Probation Status in TBHC Sub-Themes: 3. Procrastinated/Lacked Motivation/Poorly Organized 4. Made adjustments too late in semester to impact final results 5. Felt some personal issues were not within their control</p> | X | 4 | 2 |
| <p>7. Did Not Utilize/Know About Academic Resources Available Sub-Themes: 4. Did not communicate with Honors College Advisor/Ask for assistance from Honors College prior to or during first semester 5. Knew about resources but did not use them</p> | | 4 | 2 |
| <p>8. Poor Attendance/Level of Participation in Classes Sub-Themes: 1. Skipped classes 2. Poor planning</p> | | 4 4 | |
| <p>9. Overconfident Sub-Themes: 3. Felt that they already took the class 4. Took higher level course(s) than should have 5. Took on too many credit hours during first semester</p> | | 4 | 2 2 |

Table 5 Experiences of Four First Semester, First-Year Students Not on Academic Probation: Major Themes, Sub-Themes, and Frequencies

| MAJOR THEMES | TYPICAL | FREQUENT | VARIANT |
|--|----------|-------------------|---------|
| <p>1. Identified Own Academic Shortcomings Early On Sub-Themes:</p> <p>1. Identified that they needed assistance and made changes to habits early enough in semester to make a positive difference</p> <p>2. Sought resources on their own</p> | | <p>3</p> <p>3</p> | |
| <p>2. Confident That They Were on the Right Track Sub-Themes:</p> <p>1. Felt that they made the necessary adjustments and were progressing well in the Honors College</p> <p>2. Felt that they were in the right programs and majors; optimistic about career plans</p> | <p>2</p> | <p>3</p> | |
| <p>3. Felt Received the Appropriate Level of Support from TBHC Sub-Themes:</p> <p>1. Used resources available to them</p> <p>2. Access/Approachability of faculty teaching in the Honors College</p> | <p>X</p> | <p>3</p> | |

The tables above provide a brief description of the major themes and sub-themes that emerged from the participants' interview data; these themes will now be examined in more detail.

Common Experiences and Meanings

Were Solicited by TBHC to Apply

In the case of the ten students interviewed about their experiences in TBHC during their first semester, all except one (who qualified for admission automatically because of her status as a National Merit Finalist) were solicited by the College to apply after they gained acceptance to UCF. Packets came in the mail that provided more detail about TBHC and the benefits that the students would enjoy if they pursued the opportunity to join. Alexis's reaction to reviewing the information she received from TBHC encouraging her to apply: "I was like, 'Okay, sure why not.' It wasn't anything that I was planning for..."

Although all but one of the interviewees attended high school in the state of Florida, in most cases, prior to receiving the communication directly from TBHC, the participants had not heard or of possessed limited knowledge of the Honors College. Once the students replied to TBHC expressing interest, they were sent a physical application in the mail to complete and return. Austin stated that at first, he did not want to apply because he felt it "was probably going to be too hard. I didn't really know much about it..." Mia was one of the few who had prior knowledge of TBHC. She stated, "I'm pretty sure I would have applied if I hadn't gotten anything in the mail."

When asked why the students chose to apply to TBHC, their answers were relatively consistent. Audrey stated, “I really didn’t know what an Honors College entailed. I just thought it was a way of separating yourself.” Michael said, “I just signed up for it because it’s more prestigious, so I’ll sign up for anything that’s better.” Ethan’s biggest selling point on TBHC was the smaller class sizes in the honors courses: “I started seriously looking at it, and I realized how helpful it would be. I saw how the classes would be smaller, and I really wanted that.” Emily, the student who was automatically admitted to TBHC because of her National Merit Finalist status, also “liked the idea of having smaller classes.” Mia agreed, “Definitely with the smaller class sizes, just because obviously the Honors College is smaller than the university as a whole.” Sarah, Austin, and Ethan factored in their campus visit experience in their decision-making process; Sarah stated that she felt a good “vibe” about it, and the students commented that the campus and facilities were important in narrowing down their options.

The biggest reason given by the participants as to why they elected to attend TBHC and UCF in general came down to what Alexis referred to as “the logical choice:” the students received more scholarship incentive than other institutions extended. Although almost all of them applied to other public schools in the state of Florida, UCF was the best choice from a financial perspective for the students and their families.

Perception of Honors Courses/Environment Impacted Participants’ Experience

While the students may not have been very knowledgeable about TBHC prior to attending UCF, they were unanimous that the Honors College met their expectations and was “as advertised.”

Students also appreciated the opportunities to meet other students in both formal and informal settings. Many of them expressed that they were not likely to reach out on their own, but TBHC's environment and culture "forced them" to reach out to others. With regards to herself and her Honors College peers, Audrey noted, "we're not really one to be extroverted and make friends. So it [Freshman Symposium] kind of forces you to make friends, which was good, especially your very first semester." Alexis shared that "being able to meet people that have that same sort of passion for just learning anything is really invigorating... That environment really fosters my success."

Several students noted that they felt the instructors in the honors courses were more challenging yet fun. Ethan noted, "I feel like I've personally connected with the professors more, and that they've been able to help me one-on-one more than they'd normally would, and I feel like, because of that, I feel more comfortable talking to the professor." Alexis felt that the honors professors she had worked with thus far "motivated me even more. It makes me excited to learn, especially when they're [her peers] excited to learn, and my professors when they're excited to teach." Austin shared: "My professors were very helpful in my first year with the honors courses." About his honors course experience in the first semester, Ethan elaborated:

That [honors course] was a very enjoyable class. I think the professor was definitely very helpful in that class, very instructional. He made the class something you wanted to come to because you were interested in it. It wasn't a monotone. His lectures were interactive and the tests were structured in a way as they built off his lectures.... He wasn't trying to trick you. Get in class and do your work; you were all set.

There were two students, both of whom were on honors academic probation, who felt differently about their honors courses experience in their first semester. Chloe felt one of her instructors was too picky: “I got points taken off for minuscule things...I think are petty...really should be focusing on how well do you actually understand what’s going on... But, no, it’s based off of technicalities.” She noted, “I tried to follow the rubrics to the best of my ability, but then I got all these tiny, little things marked wrong.” Mia struggled in her Calculus II course and felt that the honors instructor did not set her up for success: “I think what made that [honors] class so difficult was the homework he assigned....then I’d get the test and see it and realize I hadn’t done a problem like that. So it was hard to prepare for tests.” Chloe also experienced challenges in her other honors course. She felt that her chemistry instructor was a poor choice as he seemed to hand things off to his graduate assistant and missed numerous classes. As she expressed, “It’s insulting to be given teachers who care more about graduate school than undergraduate, especially when most of us are freshman, and talking about their graduate stuff in class.”

Mia expressed her concerns about the process of assigning instructors to honors courses, “I wish that the Honors College did have more control over the professor selection because there’s really no upside to taking an honors class if you have a professor that isn’t necessarily great at their job.” Chloe appeared to concur: “I felt like because it was the Honors College those teachers would take it a lot more seriously. I’m not sure how they choose honors teachers, but I was expecting some people that were a little bit more substantial.”

Whether the participants’ experiences with honors course instructors were positive or negative, they all agreed that the relationship with and quality of the faculty were significant contributors to their first semester results.

Spent Little to No Time Studying in High School

All ten students consistently reported that they did not have to put much effort, if any, into their high school classes to obtain “A” grades. This often colored their perception of what the Honors College experience would be like; per Austin: “...my first impression was that I wouldn’t have to study as much as I do because I basically made it through high school without studying ever.” He soon learned, “It’s [college] not a walk in the park like high school was.” Ethan shared, “High school wasn’t much effort....” Emily felt college classes would be similar to what she experienced in her IB courses; she admitted that this was one of her miscalculations: “because I was familiar with the material, I didn’t study for it as much as I probably should have....” She stated, “I feel like I really didn’t study much in high school. I never really had to.” Even though his older sister had warned him about the change in rigor at the collegiate level, Adam shared, “high school was so much easier than college, so it kind of surprised me.”

Independent Learners

Many of the students, regardless of academic standing at the conclusion of the first semester, reported that they were more comfortable studying on their own, and in cases where they struggled, they often employed a “self-teaching” method. Michael was not interested in collaborating with peers and felt that he was better off studying on his own: “I like to do everything just independently.” Audrey noted that she lived alone purposefully because she wanted her own space and that she felt she studied best on her own in her room. Austin said, “I’ve always been a figure it out myself....” Adam agreed that he would consider himself to be an independent learner. He admitted, “I kind of tried tackling things on my own, and it didn’t

work out quite as well as I wanted it to.” Audrey provided a possible a reason that TBHC students may not have been inclined to reach out for assistance: “a lot of us in the Honors College are too proud to reach out for resources....” Some of the participants stated that they had difficulty reaching out to others. Chloe noted, “I usually don’t talk to anybody ever, which is not good.” Michael revealed, “Sometimes I have trouble talking to adults, really. I’m almost too shy to talk to them.”

Emily stated that she wished she had reached out to peers more in her first semester, but admitted, “I’m really not the type to just ask somebody, ‘Hey, do you want to study together?’” Ethan realized that he needed to change his solo preparation approach, “I’ve learned to reach out to other students in class and work with them more.” A few students reached out for assistance via the UCF Math Lab and experienced different results. In Austin’s case, he felt that it was helpful to get assistance, but Mia was disappointed to learn that the graduate students staffing the lab were not familiar with how to solve the problems her Calculus II professor had assigned. Ethan noted similar challenges, “Honestly, I feel the graduate students that worked there, I feel they weren’t really too helpful.” A couple of students hired private tutors to help them navigate more challenging subjects that the general UCF tutoring offerings were not able to assist them with, and they shared that they wished that a more advanced tutoring resources were available to them as honors students. Ethan stated, “One of the things with last semester was most of these classes didn’t have the supplemental tutoring that the university often offers...so when I wanted to go get that extra tutoring, they said they don’t offer it.” Adam agreed, “Tutors [in TBHC] would be nice... I understand that UCF has them, but with special cases...maybe they could help.”

Felt Comfortable Moving Forward in the Honors College and Beyond

Almost all of the students interviewed in this study felt confident about their academic and career plans moving forward. Chloe stated: “I feel pretty confident that I’ll be able to graduate with my major or a major, and do it well.” When asked about his academic future, Adam shared, “I feel very confident right now, only because I’ve seen what I did wrong, changed it, and now it’s working how I thought it would.” Michael shared, “At this point, I plan on getting a doctorate degree eventually.”

Two of the students on academic probation noted that finding themselves in that situation served as a type of wake up call. According to Ethan, “I’m more invested almost in doing better in my classes, I know how easy it is to kind of just fall.” When reflecting back on her first semester, Chloe admitted, “I just didn’t take school seriously, then after the first semester... Now, I do take it very, very seriously and I understand that.”

All of the students expressed confidence in The Burnett Honors College, its staff, and its instructors regardless of their academic status. Despite the negative experience Mia described with her honors Calculus II instructor, she noted, “that’s probably an exception to the rule, because my honors classes this semester [Spring 2015] are much better.” Chloe agreed that her situation in her honors classes did not completely overshadow her first semester experience, “Overall, first semester, I feel like the actual extra things that came with being in The Honors College besides my actual classes, overall, I think were good experiences.”

Those who had personally met with TBHC’s Director of Advising praised his efforts and guidance. Alexis stated, “I think the biggest benefit that I took advantage of was advisers.” She further noted “it was nice that he [Mr. Rex Roberts] was so accessible considering he’s so – I

feel like he's pretty important in the Honors College." Ethan raved, "Rex is definitely amazing.... He is definitely great to work with. If I ever have any questions, he's always there...he's always helpful."

The students were unanimous in their appreciation for the use of the computer lab located within the Honors College. Michael, who was a music major, noted that he had large amounts of material that he needed to scan and sometimes print. The ability to use TBHC, which was conveniently positioned next to the building where Michael attended most of his major courses, was a valued benefit. Sarah exclaimed, "God bless free printing!" Adam, who resided on campus but not near The Honors College building, said, "Yeah, free printing – it's worth the walk." Several students also noted that the ability to register earlier for classes than their non-honors peers was a perk. Austin: "scheduling for classes early is awesome. That is my favorite!" Alexis agreed, "Oh, I love the fact that we can register classes before everyone else – that's great."

When asked if there was anything the students wished were different about The Burnett Honors College, students had very little feedback, if any. Adam observed: "they're pretty good how they are." Alexis wished that there were more honors classes available in her major area, though she recognized that it was challenging to arrange that given the varied interests of the student population that TBHC serves.

Despite their academic standing at the end of their first semester in TBHC, all of the students expressed that they were pleased to be a part of the Honors College community. Chloe reflected, "I would chose to be in The Honors College again." Alexis provided an endorsement, "one of my best friends...is considering UCF and I told him, 'Look into the Honors College – it's really great!'" And Sarah was inspired by her experiences in TBHC, "I kind of want to be

one of those people [guest speakers in the Freshmen Symposium course]. Grow up and come back and be like, ‘This is what I did with my life since being in the Honors College.’”

Despite the many similarities between the two groups of TBHC first-year students, the analysis of the data also revealed several differences.

Students on Honors Academic Probation

Blamed Themselves for Honors Academic Probation Status in TBHC

All six of the participants on academic probation in honors following the conclusion of their first semester placed some level of blame upon themselves for not meeting The Burnett Honors College minimum GPA requirements. They identified several causes and/or factors that contributed to their current status.

The first sub-theme emerged early in the interviews when students were asked why they felt that they ended up on honors academic probation. Sarah confessed, “I’m a really bad procrastinator,” while Austin admitted, “The motivation is really, really not there.” Chloe spent some time talking about this problem as well: “I would put off doing the homework until the last minute.” She also shared, “I’m having a hard time setting aside six hours to study. I can’t do that. I get distracted.” At one point, she shifted the blame from herself by making it a universal issue: “Everybody does it [procrastinates]...” Ethan lamented, “I feel like I’m just not as motivated to study and get the work I want done...” and learned “I definitely realized I needed to get myself more organized.” Adam also confessed, “I blew off the first test...”

Once the students recognized that they were struggling with their grades, it was often too late into the semester to effectively change the negative behaviors, which was the second sub-

theme identified. Austin realized, “If I...did more homework assignments, I would have ended up with a ‘B’... I was pretty mad at myself at the end.” He also recognized consequences, “I had to call my parents just to let them know what was going on, as far as financial-wise. Because if I don’t bring my grades up, I’m going to lose this scholarship... I’d hate myself.”

Chloe admitted that she fell behind in one of her classes because “I never studied for quizzes...” Mia hired a private tutor to assist with her Calculus 2 honors course, and even though she performed better on the tests thereafter, she was not able to raise her grade back up to an “A” by the end of the semester. Ethan wished that he had joined more study groups to help him prepare: “I’ve learned to reach out to other students in the class and work with them more. I’ve started devoting more time to studying than last semester.” Adam felt that should have reached out to classmates to form study groups sooner as well, “I tried tackling things on my own, and that didn’t work quite as well as I wanted it to.” Sarah struggled with making time to study between her busy extracurricular schedule and, later, her illness. She tried to change her strategy by blocking off segments of time to focus on studying, but she fell ill a few weeks into the semester and was unable to regain good standing in most of her classes.

Sarah pointed to her illness as one of the major reasons she finished her first semester on honors academic probation, but she was not alone in feeling that some personal circumstances that led to poor grades were not within her control. Chloe shared that she suffered from mental health issues that were largely untreated. She also stated that she had a learning disability for which she did not wish to seek accommodations. Austin felt that some of his poor test performance was due to what he termed “girl drama.” He also felt that his feelings of stress were

not well controlled, “once I realized how bad my situation was, I had an intense mental breakdown.... I still have those moments where you just get really stressed and overwhelmed.”

Did Not Utilize/Know About Available Academic Resources

Four out of the six students interviewed who were placed on honors academic probation following the conclusion of their first semester in college shared that they either elected not to use available resources and/or they were not aware that they could take advantage of some resources within the Honors College. Some students recalled getting information about resources, but they either neglected to follow up or did not believe they would need to utilize them. Chloe started to say, “They [TBHC] were trying to tell me things and I’m just like...” but she trailed off and ended her thought with a shrug. She stated that not using available resources was her mistake, “so there’s another level of accountability that I have to take up for that [seeking assistance].” When I asked her if she had ever met with the Honors College Advisor, she said,

This is the first time I’ve heard the name ‘Rex’ [Mr. Rex Roberts, Director of Honors College Advising] ever. I feel like in the little letters we get from the Honors College in my email that hasn’t really been talked about. They’re mostly – it’s like what’s going on right now. Well, I don’t care what’s going on right now at the Honors College; what resources do you have for me?

Mia disclosed that she had not taken advantage of any resources other than an initial meeting with the Honors College Advisor, but she has since changed her major and is no longer on the same plan of study. Austin revealed, “I haven’t really used any resources because, like I

said once before, I'm a 'figure it out yourself' kind of person. I know there's tons of resources available to me." When asked about whether he had met with the Honors College Advisor to assist him with planning out his future courses, Adam said, "No. I've been meaning to ask... I want to go ask his opinion on it..."

It seems that while some of the probationary students are aware of advising resources, they have not sought out assistance from their advisor and/or have not taken advantage of other available resources offered by the Honors College.

Poor Attendance/Level of Participation in Classes

A third main theme that emerged when analyzing the Honors College students on academic probation at the end of their first semester was poor class attendance and lack of planning.

Austin stated that had scheduled too many classes and lab sessions back-to-back on Tuesdays, which led to missed sessions and feeling overwhelmed each week; he said, "That day was not fun for me." Chloe also mentioned that she did not have the foresight to better arrange her class schedule, "It was really inconvenient scheduling. I didn't schedule properly I think. I just tried to fit my classes in whenever they were available.... Now I am thinking that was a mistake." Ethan's scheduling arrangement resulted in missed class sessions as well, "I wish I had known not to schedule morning classes. I feel like that was one of the reasons why oftentimes I didn't go to class, because I'd try to wake up, and it [motivation] just wasn't there." Sarah missed numerous classes due to her extracurricular activities at first. She joined an organization on campus known as Mock Trial. She admitted that it took up a lot of her time as there were

frequent meetings, extensive preparation sessions, and travel within Florida and to other states several times during the semester for competitions. Once she made an adjustment to her schedule to allow for more time to study, Sarah succumbed to a serious case of pneumonia and was unable to attend classes, complete assignments, and take tests.

Students on probation missed classes too often due to the way their classes were scheduled, times they were held, and other non-academic activities. This was an issue that contributed to their academic shortcomings during their first semester in the Honors College.

Overconfidence

In several cases, students on honors academic probation demonstrated overconfidence in their abilities at the start of the first semester. A few of them felt that they had already taken a similar class via AP, IB, and/or Dual Enrollment courses and, therefore, did not need to spend time studying the material. Mia admitted that she did not focus on her Calculus II honors course because she had taken two advanced courses during her junior and senior years of high school. She said, “I felt like I had a pretty good foundation and that I didn’t want to take Calc I again because that was, definitely, the part where I was really strong. I didn’t want to be bored or, like I said, waste that credit.” After she earned a grade of 60 on her first test, she realized this course varied significantly from the classes she took in high school.

Ethan exempted out of many of the general education core classes and jumped right into higher level courses during his first semester. He felt that he was doing well until mid-term examinations: “I thought...that all of my classes were going well, and then midterms rolled around, and after midterms, I felt completely lost. I was like, ‘I didn’t even know anything on

that test; what am I doing in this class?” Adam had taken pre-calculus in high school and earned an “A,” so he elected to take pre-calculus during his first semester in college. After he admitted to “blowing off” his first test because he felt he already knew the material, he reflected, “That really messed my grade up, and that’s how I ended up with a bad GPA.” Chloe also felt she had a solid grasp of math as she did well in her high school pre-calculus and algebra classes, so she elected to take college algebra because, “this is going to be the stuff I did sophomore year [of high school]. It should be easy.” She soon realized this course would be more challenging than the classes she had taken previously, and tried to make adjustments by going to the Math Lab on the UCF campus, but she did not feel that her efforts were effective enough to bring her grade back up in the algebra class before the end of the semester.

Ethan realized that he may have been too ambitious when he scheduled more classes than average, “I think that’s what really impacted my grade in that class...because I almost overloaded myself with the amount of classes I was taking.” Sarah also expressed some overconfidence in her ability to manage taking on more credit hours during her first semester, but her underlying reason differed, “I had a lot of financial pressure on me. I’m not from a very well-off family...so I was like, ‘The more classes I take per semester, the sooner I get out of here, the less we have to pay.’”

Whether they underestimated the rigor of collegiate courses in subject areas they were successful in during high school or overloaded themselves by taking on too many classes during their first semester, the students on academic probation recognized their mistakes too late in the fall of 2014 to complete their first semester in honors academic good standing.

Students in Academic Good Standing

Identified Own Academic Shortcomings Early On

While the students on honors academic probation tended to identify and attempt to correct slipping grades too late in the semester, the students who were in good academic standing in TBHC revealed that they recognized problems and made adjustment early enough to achieve better grades by the end of the first semester.

Michael noted that he became more organized in his approach to his studies, and revealed that he regularly monitored his study needs accordingly: "...high school was easier; college is different. It's fine. I can adapt to it. I manage my time well, and if it feels harder, I would manage again." Emily noted that she counted on her time management skills and prioritization efforts to keep her focused, "I know college is top of my list..." She was surprised to discover that she had more free time than she believed she would before the semester began; thus, she made some changes to her study habits by getting ahead of her coursework by studying the topics in advance of the classes. Audrey said that in one of her classes, she felt like she was in "an open sea, swimming, not really knowing which direction to go with that class." She recognized that just taking notes during class time as she had done in the past was not going to be enough to get the high marks she was accustomed to receiving. She "got a supplement book and I started doing all of the problems by myself at home, and going through everything, going through the text book, and just kind of over-practicing everything so I felt prepared for the test." Audrey also made it a habit to start studying at least four days in advance of any test so that she would not have to cram and also to ensure that if something happened where she was not able to

study the day before, she would still be prepared. She said she'd "rather be over-prepared than be underprepared and have to play catch-up for the rest of the semester."

Both Alexis and Michael felt that it was key to know what the professors expected, and if they followed that, they would be successful. It appeared that they began the semester with a specific mindset about how they were going to approach their studies and did not wish to rely on others during the study process. Alexis, Michael, and Audrey each stated that they enjoyed challenges; Audrey even shared, "It kind of made me angry how simple some of my gen eds [general education course requirements] were." They all felt that the Honors College courses were more to their liking in terms of expected academic rigor.

Had a High Degree of Confidence

All of the students who finished their first semester in good standing appeared to express a higher level of confidence in their academic abilities than the probation students. Audrey reflected that after the end of the first semester, she felt that things were surprisingly manageable and expressed that she wanted to take on more in the future. Michael stated, "once I finished a semester, I just felt really confident. I was like, 'I can handle this!' When comparing himself to his Honors College peers, Michael shared,

I know those kids in those [honors] classes are smarter [than those in non-honors classes], but I feel like I'm still above.... You know, I respect my classmates a little bit more; I know that I'm in an honors class, but...I still feel like I'm a little bit above.

Alexis felt she deserved the good grades that she earned and attributed much of her success to her confidence in her work ethic: “I’ve always known if I work this much I’m going to get this.”

While Audrey stated that she was not very confident at the start of her first semester due to the uncertainty of what college life would entail, she found that completing the term with good grades was a major confidence booster: “Once I finished a semester, I just felt really confident.... I can handle this.” Michael expressed confidence throughout his interview session in his abilities. When first asked about his perception of TBHC, he stated, “I knew I would be able to handle it, and so I didn’t care what it [TBHC academic requirements] would actually entail.”

Whether a higher level of confidence in the non-probation honors students was something they possessed coming into their first semester or acquired after successful completion of their first term, most of them shared that their feelings of confidence assisted them in reaching their academic goals.

Felt Received the Appropriate Level of Support from TBHC

In contrast to their Honors College peers who ended the semester on academic probation, the students in good standing took advantage of resources at every opportunity and leveraged the support they received from the College. Audrey felt that, “Just taking more advantage of the Honors College [resources] has definitely made me more confident....” She stated that she believed there were more resources available at the TBHC and UCF level, but she suspected that people were unaware of them.

The students felt that they had benefitted from the smaller class sizes and more intimate setting when it came to accessing and approaching honors instructors. Alexis shared that she felt she not only bonded with her peers in the smaller classroom environments of the honors classes, but she felt she bonded with her professor as well: "...in those smaller honors classes you really do get a lot more attention from the professors, and they get to know you a little bit better." Emily appreciated her relationships with honors instructors when she had to take a class with hundreds of peers, "It's hard to have a relationship with your instructors so that they know what kind of student you are." Three students in this group were taking a course led by Burnett Honors College Dean Alvin Wang; they remarked on how special they felt to be able to connect with the Dean of the College in a one-on-one setting and agreed that was a unique experience that most other students within the general UCF population would not have been offered.

TBHC students in academic good standing were appreciative of the resources offered via the Honors College, and they seemed to take advantage of them more often than their peers who ended the first term in academic probation.

The information provided in this section highlighted and detailed the themes and sub-themes that emerged from the analysis of the transcription data. For the six students who found themselves on academic probation at the end of their first semester in TBHC, they appeared to take responsibility for their academic shortcomings, yet they placed at least some of the blame on others, pointed to motivational issues, and noted some personal problems. Their TBHC peers in good standing identified and adjusted their behaviors in time to make a positive difference in their grades by the end of the term; the participants on probation were not as apt to acknowledge these issues and make effective changes in enough time. While the students on academic

probation were often aware of resources available to them, they were less likely to take advantage of them than their peers in good standing. The students who ended their first semester below TBHC's required GPA expectations more often mentioned incidences of skipped classes and poor planning; their non-probation peers seemed more interested in attending and participating in classes and felt that they had their schedules planned appropriately.

Despite these differences, there were some items found to be common between the two groups of TBHC students: they were invited to apply to the Honors College based on their high school credentials and activities; they all believed that the interaction with their honors instructors was a critical component to their academic success during their first semester; they learned that the limited time spent preparing for classes and examinations in high school would not lead to successful completion of the TBHC requirements; they often described themselves as independent learners; and they all felt that regardless of their academic standing after the end of the Fall 2014 term, they would achieve their goals of TBHC graduation and their ultimate career objectives.

Individual Participant Summaries

TBHC Students on Honors Academic Probation

Mia

At the time of the interview, Mia was a petite, 19 year old Caucasian female with dark hair and dark eyes. She was on time for her interview, and she seemed to be very shy at first. She maintained good eye contact and was well-spoken. She was dressed in appropriately casual attire, and she sat in the chair across the desk from me. She was able to quickly respond to my

questions, and she appeared to be thoughtful in her answers. She began to open up over the course of the interview, and by the end, she seemed to be relaxed and comfortable opening up.

Mia was placed on academic probation following the Fall 2014 term because the GPA for honors courses was below the 3.0 minimum; she was in good standing with her UCF-wide GPA as it was above the 3.2 requirement. Mia attended an in-state, public high school where she graduated in the top 4% of her class. She had earned nine credit hours via successful completion of AP (Advanced Placement) tests taken in high school. She came into college wanting to double major in music and something else that she had not decided yet; during the interview she stated that she was looking at Health Information Management as her second major. She looked at several universities as part of her application process, including Appalachian State University, Florida State University, and UCF. Her decision to attend UCF was largely based on the amount of scholarship money she would receive and because she was unsure of her major and felt that UCF would provide her with the opportunity to go in whichever direction she chose whereas she might be limited to liberal arts elsewhere. Mia was received information in the mail about TBHC, and she completed the application and submitted it because she felt she would enjoy a more intensive curriculum, have better access to faculty, more peer-to-peer interaction, and be a part of smaller classes. She chose to live in designated Honors College housing for her first year, but she did not feel that it really provided her with any difference experience than she might have had if she had lived in another dormitory. She plans to live off-campus next year because it would be less expensive than living on campus.

Mia agreed that for the most part, she received what she expected in the Honors College; however, she was unhappy with one of the classes she took in honors: Calculus II. She felt it was

a “weed out” course, and the instructor was not in touch with students because of his antiquated teaching style in using a chalkboard with his back to the class throughout each class period. He also assigned homework that did not match up with the exam material, and the tests themselves were photocopies of handwritten questions. She elected to take Calculus II in the Honors College because she had taken advanced Calculus in high school and felt she had a strong foundation; however, this course emphasized material she had never seen before. She went to the UCF Math Lab on campus for assistance, but the graduate students there did not know how to answer her questions. She also sought out her instructor during his office hours, and while she noted that he tried to be helpful and was very nice, he was not very helpful. She was especially frustrated because she hired a personal tutor after not being able to get help from the Math Lab staff, but even so, she barely got a “C” in this course that carried four credit hours. It was also disappointing to learn from non-honors friends that the general UCF Calculus II classes were much more similar to the advanced calculus courses she took in high school, so they all received good grades. While she was disappointed with this experience, she stated that she felt this was an exception to the rule as future honors courses would likely be more in line with what she expected. She noted that she was not given the chance to provide feedback on the quality of her instructor and wished that she had that opportunity. When asked about her reaction to learning she was on academic probation, she responded that she was not surprised because she knew what her grades were, but she was initially shocked when she received a grade of 60 on her first calculus test because she had been a straight A student in high school. While she felt the Calculus II honors course situation was the primary reason for her ending up on academic probation, she also took responsibility for her circumstances by stating that she should have

made changes to her study habits and hired a tutor earlier in the semester when it might have made a difference versus after receiving such a low grade on her test.

Mia shared that other than meeting with the honors Advising Director, she had not utilized any resources specifically offered by TBHC. She enjoyed the Honors Freshman Seminar and the service learning component, but she would have liked to have been provided with more options instead of the one. She stated that although she was currently on academic probation, she expressed a high level of self-confidence in her abilities to get back in good standing and complete all of the Honors College requirements.

Sarah

Sarah was a tall, 19 year old female with light colored hair who attended a public, vocational high school prior to coming to UCF. She appeared to be extroverted, and seemed to be comfortable sharing her experiences openly from the start of the interview. As compared with the other ten freshmen that were interviewed for this study, she had the lowest class rank as she was in the top 30%, she also had the lowest high school GPA, and she did not carry over any AP or IB credit hours. She stated that she was surprised that she was admitted to TBHC because her roommate, who she did not know in advance, also applied but was not accepted. She said that she doesn't consider herself to be an "exceptional student," whereas, she felt her roommate was. She was placed on TBHC and UCF academic probation following the end of the Fall 2014 semester as her overall GPA, including honors credits, fell under 2.0. She was the only student interviewed who came from out-of-state, specifically, a small town in New Jersey, which may have been a factor in her admission.

Sarah did not know anyone who had attended college far away from her hometown, so this experience was new for her. Her father had earned an Associate of Arts degree from the nearby community college, but she was the first in the family to attend a university and to pursue a bachelor's degree. Her impressions of college life prior to arriving at UCF were largely based on information she had gleaned from television shows and movies. Most important to her was to find the ideal college setting, and she stated that she fell in love with the campus and atmosphere of UCF during her first visit. She also applied to five other postsecondary institutions including New York University where she was offered a full scholarship. Even so, her immediate connection to the campus of UCF was the deciding factor for her. Sarah had no knowledge of The Burnett Honors College until she was solicited to apply. She elected to live on campus her first year, but not in the honors housing as she had already committed to living elsewhere before she learned about TBHC. She is planning to live on campus next year with her current roommate. Sarah initially believed she would major in Interdisciplinary Studies, Women's Studies track because she was interested in helping others; however, more recently, she is focused on human and civil rights within law and would like to be a member of the United States Congress someday.

During her first semester, Sarah took four courses offered in the Honors College. Her experience in those courses was very positive overall. She enjoyed the smaller class sizes, the more intimate interaction with peers and faculty, and the opportunity to provide feedback as she felt her teachers "knew her" whereas this was not the case in the larger UCF-wide courses. She also stated that she took advantage of the TBHC computer lab and really appreciated the ability to print and scan documents at no cost. She signed up for numerous campus clubs and

organizations at the start of her first semester; in particular, she participated in a Mock Trial group. She admitted that this took a lot more time than she thought in that it was all-consuming because it involved a significant amount of preparation as well as travel out of the state for competitions. Sarah also attributed her habit of procrastination and overconfidence from not having to dedicate time for studies in high school to her current academic situation.

Sarah further shared that she fell ill about a month into the semester and missed numerous classes and assignments as a result. She was considering the option of Medical Withdrawal for the fall semester which would essentially erase her current credit hours and grades for all of her courses. As a follow-up, I checked to see if the leave had been granted, and it was, so Sarah's records will not indicate that she was on academic probation following the conclusion of her first semester at UCF and in TBHC.

Austin

Austin was a 19 year old Caucasian male of medium height with a slight build. He wore glasses for nearsightedness with black frames, and he sat in the first swivel chair across the desk from me. Austin had a cheerful demeanor with a bit of a nervous laughter throughout the interview, and although he appeared to be a bit shy, he opened up quickly during the discussion. He attended an in-state public high school where he graduated in the top 5% of his class, and he carried over nine credit hours from AP testing. He was placed on honors academic probation as his overall GPA fell under 3.0 at the conclusion of the Fall 2014 semester. He applied to several other colleges, all of them in-state, but chose UCF because he liked the location, campus, and idea of attending a large institution. He received information via mail suggesting that he consider

applying to TBHC, and after attending “Scholar’s Day” for applicants offered scholarship money to attend UCF, he decided he would like to be part of the Honors College. Though he came in with the preconceived notion that his peers in TBHC would be really smart, and therefore somewhat “weird,” he was pleased to learn that, for the most part, they were down-to-earth like he considered himself to be. Austin has decided to major in Chemistry, specifically the Biochemistry track.

Austin’s initial thoughts were that honors instructors would be much harder and “mean,” but he was pleasantly surprised to learn this was not the case. While the teaching methods varied and were not quite what he expected, he felt comfortable in the smaller science classes he attended in the Honors College. He felt the honors faculty were very helpful, and the overall experience was very satisfactory. While they were not the grades he wanted, he felt the two “B’s” he received in his honors courses were the grades he earned. He felt that since he had taken similar classes in the past, he would not need to study because he rarely had to do so in high school. He also stated that he had not scheduled his classes very well as he had too many on Tuesdays and sometimes lacked motivation to attend some of those classes. His non-honors College Algebra course, which carried five credit hours, is what he attributed to his academic probation status at the end of the first semester. Though he utilized the UCF Math Lab, which he described as a “nightmare,” he felt that he learned a lot when he was there. He noted that his motivation to attend and study College Algebra was really not there, so it was difficult for him to force himself to go to classes and spend time outside of class preparing for that course. After he received a “C” in the class, he determined that if he had gone to class more often and completed more of the homework assignments, he would have received a “B” grade instead; this realization

led to what he termed “an intense mental breakdown.” He expressed frustration at himself about this and viewed it as an important lesson that he would not like to repeat in future semesters.

When asked what his reaction was when he received his grades and learned of his status in TBHC, he disclosed that he was “really mad at” and “very upset with” himself, but he was not surprised. He expressed concern about the possibility of losing his Bright Futures scholarship if he did not pull his grades up over the spring semester, which led to a great deal of stress.

Austin felt comfortable with the availability of TBHC and observed that the College is always offering to help, but he noted that he is a “figure it out on his own” type of person so at the time, he had not used any offered resources. He also had not met with the advisor yet, but he stated that he planned to very soon. One of the benefits of being in TBHC in his mind was the ability to enroll sooner than other UCF students. He also felt that TBHC was providing the right level of communication with the weekly emails sent to honors students. Austin did offer two criticism about TBHC: first, he was very displeased to learn that the Freshman Seminar was a pass/fail course that did not contribute to his GPA; and second, he felt that it was too early to place someone on academic probation after the first semester. He observed that experiencing a tough first semester is common, and that it was too soon to evaluate academic performance after only a few classes. In the end, however, Austin stated that he was glad he was a part of TBHC and would like to remain in it and complete his degree with honors.

Chloe

Chloe was a multi-racial, petite female with short, dark hair who appeared to be very nervous at the start of the interview but opened up once we began. She was casually dressed and

arrived on time for her interview where she chose to sit in the first chair on the other side of the desk from where I was positioned. Chloe started high school out of state, but then moved with her family to Florida and finished secondary school here where she attended a public institution and ended up in the top 3% of her graduating class. She discovered UCF while searching on a website called “CAPPEX” for ideas on where to attend college. During high school, she participated in the East Program based in Cambridge, Massachusetts which she described as similar to the IB (International Baccalaureate) program. She came into UCF with eleven credit hours from the East Program in combination with hours earned for passing AP tests. Chloe was placed on honors academic probation following the completion of her first semester at UCF as a result of her overall GPA falling below the required 3.0 minimum.

Chloe stated that she has known she wanted to be a doctor for a long time. She is specifically interested in becoming a surgeon and working for the Doctors Without Borders organization in the future. She applied to several other universities that were all out-of-state, but elected to attend UCF when she received information about TBHC encouraging her to apply to UCF and to join the Honors College. She was also awarded two scholarships to attend, and she indicated that the financial awards were important because of her family’s income. While she admitted that she viewed UCF as a “back-up” plan, she stated that she would have chosen it all over again.

Chloe took three honors courses during her first semester, and she found that she enjoyed the smaller class sizes and opportunities to meet peers. She was introverted and not very apt to walk up and introduce herself to others, but the size of the classes and atmosphere in the honors courses allowed her to open up more quickly. She lived in the honors housing and felt that was a

perfect situation where she could continue to meet like-minded students and be close to her classes. With respect to her honors courses and instructors, she was very pleased with the exception of one of her courses. She felt that the instructor was not happy to be teaching undergraduates, and he often talked about his graduate students, attended conferences, and missed many classes. When he was in class, he spoke with a very thick accent, which made him and the lessons difficult to understand. He was rarely available outside of class time and not very approachable. The Graduate Teaching Assistant who filled in for him when he was absent did not have very strong teaching skills: she could not gain command of the class, did not project her voice well, and gave problems to the class that she hadn't worked out yet so it took a while for her to provide solutions. In addition, the TA put incorrect answers on the board, and the students in the class, including Chloe, had to frequently correct her. This was a very disappointing course and not at all what she had expected to experience in the Honors College. Chloe shared that she enjoyed the Freshman Symposium course, she would have liked for there to be speakers who were better at communicating; at times, it was challenging to sit through as a student because, although the presenter was a very knowledgeable person in the field, he or she was not very engaging.

Similar to Austin's experience, Chloe also struggled with the non-honors College Algebra course. She felt very confident in her mathematical skills and was accustomed to earning A's without studying, but she determined that was not going to be the case with this course. She also felt that she did not schedule her classes very well as she had back-to-back classes that were located relatively far away from each other, and she did not have a car to get her back and forth quickly. As a result, she stopped attending her math class towards the end of

the semester. Reflecting back on her experience, she noted that she should have dropped the College Algebra class that semester and retaken it later, but she was ambitious with respect to getting into courses and filling in schedule gaps wherever possible.

While Chloe took responsibility for her academic standing, she did comment that she suffers from high anxiety, was officially diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome as a young teenager, and also has a non-verbal learning disorder, which put her at a disadvantage. She was hesitant to request accommodations for her learning disability because she perceived the application process to be overwhelming. She also pointed out that she did not seek help when she was struggling in classes, which she felt was her mistake. Chloe noted that she had difficulty concentrating in class as her attention span was short; this also impacted her ability to study as she could not focus on her work for very long because she became distracted. She realized that she would need to be more proactive in studying well in advance for tests and completing assignments. This was not something she had to do much of throughout her high school years as mastering those subjects came easily to her. Finally, Chloe shared that she experienced challenges with respect to knowing where she stood in terms of her grade over the course of the semester. Some of her professors did not use Canvas to electronically post grades, and those who did often fell behind in recording the grades so she was often unsure about her performance.

Chloe was surprised to receive the news that she was on honors academic probation because she did not know what her grades were until the end of the semester in some cases. She regrouped quickly and realized that although she was in jeopardy, she had a chance to "redeem" herself. She noted that if she had been "kicked out," she likely would have descended on a downward spiral. To keep this from happening, she has planned out her next three years, found

some peers to form study groups, was being more proactive with her studies, and was working on overall communication skills. Chloe expressed that she was confident she will be able to get back on track and graduate with honors.

Ethan

Ethan was an 18 year old Asian male of average height with an athletic build who was early for his interview and came dressed in formal attire. He was polite, well-spoken, made eye contact, sat directly across from me, and appeared to be more extroverted as he was open from the beginning to the end of the session. He graduated from an in-state public high school where he finished in the top 17% of his class; he was awarded 6 credit hours towards his bachelor's degree from a combination of AP and IB. Ethan was placed on academic probation because his overall UCF GPA fell below 3.0.

Ethan's decision to attend UCF was based primarily on his experience when he first visited the campus and felt it connected with him. He has determined that he wants to pursue a degree in engineering. Given this area of interest, he also applied to the Massachusetts Institution of Technology, The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, and Stanford University. Another deciding factor for Ethan was the scholarships he was awarded to attend UCF. He was very enthusiastic about his chosen career and stated that the courses he has enjoyed most thus far have been those focused in engineering. Though he had heard about TBHC during an orientation session, he did not know much about it until he received a packet of information encouraging him to apply.

Aside from the Freshman Seminar, Ethan only took one course in the Honors College during his first semester. His experience with that course was very positive, and he enjoyed the benefits that the small class size offered. Ethan became more involved in TBHC by becoming a member of the Honors Congress. He also lived in the honors housing and noted that made a positive difference in his feeling of belonging; however, he plans to move off-campus next year because it will be less expensive.

In his non-honors course, Ethan struggled. As was the case with some of his peers, he did not do very well in his mathematics course. He felt it was different from what he learned in high school, and he did not have a positive experience working with the Math Lab. He felt that he was doing well, but when he took his midterm exams, he realized that he was not and felt completely lost. He made adjustments, but in the end, he felt he would not be able to make up for the poor grades he received during the first half of the semester.

Ethan praised the efforts of the honors advisor and felt that he received good advice and counsel from him. He also appreciated that the advisor visited the honors housing on a weekly basis because it was an opportunity to ask questions and interact more informally. Ethan also enjoyed the ability to use the computer lab for printing, but said he did not spend much time studying in the Honors College because the WiFi was “spotty.” When asked what he might suggest as far as improvements were concerned, Ethan felt it could be a little more personal. After requesting that he elaborate on that point, he said that he wished the Freshman Symposium portion itself was shorter and the break out groups longer to allow for more interaction with peers. He did enjoy the service learning component and felt it helped strengthen his public

speaking skills which is something he felt he lacked. He felt that TBHC was a great place to be, and he appreciated how genuinely the college reached out to provide assistance and support.

Upon learning that he was on honors academic probation at the conclusion of his first semester, Ethan stated that even though he was “kind of expecting it,” he was “floored.” Similar to Chloe’s experience, he was unaware of where he stood in most of his classes because he was not receiving grades and did not know where he stood until the semester ended. In addition, he found that conflicting grades were posted, so he did not know which was correct. To cope with his situation, Ethan first “ate a lot of chocolate,” but then he said he knew what he needed to do next. He made a plan for himself that included getting more organized, planning further in advance, joining and/or forming study groups, spending more time focused on his studies, something that was not necessary for him to be successful in high school. Ethan also realized that he may have made mistakes in planning his classes for the first semester. He scheduled several morning classes, but then was not motivated to get up that early and ending up skipping them completely. In addition, his classes were spread out across the campus, so he had a difficult time getting to some of them on time.

At the end of the interview, Ethan expressed a high level of confidence in his abilities to make the adjustments he felt were necessary, and he was looking forward to performing well during his second semester and moving on in the Honors College.

Adam

It was a challenge to arrange a time to meet with Adam because of Spring Break plans, exams, and illness, so I met with him via phone. As such, I am unable to describe his physical

appearance, but he identified himself as Hispanic in his records. He was 18 years of age at the time of our session, and he appeared to be comfortable speaking with me. While seemingly introverted, Adam overcame any hesitancy he may have had quickly, and our discussion was lively.

Adam attended an in-state public high school where he finished in the top 2% of his graduating class. He brought over thirteen credit hours with the successful completion of AP and Dual Enrollment (at Florida Southwestern College) courses. He elected to attend UCF mostly because of its location, its reputation in his chosen field, and financial awards he had been offered. Upon applying to the university, he was sent information about TBHC via mail and elected to submit his application to the Honors College. Adam had an older sister who was in college, so he had an expectation that it would be more challenging than high school, but he was still surprised at the rigor involved once he began taking classes at UCF. Adam did not have to spend time studying in high school, but after “blowing off” his first test because he thought he was well acquainted with the material, he realized that his college experience would require greater effort in that area. Adam had chosen his major before coming to UCF; he has elected to pursue a degree in aerospace engineering.

Although Adam did not take any honors courses other than the Freshman Symposium during his first semester, he did actively participate on the social committee of the Honors Congress where he planned gatherings and events for his TBHC peers. He chose to live on campus but was not in the honors housing because he preferred the accommodations on another part of campus and it was less expensive than the honors dormitories. He did state that utilizing the services in the Honors College computer lab was “worth the walk.” Adam had planned to

take more honors courses in the fall, but his Excel Seminar (which offers an undergraduate research experience) was scheduled for the same time. He expressed that he enjoyed the Freshman Symposium and appreciated that it was structured as a pass/fail because it took a lot of pressure off of him. He liked having the opportunity to be with his TBHC peers at least once per week since he was not taking any other honors courses, and he liked participating in the service learning project.

As has been described in other participant profiles, Adam struggled most with his mathematics class. In his case, it was pre-calculus, which was a five credit hours commitment. He had successfully completed a similar advanced class in high school and felt confident that he would be able to earn an A in this course as well; however, the first test proved that theory to be incorrect. He encountered a similar situation with his four credit hours chemistry class and hired a private tutor; as a result, he finished with a “B,” but he earned a “C” in his math class which was a significant contributor to his first semester GPA.

When I asked Adam what his initial thoughts were when he was informed that he had been placed on honors academic probation, he admitted that he was not surprised but he felt “pretty bad.” The first thing he did was calculate what grades he needed to earn in the second semester to raise his GPA above the honors probation threshold and set that as his goal. He changed his study habits to where he spends time every day reviewing material and makes sacrifices in his personal life by not spending as much time with friends or playing recreational sports. The interview concluded with Adam expressing his confidence that he was aware of where he had gone astray and would be able to correct it with his new plans.

TBHC Students in Academic Good Standing

Alexis

Alexis was an 18 year old Hispanic female of average height and weight with longer, dark hair. She appeared to be introverted and looked away from me during the interview while she carefully considered her responses to my questions. She seemed to become more comfortable after the first few questions were asked and answered as she relaxed her posture and her voice steadied. Alexis attended a public high school in the Orlando area near the UCF campus where she earned the distinction of graduating in the top 2% of her class. She was also able to earn ten credit hours as a result of successful completion of AP courses. She appeared to be shy, was very polite, and sat directly across the table from me. She seemed to become more comfortable speaking about her experiences as the interview wore on.

Initially, Alexis thought she would attend an out-of-state university because of her desire to major in singing and vocal performance, but she decided to focus on speech therapy and wanted to continue to live at home for convenience purposes. She stated that she had a positive relationship with her family members, received a great deal of independence, and did not feel that she is missing out on anything by not living on campus. Once Alexis applied and was accepted to UCF, she was solicited by TBHC to apply, and although it was not something she had been planning to do, she decided it would likely be similar to her AP and other advanced classes, so she submitted her application and was accepted. She was further incentivized to attend UCF as she received a substantial scholarship.

Alexis did not have specific expectations of what her experience would be like in college and within TBHC, but she shared that she thought it would be different from what she had

observed during the first semester. For her, college has been a big change, and she felt she was always busy between classes, studying, and her part-time job working with children at a local daycare. She has also found that most her honors peers are similar to her in that they have a strong work ethic and are passionate about learning, but they do not fit the stereotype of an honors student in that they are “normal kids.” In her mind, this was a “good different” when she compared the reality to her expectations.

In addition to the Honors Freshman Symposium course, Alexis took two other honors classes along with two UCF-wide classes. She related that the biggest difference was the class size in that honors enjoyed smaller, more intimate sessions; she felt that she was able to talk with her classmates more often, and it seemed that they bonded in and out of the classroom in study groups and even social interactions. She liked that she got to know her professors better and she got the sense that they knew her as well. She noted another difference was that she did have to put more effort into her honors courses, and they were more time-consuming and demanding than her non-honors classes.

Alexis ended her first semester in academic good standing. She stated that upon receiving her final grades, she felt that she earned the grades she worked for, so she was not surprised. She noted that part of why she was successful was that she felt she had a very good understanding of what her instructors expected from her, and she delivered accordingly. She was accustomed to working independently, but she found that studying with other honors students provided her with another advantage because being with other students who cared about learning as much as she did fostered her “sense of dedication” to her classes, herself, and TBHC. She did not feel that the classroom environment was competitive; rather, it was encouraging and invigorating which made

her want to perform at a higher level and truly enjoy learning for the sake of gaining more knowledge. She found her honors instructors to be interesting, their class sessions stimulating, and that their knowledge of the subject material was deep enough to carry on discussions she found to be fascinating, especially when compared with her non-honors courses. Her only criticism related to her first semester courses was with respect to the Honors Freshman Symposium where she stated that she wished more time was spent on community endeavors rather than breaking off into groups and “talking about feelings.” She also expressed that she would like to see more honors courses offered more closely related to the various majors, but she was aware that there were resource restraints in terms of instructor availability.

Alexis cited her time management, efficiency, and prioritization skills as other reasons she achieved strong marks at the conclusion of her first semester in college. She placed her learning at the top of her list and made sacrifices to her personal life by staying home and studying instead of going out with her friends and family, even though she said they sometimes applied some peer pressure to try to change her mind.

Alexis frequently commented that she was pleased to be a part of TBHC. She was hesitant to attend a large university at first, but the ability to attend smaller classes in the Honors College has made a positive difference. She also liked that as an honors student, she was permitted to enroll in classes earlier than the general UCF population. She praised the TBHC Director of Advising for his guidance and availability along with the computer lab’s amenities. She stated that she has a close friend who was currently applying to colleges and she was encouraging him to apply to TBHC because of the resources and perks that come along with being an Honors College student at UCF.

Michael

Michael was an 18 year old Hispanic male of average build with dark hair and wire-rimmed glasses. He arrived a few minutes early for the interview, sat directly across the table from me, and demonstrated confidence in his posture, eye contact, and his manner of speaking throughout the interview session. Michael also attended a local, in-state, public high school where he graduated in the top 2% of his class and carried over nine credit hours from his AP courses. He also received the highest SAT score of the eleven participants in this study.

Michael stated that he was looking for an extension of his high school experience when he considered where to attend college and what his expectations were transitioning to a postsecondary institution. While UCF was not his first choice as he had decided to major in music and wanted to attend a school with a strong reputation in that area, but he decided to attend because he received scholarship money and felt comfortable on the campus. He received information about TBHC once he had been accepted to UCF, and he decided to apply because it was “more prestigious.” He appreciated the smaller class sizes, but he said the “one-on-one interaction” Honors Colleges are known for between the professors and students was not important to his learning process as he was comfortable in classrooms of any size. He stated that he liked to be challenged, which was another reason he chose to attend TBHC. Michael elected to live at home and has thus far been satisfied with that decision.

Michael admitted that high school was easier for him and required less study time, but he approached the transition to college with an expectation of greater rigor and organized his time and schedule accordingly. He liked to have assignments completed well in advance of the deadlines, and he did not feel that he needed any “hand holding” to accomplish tasks. He felt

very confident when he took tests and his final exams, and he performed well. He stated that there is always uncertainty about grades until one receives the finalized information, but it was more of a feeling of relief than surprise when the end results matched his expectations. He kept close track of his grades throughout the semester and was sometimes disappointed to see that his instructors did not update them very frequently. Michael was proud of the fact that he always received straight A's as he strives for that grade because it is the "best option." He credited his organizational skills and his internal pressures for why he has been able to perform at the highest level, and he shared that he plans to continue his education until he receives a doctoral degree. He also shared that he felt he earned better grades because he was more intelligent than his peers.

When asked about the resources available to him as a TBHC student, he said that he appreciated the use of the computer lab, especially since it was located close to the Performing Arts building where he attended many of his classes. He felt that he had his program of study well-planned and did not need assistance from advisors or mentors other than their acknowledgement that his plan was complete and achievable. Michael expressed that he was not as interested in socializing or studying with peers as he had always been an independent learner. He also felt that while the other honors students had demonstrated a high level of intelligence, he felt that he was a "little bit above" in comparison.

Michael felt very confident that he would continue to earn straight A's throughout his time in the Honors College and would graduate having satisfied all of the requirements.

Emily

At the time the interview took place, Emily was a petite, 18 year old Asian female who had attended a local public high school and graduated in the top 6% of her class. She appeared to be nervous when she first sat down across the desk from me, but she soon became more relaxed as evidenced by her less rigid body language and increased amount of eye contact. She began her collegiate career in the fall of 2014 with thirteen credit hours as a result of her successful completion of AP and Dual Enrollment courses. When asked about how she learned about The Burnett Honors College, Emily shared that she was a National Merit Finalist, one of the conditions under which a student is automatically accepted into TBHC upon receiving admittance to UCF.

One of the reasons Emily decided to attend TBHC at UCF was because she liked the idea of a smaller class size. Though she had experienced success at a large high school, she felt that such an environment would benefit her at a postsecondary institution. She also stated that the interdisciplinary seminars offered through TBHC would offer an enjoyable learning experience outside of her major courses. Emily also applied to Brown University in Providence, RI, Columbia University in New York City, NY, and the University of Florida (UF) in Gainesville. When making a final determination between UF and UCF, she chose UCF because she would receive more financial awards. Her undergraduate goal was to obtain a double major in political science and math with a minor in chemistry. Emily's future plans are to become a physician working for Doctors Without Borders or with another organization focused on humanitarian aid. Thus far, she felt that her expectations of university life have matched the reality of being a college student.

During her first semester, Emily took two honors courses: Freshman Seminar and Calculus 1. She enrolled in three other classes outside of the Honors College. Emily expressed that she enjoyed the symposium class and felt she got a lot out of it, including meeting peers which was important to her given her introverted nature. She quickly discovered that her course load was more time-consuming than she originally expected and had to make some adjustments to her schedule. In high school, Emily did not have to spend a lot of time studying, but she found that she needed to motivate herself to do so in order to be successful. She admitted that she had a lot of free time outside of her classes, but she felt she was not using it properly and needed to change her work habits. Instead of cramming before a test, Emily began to set aside time in advance to study the materials and even get ahead when possible. She credited this adjustment to why she ended the semester with good grades. She was not pleased to learn that she received two “B’s” given her straight “A” performance in high school, but she felt she was given the grades she earned.

Emily learned that she preferred to have a relationship with her instructor so that he or she would know the type of student she was; in the larger classroom settings, she found that to be practically impossible. This was one of the benefits of being in TBHC that she appreciated. In addition, she enjoyed her relationship with the Dean of the Honors College as she sought undergraduate research opportunities and was able to work with him on a specific project. She also felt that she received guidance from the honors advisor and felt her plan of study was putting her on the right track to achieve her academic goals. Emily admitted that she sometimes regretted not choosing to attend UF where many of her friends were, but she likes being part of The Burnett Honors College “a lot.”

Audrey

Audrey was a 19 year old Caucasian female with shoulder-length dark hair who arrived to the interview early and sat directly across from me during the interview. Though she answered each question without hesitation, she kept hold of a section of her hair with her right hand and twirled it during the entire session, an indication that she was nervous. Similar to most of the participants, she graduated from an in-state public high school, but she finished in the top 1% of students and came in with the highest high school GPA as compared with the other ten interviewees. Between successful completion of both AP and IB courses, she entered with ten credit hours. While her father has taken some postsecondary courses in the past, she is the first person in her family to enroll at a university.

In addition to UCF, Audrey applied to the University of Miami in Miami, FL, the University of Florida, and The Georgia Institute of Technology in Atlanta, GA. She stated that she had originally intended to apply to more out-of-state institutions, but the cost of attending those was high, and she felt that she would not be offered enough scholarship funds to offset the expense. She selected UCF because it was more affordable, offered her more financial awards, and had a strong engineering program. At the time Audrey submitted her applications, she was planning to major in engineering on a pre-med track, but she has since elected to double major in biomedical science and mathematics. Also similar to the other participants' experiences, Audrey received a mailer from The Burnett Honors College via the mail encouraging her to submit an application. She stated she did not know what an Honors College was at the time, but she looked at it as a way of distinguishing herself amongst her peers who would be seeking admission to medical schools in the future. Her thoughts about college life prior to starting her education at

UCF were that college was all everyone talked about in high school and that her entire life led up to this achievement. When she arrived on campus, she described the feeling as “surreal” because of the feelings of anticipation. From an academic perspective, Audrey believed that her experiences in the Honors College would be similar to those in her IB courses, but she stated that she really did not have a firm idea of what it would be like. She elected to live in an off-campus apartment during her freshman year because it was less expensive than living on campus, and she preferred to live alone and not have to share space.

For her first semester, Audrey elected to enroll in two honors courses, included Freshman Symposium. While she enjoyed the overall experience, she said that she felt some of the activities were “a little silly.” She acknowledged that they served an important purpose in the end because they were opportunities to get to know her peers, and she observed that while honors students tend to be friendly, they are not very extroverted, and therefore, they needed to be “forced” into making connections. She also appreciated the service learning experience as she attended a Title I institution in elementary school, and she felt that she was giving back and making a difference by participating in the project. Audrey stated that the other honors course she took in her first semester was her favorite because it was in line with her planned studies, and she enjoyed the smaller classroom environment as well as the peer and instructor interaction that afforded. She appreciated that TBHC frequently reached out across various media to provide students with information and resources, and she felt that she had the right level of support. One suggestion she made was that “because a lot of us in the Honors College are too proud to reach out...,” it might be useful to circulate information about the various resources available across the university that TBHC students could take advantage of beyond those offered in the college.

Audrey shared that she did not have as positive an experience with her non-honors courses. In one of them, she said that she had to teach herself in order to achieve the grade she desired. The instructor for that class did not provide assignments for practice, and the only grades were the two tests comprised of only 25 questions; Audrey found it unsettling to not know where she stood in the class until after the exams were graded. With 300 students enrolled in the course, she described feeling as though she was “in an open sea” and did not know which direction to go. In order to ensure that she was prepared for the tests, Audrey purchased a supplemental text with questions and practice tests to help her teach herself the material she needed to know. She felt another general education (gen eds) course she took outside of the Honors College was “obnoxiously easy.” She expressed that it angered her how simple it and another one of her gen eds classes were because she came to UCF to learn, not to waste her money being “spoon-fed” in subjects that lacked depth of content.

As in the case of her peers, Audrey shared that she did not need to spend time studying in high school except for doing some last minute preparation for the AP exams. She made adjustments to her way of thinking prior to starting her college classes, and she credited this as one of the reasons she was successfully academically speaking in her first semester. Her strategy is to take notes during class, then immediately create an outline of the material when she came home to use for study purposes. She planned to begin studying for each test at least four days prior to the date of the exam to allow herself plenty of time to prepare. As a self-described visual learner, she also found that it helped her retain information whenever she could create a chart or graph from her notes, so she looked for opportunities to consolidate materials in that form. Audrey liked the idea of study groups and did participate in a few, but only after she had spent

time studying the material herself first and felt she had a strong grasp of the information. She admitted that she is not the type of person who would walk up and ask someone to join a study group as she is introverted by nature.

In reaction to her final first semester grades, Audrey was pleased with them except for what she described as her “worst grade,” which was a “B+” in a non-honors course. She joked that she was “bitter about that B+” but she knew that it was coming as she had performed poorly on the first test. She had not prepared well for that test as she assumed that she knew the material from participating in her high school classes, so she since adopted a habit of being over-prepared; she would rather adjust downwards than have to play catch up for the rest of the semester to achieve the grades she wanted.

Reflecting back on her first semester, Audrey stated that it felt “surprisingly manageable,” and she realized that she could take on more work in the future. She planned to join a couple of clubs and organizations in her major areas of study and perhaps gain some experience as a volunteer. She shared that she felt very confident about her future in the Honors College, and she expressed enthusiasm in resuming her studies during her second semester.

Summary

This chapter has provided answers to the research questions posed at the beginning of the project and has presented the analysis of the data gathered from participant interviews. The final chapter will provide discussion of the results, implications of the study, and recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

The purpose of this research study was to understand the lived experiences of first-year Honors College students placed on academic probation after completing the first semester. In this chapter, the results revealed in the previous chapter will be discussed in more detail and recommendations will be made.

The analysis of the focal group of this study, first-year students on academic probation at the conclusion of their first semester in TBHC, revealed four common experiences. The first was that the students often placed blame on themselves for their probation status. In all cases, the students reflected on what they might have done differently that would have made a difference, whether it was to do more homework, utilize available resources, spend less time pursuing non-academic interests, become more organized, and/or stop procrastinating. These students also did not seem to have utilized the resources in and outside of TBHC offered unless it was mandatory, as in the case of the UCF Math Lab for those enrolled in certain courses. Several students felt that their schedules were problematic in that they had classes too early in the day, were overwhelmed with too many classes on a specific day of the week, or signed up for too many classes from the start. Finally, almost all of these students came in with AP, IB, and/or Dual Enrollment course credits and felt that they were already familiar with the material so they underestimated the amount of time they needed to commit to those courses to be successful; or, the students had “exempted out” of some classes, so they elected to take higher level courses and were unable to keep the pace with their classmates.

In many cases, these four shared meanings found in the analysis of the students placed on academic probation intersected with one another on occasion; for example, the placing blame on themselves for their inability to meet the Honors College GPA requirements appeared to demonstrate an introspective self-awareness at first, but in many cases, the students still shifted the burden of responsibility to others or felt the shortcomings were the result of some entity or occurrence outside of their control. They tied their motivation issues to the times and days their classes were scheduled and/or their disinterest in the subject; their overconfidence and overestimation of their knowledge based on high school learnings was sometimes blamed on the instructors because they did not teach it the “right” way or did not provide enough guidance to allow the students to be successful; their adjustments to study and preparation habits were belated in some cases because of the perception the students held that someone (whether it be TBHC or the individual course instructors) should have provided them with or notified them of existing resources to assist them in their scholarly efforts.

Sarah fell ill during her first semester and was unable to complete the term, but she noted that she spent so much time on her extracurricular interests that she wore herself down and was unable to maintain the pace while remaining current with her studies. As she shared, the cycle of trying to catch up with her coursework because she had dedicated so much time to her non-academic campus organization, studying for exams, and not getting much sleep were major contributors to her physical wellness. Chloe felt that she should have been given accommodation for her learning disability, but she stated that she did not want to file for one because the process to do so was overwhelming. Austin felt his academic effort was being judged too quickly by

TBHC: "...Honors College is like, 'What? You fell below a 3.0 or a 3.2 or whatever, yeah? You're on probation now. We don't care if this is your first semester.'"

In contrast, the students who ended their first semester in TBHC in good academic standing seemed to have circumnavigated these difficulties more easily, and in the cases where they took missteps, they generally did not shift responsibility elsewhere. As Michael remarked, "People always like to blame teachers; I never blame teachers. I find that they always seem to be totally on point... I've looked at the [TBHC degree] requirements and I see no problems with it." The non-probation group often cited their internal abilities as the reason they were successful – they were organized; they studied more regularly; they adjusted when their current strategies were not delivering the results expected. They were less focused on what TBHC wanted them to achieve and more focused on what they expected themselves to achieve. Emily stated:

I was a little disappointed because I knew I could have gotten 'A's' in those classes if I'd maybe spent a little more time in them, but I figured I got the grade I deserved for the time I put into the class, so that was okay.

Although Audrey expressed that she felt some resentment about the way her course was structured, where only the test grades counted so there was no room for error, she ultimately felt that she had "learned her lesson" and resolved to over-prepare for exams in the future.

Five commonalities were found in both groups of participants. Many of them were not knowledgeable about TBHC prior to being solicited to apply which suggests their enrollment in The Honors College was not something they planned for in advance. They all felt that interactions with the instructors in the classroom were critical to success, and they agreed that the

smaller class sizes offered in TBHC provided a significant benefit over their non-honors peers. None of these high-achieving students reported spending significant time studying in high school with the exception of “cramming” when necessary to pass an examination; although, it appeared that those students on academic probation were unable or unwilling to make the adjustments and/or changes to their habits as quickly as did their peers who ended the first semester in academic good standing. Most of the students in both sub-populations were most comfortable working independently and expressed challenges in reaching out to others. They felt that being a part of TBHC was a benefit in this sense as the more intimate classroom environments and sense of community encouraged them to forge relationships which sometimes led to the formation of study groups. Finally, while those students on academic probation and those in good standing described differing experiences with their honors courses, staff interactions, and support, they were in agreement that they were in the right place. The Burnett Honors College offered them benefits they would not have received elsewhere, and they all felt confident that they would successfully complete their undergraduate degrees with TBHC honors distinction.

Discussion and Implications

Although this study examined has limitations (noted in the following section), several implications that can be made from its findings. First, Stern’s (1966) “freshman myth” theory that most students matriculating to college for the first time arrive on campus with expectations that do not match the reality. Almost all of the students interviewed regardless of their academic standing as of the end of the first semester shared that their ideas of what college life would be like fell short of the actual experience. Most of the students believed that their ability to receive

good grades with minimal effort would continue; all found this assumption to be incorrect. Those students who recognized the need for change and adapted quickly were often more successful than those students who did not.

The instance of perfectionism in honors students was not discussed at length by any of the participants; however, a few of the students made inferences with regards to this idea. Audrey, who completed the first semester with a 3.796 said that the “B+” she received in her chemistry class was her “worst grade.” She laughed as she expressed that she was “bitter about” the grade, but she spent a significant amount of time talking through her frustrations with not receiving an “A” as she was so accustomed to achieving in the past. Michael also commented on his need to achieve perfect grades. He shared that he placed “internal pressure” on himself to maintain a perfect GPA. He presented his reason for setting this goal logically, “I get straight ‘A’s.’ Why do I? It’s because it’s the best option.” Sarah, one of the students on probation, had difficulty with letting go of her need to achieve perfection: “I’m a very big achiever. I want to do everything; I want to handle everything; I want it to be done right, perfectly. I’m trying to work on accepting the fact that sometimes I just can’t do it all...” Sarah’s admission seems to correlate with Parker and Adkins’ (1995) report that when the goals are unrealistic, the instance of perfectionism can be considered unhealthy from a psychological as well as physical perspective. Sarah’s extensive involvement in non-academic pursuits competed with her desire to earn good grades in all of her classes. She felt that she succumbed to pneumonia as a result of her efforts to “push through” and try to fit everything in without considering the effect her behaviors had on her physical well-being.

The majority of the literature and research focused on characteristics of honors students is concentrated in the K-12 environment or is used as a comparison: honors students versus non-honors students (Acterberg, 2005; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Hebert & McGee, 2007; Long & Lange, 2002; Rinn & Plucker, 2004). The participants in this study were all Honors College students; therefore, comparisons to non-honors peers could not be made. Several students mentioned certain words when describing their approach to their studies and/or their feelings about their status as honors students, many of which were included from the literature in Table 1: Characteristics of Collegiate Honors Students. In addition, the observations made during the interview sessions with respect to verbal and non-verbal cues included characteristics such as: achieving, advanced, ambitious, autonomous, committed to learning, high ability, independent thinkers, introverted/shy, optimistic, overachieving, passionate, persistent, self-confident, self-directed, smarter, and well-spoken.

The literature suggests that Honors Colleges provide students attending a university greater academic challenge and several other perks (Bratt, 2010; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Hebert & McGee, 2007; NCHC, 2005; Rinn 2003; 2006; Spurrier, 2008). The participants in this study named several perceived benefits in attending TBHC. Many of the students elected to attend TBHC because it was a more prestigious option than attending the general public university, and they felt that a degree with Honors College distinction would differentiate them in the graduate school admissions pool and/or job market in the future. All of the students mentioned that they enjoyed the smaller class sizes and more one-on-one interaction with faculty and peers, another signature offering of Honors Colleges (Hebert & McGee, 2007). This was not only considered by the participants to be an advantage over their peers, but they often

commented that it helped in facilitating learning and provided more interactive participation. A few of the students elected to live in the specified honors housing, but they did not remark on whether that arrangement contributed to their first semester experience. The other “perks” as the students noted were related to the ability to register earlier than non-honors peers and the physical presence of a computer lab that allowed them unlimited free access.

One of the most important factors that several studies have found to be an accurate predictor of collegiate academic success is the student’s high school GPA (Feldman, 1992; McDonald & Gawoski, 1979; Roufagalas, 1993). While there was a slight difference in average high school GPA between the students on academic probation (4.16) and the students in academic good standing (4.29), both groups were above the university-wide average (3.89). The results of Campbell and Fuqua’s (2008) study of 336 honors students found that the most significant factors predictive of successful honors program completion included not only high school GPA, but also first semester GPA. The difference between these two groups is more pronounced when those measures are averaged. Students on academic probation’s GPA averaged a 2.56 after their first semester while those not on probation averaged a 3.8 GPA. The research implies that this measure could be predictive of whether the probation students are likely to successfully complete the Honors College program requirements or not. Another factor found to be linked to academic achievement in college that was not discussed in the literature review is class attendance (Devadoss & Flotz, 1996; Launius, 1997; Moore, 2003; 2006; Street, 1975; Thomas & Higbee, 2000; Thompson, 2002). Many of the students on academic probation reported that they were unmotivated to attend classes for various reasons; while scholars caution that the correlation does not necessary lead to the cause, they emphasize that attendance in class

can increase the probability of earning a higher grade (Launius, 1997; Moore, 2003; 2006; Romer, 1993; Wiley, 1992). The students on academic probation mentioned that they missed more than a few classes over the course of the first semester; thus, poor attendance may have been a factor in their lower GPAs.

As Badenhausen (2010) asserted, honors students seem less likely than their non-honors peers to seek assistance when they may need it. One of the major themes in the academic probation student group was that they did not utilize and/or have knowledge of available resources. One of the students seemed to link why he did not elect to seek help to Badenhausen's second reason: they never have had to ask for assistance in the past and may not know how to do so. Specifically, Austin stated that he was a "figure it out yourself" kind of person, so he attempted to work through his problems on his own. Other students noted that they knew there were resources but did not know what they were or where to find them. In these cases, the students did not take initiative to locate resources and seemed to expect a member of the institution to provide them with direction. When they did interact with TBHC advisors, staff, or faculty members, they did not exhibit outward signs of distress; Walsh (2010) noted that honors students who know that they are in trouble can sometimes hide their concerns and appear to be upbeat and positive. As Irwin (2010) observed, most collegiate honors students have never failed in any academic setting, and they are quite possibly, ill-equipped to handle it. She also noted that failure can be a good teacher: once the student fails and he or she has dealt with the consequences of that failure, that student is more likely to better anticipate and handle similar situations going forward. In the case of the students in TBHC on academic probation, they made comments that hinted at this shift in their mentality. Adam said, "I'm very confident right now

only because I have seen what I did wrong, changed it, and not it's working how I thought it would." When asked about her academic future, Sarah said, "I'm definitely not daunted by it." She later added her thoughts in moving forward in TBHC, "This is how it happened last semester. That happened. That's okay, but don't let it happen again."

In contrast, there were some research studies conducted that seemed to contradict the findings of this investigation (Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Boretz, 2012; Damashek, 2003; Hutson, 2006; James & Graham, 2010; McGrath & Burd, 2012; Wlazelek & Coulter, 1999). With a few exceptions, the characteristics of students on academic probation in these studies did not seem to be present in the students on honors academic probation in TBHC. One of the reasons could be that these attributes were intended to apply to a general collegiate population versus an Honors College population. Another may be the way the questions were presented to the students in this study. Elements such as socioeconomic status and employment obligations were not discussed; the demographic data collected was minimal. Students were not asked to reveal any anxiety, self-esteem, or ethical conflicts which were listed as individual factors present in students who were not meeting academic standards. In addition, all of the students in the study had similar academic factors in terms of high GPAs and entrance exam scores; the main difference between the two groups in the study was how well and how quickly they modified their academic habits during the course of the first semester.

All of the students who participated in the study were solicited by TBHC to apply; therefore, the literature related to the reasons students decide to enroll in an Honors College is not as relevant. Most of the benefits of TBHC were discovered by the students after they began their first semester; the main reason the students cited as the reason they decided to apply was

the perception that a degree from an Honors College would be more valuable than a degree from the university without honors distinction.

While there were several honors student characteristics found to be present in this investigation's sample, there were several that were noticeably lacking (Acterberg, 2005; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013; Hebert & McGee, 2007; Long & Lange, 2002; Rinn & Plucker, 2004). In the case of the students on academic probation, the focus of this study, many of the anticipatory and motivational characteristics were not observed. For example, curious, highly motivated, imaginative, inspired, resourceful, self-disciplined, strategic, strong focus, strong self-control, and successful were not descriptors used by the probationary students and were not observed or inferred from the interview sessions.

With respect to Boretz's (2012) theories related to the gifted underachiever phenomenon, most of these attributes were not found to be present in the participants interviewed. Boretz emphasized their close relationship with parents, pressures placed on them to succeed, and overscheduled as characteristics of this type of student. In this study, only a couple of students mentioned their parents, and in every case, when those students on academic probation were asked about the reaction to this status, there was no mention of external pressures or disappointed reactions from others. There was one instance of overscheduling, but that was not considered to be a major theme identified in this sample.

Finally, with respect to the information about non-completion of honors, there were some marked differences. Some of the literature suggests that students experienced a loss of self-identity as a "smart kid" because of their poor grades (Campbell & Fuqua, 2008), but in this case, the "failure" only seemed to re-double the commitment of the students on academic

probation to be successful. Two of the students in the study specifically mentioned that they were pleased to have the chance to “redeem” themselves and regain good academic standing in TBHC, a goal which they noted that they fully intended to accomplish.

The findings in this study adds to the research and literature in higher education as it is focused on an understudied population in unique circumstances. Studies concerning postsecondary honors students from the voice of the students themselves are rare (Achterberg, 2005; Frost, 2011; Goodstein & Szarek, 2013), and academic probation at the collegiate level has received little scholarly attention (Arcand, 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2011; 2012; Henry, 1972; McGrath & Burd, 2012). The results provide some student perspectives that may be of interest to those examining such topics as retention, recruiting, and first-year transition. Advisors may also note the importance of their roles in working with freshmen, particularly those underclassmen students who come in with a specific plan of study in mind to ensure that the students are following the appropriate curriculum path.

Limitations

As noted throughout this document, the participants in this study were limited to first-year, first semester, traditional aged Honors College students with no previous postsecondary experience. Six of these students were on honors academic probation at the conclusion of the fall semester in 2014; four were in academic good standing. Those students who were non-traditional aged, who were on academic probation beyond the first semester of their freshman year, and/or who had previous college experience were excluded.

The selection process for the participants is also a limitation as they were either solicited to volunteer via email communication or at the request of the Dean of TBHC. The minimum sample size needed for the academic probation student group was six; this was met after three separate emails were sent from three different members of TBHC. The use of volunteers can be limiting as they “can be biased in particular ways” (Liamputtong & Ezzy, 2005, p. 48).

Finally, the data used in this study was gathered at the Honors College within one university located in the southeastern United States; therefore, it is possible that honors students’ experiences and characteristics may differ from those at other postsecondary institutions in other geographical locations.

Recommendations

Some specific recommendations for Honors College and Honors Programs can be drawn from the previously presented results and discussion. One suggestion would be to review in-state marketing efforts. Although all of the students except for one completed high school in the state of Florida, few were aware of the existence and purpose of The Burnett Honors College. Some ideas for better circulating information include use of social media, recruiting visits, campus tour invitations, and targeted mailings to rising high school juniors and seniors enrolled in advanced courses. Based upon the responses that all students had some difficulty with the adjustment from high school to college, Honors Colleges and Honors Programs can review their onboarding and first semester practices to determine if they are meeting the transitional needs of their incoming freshmen populations. Honors Colleges and Honors Programs may wish to utilize a modified version of the research questions and/or interview protocol in advising sessions with honors

students who are struggling academically, especially when underperformance is discovered early in their academic careers. This may provide advisors and administrators with valuable information and insights into their specific student population. Finally, those responsible for the selection of honors faculty as well as the faculty members themselves can be made aware of the critical role the instructors play in creating an atmosphere conducive to learning for academically gifted students.

Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research in the area of honors students on academic probation given the dearth of scholarly information available on this specific topic. Similar studies could be conducted in university Honors Colleges or Honors Programs in other locations to determine if there may be differences in student experiences by institution and/or geography.

Information can be collected from advising sessions with students on academic probation to determine if there are trends within the program that can be identified. Those issues can then be examined more closely to determine if there are ways to assist in resolving or reducing the severity or frequency of those student concerns. Honors College recruitment efforts can also be evaluated by soliciting feedback from incoming students about their previous knowledge of the program and their ease of adjustment from high school to college.

Questionnaires can be developed to administer to incoming honors students to capture their expectations of what college will be like; a follow-up questionnaire could then be administered to gather their impressions after the end of the first semester or first year in the

Honors College. These results could provide insight to recruiters and first-year experience staff on what areas they may need to specifically focus on or dedicate more time to in their student onboarding sessions.

Since one of the major differences between the students on academic probation and those in good standing included lack of motivation, there is opportunity for further exploration of this concept via quantitative analysis. Specifically, the students in academic jeopardy more often described achievement motivation while the students who earned better grades during the first semester of college mentioned mastery motivation. A future study could apply accepted theories and instruments in a quantitative analysis to better understand these differences in motivation.

Conclusion

The transition from high school to college often brings many exciting and stressful changes to the students who elect to continue their education at the postsecondary level. Honors students often come from academically successful backgrounds where they have positively differentiated themselves from their peers, but when they join an Honors College, they are surrounded by those who also thrived in elementary and secondary school environments. In addition to the typical stressors involved in making significant life changes during the transition from high school to college, some honors students may also face increased demands and experience a higher level of competition than they have encountered in the past. As a result, these students may find themselves in unfamiliar territory after the completion of one semester in an Honors College: on academic probation.

Universities and colleges are more aware of the costs related to early student departure than ever before, and large-scale efforts have been undertaken at many institutions to retain undergraduate students from the high-level institution-wide perspective down to the individual colleges and programs. Evidence shows that the first year of college is the most precarious as a larger percentage of students abandon their pursuit of higher education between the freshman and sophomore year than at any other time during their collegiate careers. Given the stakes for both the institutions and the students, gaining insights about the reasons for early student departure is critical in the efforts being made to retain students through the first year and beyond.

The motivation for conducting this study was to better understand the experiences of Honors College students placed on honors academic probation after completing one semester of university courses. Students who are not meeting the honors degree requirements after the first semester are more likely to discontinue their participation in the Honors College than those who are in academic good standing. In order to succeed in retaining these students who did not perform at the expected level, the reasons why from the student perspective is useful in determining the proper course of action.

In the case of the Burnett Honors College within the University of Central Florida, the six students in academic jeopardy still maintain confidence in their abilities to complete their degree requirements with the honors distinction. The early identification of these students coupled with intensive advising based upon an understanding of their lived experiences has the potential to benefit these driven students and others in similar circumstances and ultimately lead to what the student and the Honors College are striving to achieve: graduation.

APPENDIX A: TBHC ENTERING FRESHMEN DATA – FALL 2014

| Name | Ethnicity | YOB | GPA | HS GPA | Class Rank | SAT/ACT | DE? | Credits | Type HS |
|-------------|------------------|------------|----------------------|---------------|-------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|----------------|
| Chloe | Multi-Racial | 1996 | 2.923 | 4.463 | 3% | 30 | N | 11 | Public |
| Sarah | White | 1996 | 1.6 | 3.8 | 30% | 1370 | N | 0 | Public |
| Mia | White | 1995 | 3.250 (Hon 2.000) | 4.47 | 4% | 1410 | N | 9 | Public |
| Austin | White | 1995 | 2.727 | 4.022 | 5% | 1330 | N | 9 | Public |
| Adam | Hispanic | 1996 | 2.6 | 3.919 | 2% | 1320 | Y | 13 | Public |
| Ethan | Asian | 1997 | 2.25 | 4.286 | 17% | 33 | N | 6 | Public |
| Alexis | Hispanic | 1996 | 4 | 4.583 | 2% | 30 | N | 10 | Public |
| Michael | Hispanic | 1996 | 4 | 4.543 | 2% | 1470 | N | 9 | Public |
| Brian | Multi-Racial | 1996 | 2.938 | 4.136 | 10% | 1390 | Y | 19 | Public |
| Emily | Asian | 1996 | 3.462 | 4.364 | 6% | 33 | N | 13 | Public |
| Audrey | White | 1995 | 3.769 | 4.688 | 1% | 31 | N | 10 | Public |

**APPENDIX B: EMAILS SENT TO SOLICIT PARTICIPANT
VOLUNTEERS**

Email 1: Sent by Brandy Blue on February 12, 2015:

Email Sent From The Burnett Honors College Authored by Marty Robinson to First-Year, First Semester Honors College Students to Solicit Volunteers for Study

Dear Burnett Honors College Student,

My name is Marty Robinson, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Higher Education in the College of Education and Human Performance who will be conducting a study about Honors College students' experiences and perceptions following the conclusion of the end of the students' first year, first semester (Fall 2014). You are receiving this email as you are currently enrolled in your second semester (Spring 2015) in TBHC at UCF and are at least 18 years of age.

In order to gain more insight into this topic, I would like to solicit volunteers to participate in a one-time, one-on-one, audio-recorded interview, which will take place on the main UCF campus (either within TBHC or the Education Complex). The approximate length of the interview is expected to be forty-five minutes to one hour. Your identity will remain confidential.

Your insights regarding your first semester in TBHC would be very much appreciated in allowing me to conduct this research and to share your experiences with the administration of TBHC. A summary of the findings of the study will be made available to you as well.

Please reply directly to me (Marty.Robinson@knights.ucf.edu) no later than February 20, 2015 to volunteer for this study. Your time and consideration is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Marty Robinson

Faculty Advisor: Dr. David Boote: David.Boote@ucf.edu

Email 2 Sent by Rex Roberts on February 20, 2015:

Dear Honors student,

As a student currently on Honors Probation, it is our desire to see you improve your grades and ultimately graduate with Honors! As part of this effort, we are urging you to assist Marty Robinson, who is researching first year students on Honors Probation for her doctoral dissertation. We believe that her findings will assist you and future students like you. If you are able to help, please contact her at Marty.Robinson@knights.ucf.edu. The details are below. Thank you!

Email Sent From The Burnett Honors College Authored by Marty Robinson to First-Year, First Semester Honors College Students to Solicit Volunteers for Study

Dear Burnett Honors College Student,

My name is Marty Robinson, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Higher Education in the College of Education and Human Performance who will be conducting a study about Honors College students' experiences and perceptions following the conclusion of the end of the students' first year, first semester (Fall 2014). You are receiving this email as you are currently enrolled in your second semester (Spring 2015) in TBHC at UCF and are at least 18 years of age.

In order to gain more insight into this topic, I would like to solicit volunteers to participate in a one-time, one-on-one, audio-recorded interview, which will take place on the main UCF campus (either within TBHC or the Education Complex). The approximate length of the interview is expected to be forty-five minutes to one hour. Your identity will remain confidential.

Your insights regarding your first semester in TBHC would be very much appreciated in allowing me to conduct this research and to share your experiences with the administration of TBHC. A summary of the findings of the study will be made available to you as well.

Please reply directly to me (Marty.Robinson@knights.ucf.edu) no later than February 20, 2015 to volunteer for this study. Your time and consideration is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Marty Robinson

Faculty Advisor: Dr. David Boote: David.Boote@ucf.edu

Email 3 Sent by Associate Dean Martin DuPuis on March 4, 2015

Dear Honors student,

As a student currently on Honors Probation, it is our desire to see you improve your grades and ultimately graduate with Honors! As part of this effort, we encourage you to meet with Marty Robinson, who is researching first year students on Honors Probation for her doctoral dissertation. We believe that her findings will assist you and future students like you. If you are able to help, please contact her at Marty.Robinson@knights.ucf.edu. The details are can be found below in her email Thank you!

Martin DuPuis
Associate Dean

Dear Burnett Honors College Student,

My name is Marty Robinson, and I am a Ph.D. candidate in Higher Education in the College of Education and Human Performance who will be conducting a study about Honors College students' experiences and perceptions following the conclusion of the end of the students' first year, first semester (Fall 2014). You are receiving this email as you are currently enrolled in your second semester (Spring 2015) in TBHC at UCF and are at least 18 years of age.

In order to gain more insight into this topic, I am soliciting volunteers to participate in a one-time, one-on-one, audio-recorded interview, which will take place on the main UCF campus. The approximate length of the interview is expected to be forty-five minutes to one hour. Your identity will remain confidential.

Your insights regarding your first semester in TBHC would be very much appreciated in allowing me to conduct this research and to share your experiences with the administration of TBHC. My project has received IRB approval and a summary of the findings of the study will be made available to you as well.

Please reply directly to me (Marty.Robinson@knights.ucf.edu) no later than March 15, 2015 to volunteer for this study. Your time and consideration are greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Marty Robinson

Faculty Advisor: Dr. David Boote: David.Boote@ucf.edu

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

**Marty Robinson – Interview Guide for Dissertation Study:
The Lived Experiences of First-Year, First Semester Honors College Students on Academic Probation**

| Data | Question | Prompts |
|---|---|--|
| Expectations prior to University and Honors College experience | Prior to arriving at UCF, what did you expect or envision for your experiences as a first year student in the Honors College? | Silence What did you mean...? Can you give more detail...? |
| Thick description of experiences during first semester | Please describe your experiences during your first semester at the Honors College. | Do you have any examples? Could you say more about...? What happened next? |
| Experiences after learning academic status. | What were your experiences when you learned your grades from last semester? | What did he/she say...? What did he/she do...? |
| Attributions about academic status | To what do you attribute to your experiences last semester? | Do you mean that...? Is it correct that...? |
| Meanings or beliefs about experiences | What does it mean to you to be where you are academically at the end of your first semester in TBHC? | |
| | How have your experiences affected yours view of postsecondary education and your academic-related future? | |
| Beliefs about preparedness | How prepared are you to move forward in the program? | |
| Member check | Paraphrase what I hear as the central experiences and beliefs: 1. main experiences that affected last semester 2. attributions about reasons for academic outcomes 3. meaning attributed to experiences And ask for a response. | |

APPENDIX D: APPROVED IRB SUBMISSION

| | |
|---|--|
|  | <p>Institutional Review Board</p> <p>University of Central Florida</p> <p><i>Human Research Protocol & Instructions (1/2015)</i></p> |
|---|--|

1) Protocol Title

An examination of the lived experiences of first-semester, first-year Honors College students placed on academic probation

2) Principal Investigator

- Mary-Margaret (“Marty”) Robinson

3) Objectives

The purpose of this study is to examine the lived experiences of first-year, first semester University of Central Florida (UCF) Burnett Honors College (TBHC) students who have been placed on academic probation after the Fall 2014 semester to better understand how they perceive this circumstance and how they cope. A small sample of TBHC students in good academic standing will be included to compare experiences.

The research question that this study will address is: What are the textural features, if any, among the lived experiences of first-year honors students placed on academic probation?

In addition, the following research sub-questions will be addressed:

1. What were the students’ perspectives of their first year of college and life as an Honors College student prior to the start of their first semester?
2. What do the first-year honors students attribute to their academic status at the completion of the first semester? What experiences do they specifically recall that led to their current circumstances?
3. What meaning do TBHC students attribute to their academic status? How do they plan to maintain or attain good status going forward?
4. How has the experience of being a TBHC student affected their view of postsecondary education and their academic-related future?

Information gathered in this project will be utilized in the principal investigator’s dissertation and possibly in future publications. The results of the research will be shared with the administrative staff and faculty of the UCF Burnett Honors College, but it will not be shared directly with the study participants.

4) Background

During the early 1900s, Edmund Husserl introduced the notion of “philosophy as rigorous science,” which he termed phenomenology (Churchill & Wertz, 2014). It was his belief that science should extend the boundaries of what is found in the physical world to include human experience as equally critical information, as description in place of explanation would be the best method for identifying the vital components of the conscious experience. Husserl established this alternative in an effort to produce a more genuine understanding with its foundation in the lived experience of the subjects. This seminal work has been largely accepted, particularly in the discipline of psychology, and has been expanded upon by numerous researchers since it was introduced, most notably, Clark Moustakas and John Creswell (Churchill & Wertz, 2014). The intent of the investigator of this study is to utilize what Creswell (2013) describes as Hermeneutic Phenomenology wherein the researcher reflects on the essential themes that emerge from the data collected (in this case, interviews) and then develops a more robust description of the phenomenon via interpretation of the meaning of the lived experiences.

Research on this specific topic (honors college students on probation) is extremely limited. There are several studies related to over-achieving students who have a “perfectionist” approach (Adderholt-Elliott & Eller, 1989; Balduf, 2009; Frost, 2011; McCoach & Siegle, 2003; Mendalgio, 2007; Neumeister, 2007; Neumeister, 2004; Parker & Adkins, 1995a; Parker & Adkins, 1995b; Parker & Mills, 1996); chronicling of the emergence and history of honors colleges (Aydelotte, 1946; Guzy, 1999; Rinn, 2006; 2003; Matthews, Peters, & Housand, 2012); characteristics and challenges of Honors College students (Achterburg, 2005; Baker, McNeil, & Siryk, 1985; Clark, 2000; Gerrity, 1993; Hébert & McBee, 2007; Otero & Spurrier, 2005; Pflaum, Pascarella, & Duby, 1985; Siegle, Rubenstein, Pollard, & Romey, 2009); college students placed on probation (Arcand, 2013; 2012; Arcand & LeBlanc, 2012; Boretz, 2012; Bettinger & Long, 2004); and first-semester and/or first-year experience (Barefoot, 1993; Gardner, 1986; Gardner, Siegel, & Cutright, 2001; Gordon & Grites, 1984; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, Terenzini, & Wolfe, 1986; Tinto, 2000; Upcraft & Gardner, 1989); however, there has not been a phenomenological study performed specifically on Honors College students in their first-semester, first-year who are faced with the reality of academic probation from their perspective.

This research has the potential to assist in building a foundation to aid in the understanding of the lived experience(s) of academically high-performing students who are placed on probation after their first semester in college. In addition, gaining some insight regarding this population may also assist administrators, advisors, and faculty working with them, which could lead to modifications to the resources available, support services provided, and even the program itself.

5) Setting of the Human Research

- Interviews with participants will be conducted in a conference room or office within the Education Complex or the Burnett Honors College on the UCF main campus.

6) Resources available to conduct the Human Research

- The Burnett Honors College will provide the researcher access to a pool of current TBHC students meeting the criteria (first year, first semester TBHC students on academic probation and first year, first semester TBHC students in good academic standing) with whom she will conduct interviews.
- A memo written by the researcher (see Attachment B) will be sent to solicit volunteers from each pool, and TBHC will send the memo to the two targeted populations with a response deadline. Potential participants will be identified from the responses based on the criteria for participation provided above. Interviews will take place between January - February 2015, and each interview will last between 45-60 minutes.
- The primary investigator, a current Ph.D. candidate in the field of Higher Education, has developed all protocols (see attachments) for this study and will conduct all interviews with participants for the duration of this study.
- The research will be conducted in private offices rooms in the UCF Burnett Honors College or in the Education Complex.
- The audio recording equipment that will be used is an H4 Next, Zoom model, 24-bit/96kHz with high definition audio that is password protected.
- Transcriptions (via a professional transcription service) will be available to successfully analyze the information obtained from the THBC participants' sessions.

7) Study Design

Main Research Question:

What are the textural features, if any, among the lived experiences of first-year honors students placed on academic probation?

Please see Attachment A [Appendix C] for the participant-focused questions that will be asked of the participants during each interview.

a) Recruitment Methods:

- University of Central Florida Burnett Honors College students to be interviewed will come from a population of current students.

- The ideal number of participant for this project is $n=6-12$, determined from the review of literature regarding qualitative phenomenological interview protocols (Creswell, 2013; Finlay, 2008).
 - The first group will consist of $n=6-12$ TBHC first year students who are identified by TBHC as on academic probation (with a GPA of a minimum of 2.0) following the conclusion of the Fall 2014 semester.
 - The other group will consist of $n=3-4$ TBHC first year students who are in good academic standing following the conclusion of the Fall 2014 semester.
- b) Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:
 - Participants must be traditional-aged, have been admitted to UCF and the Burnett Honors College, began their studies by the Fall 2014 semester start date (August 18, 2014), are first time in college students, and are still currently enrolled at UCF. The researcher will work with TBHC to select volunteers by examining the current THBC demographics with respect to gender and ethnicity in order to provide reflective demographics if possible in the purposeful sample of students that will be used in the study.
- c) Study Endpoints:
 - Data collection will take place during January and February 2015; data analysis will occur in February and March 2015.
- d) Procedures involved in the Human Research:
 - The study will include semi-structured interview sessions with sub-populations of the two identified groups within the TBHC. The researcher will follow the data analysis methods recommended by Moustakas (1994). The faculty advisor (Dr. David Boote) will serve as an external reviewer to assist in the analysis and avoid bias with respect to the researcher's findings. As such, he will have access to the transcribed interview documentation, but this will occur after any and all identifying information of the participants has been removed to ensure confidentiality.
- e) Data management:
 - Any digital recordings will be stored on a password-protected computer in a locked office. The interviews will not ask participants to self-identify during the interview, thus helping to preserve the confidentiality of each participant. They will be transcribed by a professional service after any identifying information has been removed. Transcripts will be returned to the researcher on a password-protect or secure webpage; they will be maintained on a computer that is password protected and kept in a locked office. An alias will be assigned to each participant in the transcripts, and digital recordings will be erased.
- f) Provisions to monitor the data for the safety of participants (Required when Human Research involves more than minimal risk to participants):

- N/A

g) Withdrawal of participants:

- Participants may elect to withdrawal at any time from the study with no penalty, as will be included on the solicitation memo and the informed consent form.

8) Risks to participants

- There are no perceived risks to students who will take part in this study. Participants are not required to answers any questions that may make them feel uncomfortable; this will also be included in the informed consent form, and it will clear to the students that they may chose not to answer any inquiry.

9) Potential direct benefits to participants

- There is no direct benefit to students associated with this research; however, future benefits to students may include options for further research to clarify procedures and support services for a successful honors experience. Students may gain knowledge of the qualitative research processes.

10) Provisions to protect the privacy interests of participants

- All interviews will take place in a private setting on the main campus of UCF. The recording device used for the interviews will be uploaded via USB cable immediately following the conclusion of the session, saved on a password protected and secure computer, and then erased from the recorder itself. The interviews will be transcribed by a professional service after any identifying information has been removed. Transcripts will be returned to the researcher on a password-protect or secure webpage; they will be maintained on a computer that is password protected and kept in a locked office. Additionally, pseudonyms will be used for all transcripts and in all data reporting.

11) Provisions to maintain the confidentiality of data

- All digital recordings will be kept on a password-protected, secure computer. The interviews will not ask participants to self-identify during the interview, thus helping to preserve the confidentiality of each participant. They will be transcribed by a professional service after any identifying information has been removed. Transcripts will be returned to the researcher on a password-protect or secure webpage; they will be maintained on a computer that is password protected and kept in a locked office. Additionally, aliases will be used for all transcripts and in all data reporting.

12) Consent process

- All participants will be provided with an informed consent form.

13) Sharing of results with participants

- The results of this research will not be shared directly with the participants.

APPENDIX E: IRB HUMAN SUBJECTS PERMISSION LETTER



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1**
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Mary-Margaret G. Robinson**

Date: **February 11, 2015**

Dear Researcher:

On 02/11/2015, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination
Project Title: The lived experiences of first-year, first semester honors college students on academic probation
Investigator: Mary-Margaret G Robinson
IRB Number: SBE-15-11007
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 02/11/2015 03:29:26 PM EST

IRB Coordinator

APPENDIX F: SUMMARY EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH



SUMMARY EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: The Lived Experiences of First-Year, First Semester Honors College Students

Principal Investigator: M.G. (“Marty”) Robinson, Ph.D. Candidate

Faculty Supervisor: Dr. David Boote

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

Introduction: Researchers at the University of Central Florida (UCF) study many topics. To do this, we need the help of people who agree to take part in a research study. You are being invited to take part in a research study which will include about 12-24 Burnett Honors College students in their first year who have completed the first semester (Fall 2014). You have been asked to take part in this research study because you are a first year TBHC student admitted during the Fall of 2014. You must be 18 years of age or older to be included in the research study.

The person doing this research is M.G. Robinson, a Ph.D. candidate in the Higher Education program in the College of Education and Human Performance at UCF. Because the researcher is a Ph.D. student, she is being guided by Dr. David Boote, a UCF faculty member and advisor in the UCF College of Education and Human Development.

What you should know about a research study:

- Someone will explain this research study to you.
- A research study is something you volunteer for.
- Whether or not you take part is up to you.
- You should take part in this study only because you want to.
- You can choose not to take part in the research study.
- You can agree to take part now and later change your mind.
- Whatever you decide it will not be held against you.
- Feel free to ask all the questions you want before you decide.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose and objectives of this research study are as follows:

1. Identify student perceptions of their first year, first semester of Honors College prior to enrollment.
2. Identify students' reasoning for academic status.
3. Record students' self-identification of coping skills with respect to their current academic status.
4. Provide students' descriptions of THBC experience categorized by academic status.

What you will be asked to do in the study:

You will be asked for your time and permission to be interviewed on one occasion by the principal investigator in a one-on-one setting. The recorded interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes during which you will be asked semi-structured questions with regards to your experiences as a first year, first semester student in TBHC at UCF.

You do not have to answer every question and will not be negatively affected if you skip questions.

Location:

The interview session will take place on the main campus of UCF in a private office or meeting room located either in the Burnett Honors College or within the Education Complex.

Time required:

We expect that the interview will last approximately 45-60 minutes outside of class time.

Audio taping:

You will be audio taped during this study. If you do not want to be audio taped, you will not be able to participate in the study. Digital recordings will be uploaded to a secure computer kept in a locked, safe place. The recording will be erased once the study is completed. Transcripts will be generated by a third-party professional service after any and all identifying information has been removed to ensure confidentiality. Aliases will be assigned to participants for data analysis and reporting purposes.

Risks:

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks or discomforts involved in taking part in this study.

Benefits:

We cannot promise any benefits to you or others from your taking part in this research. However, possible benefits include changes to practices and/or support services offered to Honors College students in the future.

Confidentiality:

We will limit your personal data collected in this study to people who have a need to review this information. We cannot promise complete secrecy.

Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:

If you have questions, concerns, or complaints, or think the research has hurt you, please contact M.G. Robinson, Graduate Student, Higher Education Program, College of Education and Human Performance, (704) 497-3272 (email: marty.robinson@knights.ucf.edu) or Dr. David Boote, Faculty Supervisor, College of Education and Human Performance at (407) 823-2233 or via email at David.Boote@ucf.edu.

Withdrawing from the study:

If you decide to opt out of the study, contact the investigator (M.G. Robinson) via the communication channels listed above so that the investigator can include another volunteer and remove any information you have provided to that point from the study. Please note that the person in charge of the research study can remove you from the research study without your approval.

IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint: Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

**APPENDIX G: PARTICIPANT TRANSCRIPTIONS: TBHC STUDENTS
ON ACADEMIC PROBATION**

Mia

- S1 00:00 Okay. Let's get started. As I mentioned, this study is intended to get a better understanding and insight into your first semester experience as a first time in college student in the Honors College at UCF. So, can you tell me about before you came to UCF - the Honors College - as you were looking at different institutions, what were your expectations coming in?
- S2 00:31 In general, about the university experience?
- S1 00:35 Yes, what did you think it was going to be like to come to university from high school?
- S2 00:39 I knew that it would be more difficult to choose classes to take. In high school, most of the classes were a requirement for graduation. But then moving onto college, obviously, you have to select an individualized major, and there are different general ed classes that you would want to take based on your major. I already had a lot of Gen Ed classes covered coming in, but I didn't necessarily know - and I still don't necessarily know - what my official, declared major is.
- S1 01:10 When you say Gen Ed classes are you talking about AP? Or are you dual enrollment? What was the--?
- S2 01:16 No, just the classes you need to take to get your AA - pre-reqs for your major. Coming in, that was my expectation that that would be the biggest challenge, just picking the right classes to take so that I didn't end up having to take something again that would've satisfied earlier criteria.
- S1 01:41 So that was one of your concerns coming in. What about the transition from being in the kind of environment? Were you in a small school, a big school, what was the--
- S2 01:51 I was in a fairly large school. We had about 2,000 students. I was involved in a ton of extracurricular activities at a fairly high level. I was on the golf team, we won the state tournament once, and were runners-up another year. I played two instruments at the All-State level.
- S1 02:11 What'd you play?
- S2 02:11 I played viola and oboe.
- S1 02:14 Wow.

- S2 02:16 Coming into college, I wasn't sure which instrument I was going to play. I was planning on double-majoring in music performance and something else. So that was also a big transition, just narrowing down an instrument. But I actually felt like, scheduling-wise, college would end up being easier because I wouldn't have the golf burden of having to practice that every day, and I would be able to pick one instrument and focus on that. So theoretically, my schedule would be cut down to a much more focused branch.
- S1 02:46 So that was the expectation. Are you from Florida? Are you from around this area? Or from-- ?
- S2 02:53 My mom's parents are from Melbourne, so I lived in Melbourne since first grade. I lived in Montana for a couple years before that.
- S1 03:03 That's quite a change.
- S2 03:04 I was born in Jacksonville, so I'm from Florida.
- S1 03:11 Were there other institutions or other colleges that you looked at?
- S2 03:19 Yes.
- S1 03:19 What were those places?
- S2 03:20 I looked at Appalachian State in Boone, North Carolina. That was my first choice. I did not get the scholarship money I needed in order to go there. I also looked at Florida State University, and I cut it down to the wires as far as sending in my official acceptance to UCF. I was so torn between those two schools, mainly because FSU has a great reputation for their Music School, and I was offered more scholarship money there for music. And they have an Actuarial Science program that's nationally accredited. I think they're the only School in Florida that has that program, and that's what I was leaning towards as my second Major at the time. But I ended up getting more money over all to come to UCF. Like I said before, I'm still not exactly sure what I want my major to be. And I felt that UCF would offer me the opportunity to go any route, whereas I felt at FSU I'd be limited more to liberal arts majors.
- S1 04:22 All right. Were you looking at the Honors Colleges at either of those?
- S2 04:27 I actually was brought into FSU for scholarships that were specifically within the Honors College. I think this is the first year they did it. So I went in for a round of interviews, but I wasn't selected. So that was the deciding factor.

- S1 05:12 But App State was your first choice, a much smaller school than the other two that you applied to and pursued in the end. What was the rationale behind that?
- S2 05:28 Size wasn't so much an important factor to me. I was more looking at the programs offered and the ability to say, "Hey, I don't really like this major. I'd like to change to something totally different," which I don't know what that may be. But really, all three schools seemed to offer that choice. And I knew the orchestra director at App State, and got to be pretty familiar with viola professor, so those were also connected vibe things. And I just love the area.
- S1 06:04 It is beautiful. So when you applied to UCF, did you know about the Honors College right away, or were you solicited? How did it work?
- S2 06:21 I think I got something in the mail based on-- I want to say based on my SAT scores. Maybe it was PSAT scores, I'm not sure. Basically, if you apply at the Honors College you would be accepted, and that was definitely something I wanted to do. So, I'm pretty sure I would have applied even if I hadn't got anything in the mail.
- S1 06:45 So you knew about it before? All right. What were your expectations about what the Honors College would be like before you came into it?
- S2 06:55 Let's see. I was hoping that the Honors classes would be a more intensive curriculum, maybe with the more qualified professors. Definitely with smaller class sizes, just because obviously the Honors College is smaller than the university as a whole.
- S1 07:19 Sure.
- S2 07:21 So more peer-to-peer and peer-to-professor interaction within the classroom. It's hard now to distinguish between my current expectations and my expectations coming in.
- S1 07:31 It is, it is difficult. I'm trying to ask you to step out of what you now know, to think about what you thought before. It is hard.
- S2 07:40 Then based on listening to presentations from Rex before I actually started classes, those were my expectations.
- S1 07:52 So you are getting TBHC orientation information and that's what you expected. Okay. Looking back, did you feel like those expectations were met?

- S2 07:58 Actually, I think they were pretty clear that the curriculum, as far as Honors classes, would just vary from professor to professor and what they wanted it to be. So, I take that earlier part back about the curriculum necessarily being more intensive.
- S1 08:14 So now that you have made the decision to come in to UCF and the Burnett Honors College, what were your experiences in Honors College? When you came in, how many Honors courses did you sign up for?
- S2 08:31 Last semester I was more focused on my music classes, and Honors classes are more limited there, so I was only-- well, I was enrolled in symposium last semester.
- S1 08:40 Of course.
- S2 08:41 And also in Calculus 2 Honors, which turned out to be an absolute nightmare [chuckles]. I should accept partial blame for that because I was more in coming in Calc 2. It's really hard. It's the weed-out class, but I'd taken Calc AB and BC my junior and senior year. I felt like I had a pretty good foundation and that I didn't want to take Calc 1 again because that was, definitely, the part where I was really strong. I didn't want to be bored or, like I said, waste that credit. But I ended getting a professor that was-- he was 76 years old, he told us that at the beginning of class. He was really sweet and he wanted to be helpful. I went to his office hours, he tried to answer my questions. But the way he lectured was on a chalkboard with his back to us, talking to the board. His tests were all handwritten and they weren't really like the homework he assigned. When I went to the tutoring lab, the tutors were all like, "I don't really know what's going on here." We moved twice as fast as all the other Calc classes and spent the second half of the class just reviewing. I don't think I've ever worked so hard at a math class just to barely get a C. So that was really frustrating because I had friends that weren't in the Honors college, in Calc 2 as well, they had great professors. They learned a lot, they did really well. And I had more calculus experience than them coming in, so that was frustrating. But I don't know how much control that the Honors College has over choosing the professors, so I understand that that's probably an exception to the rule, because my Honors classes this semester are much better.
- S1 10:32 How many are you taking this semester?
- S2 10:33 I'm taking two - Psychology and Speech. Those are good too, because the smaller class size in those type of classes really makes

for good conversation. Those classes lend themselves well to that. The main struggle I'm having now is that my Calculus class was four credit hours, and I got a C, so I'm on probation. So I have to get an A in these two, three credit hour classes to get off probation.

- S1 10:58 Because the symposium is just the P/F, you either pass or fail. So it doesn't really carry weight in your honors GPA.
- S2 11:11 And I was definitely expecting Calculus 2 to be a challenge, but I've always been a straight A, high A student. So coming in and like struggling, studying a couple of hours a day to get a 60 on my test was a shock factor there.
- S1 11:29 Sure, what about your-- so you said you were focused on some music classes, how did those go in on your first semester?
- S2 11:35 Those went really well. I had a great experience with my viola professor through my private teacher. I took a music history class which was really interesting. Obviously, I like music, so it was great to be able delve deeper into the history behind it.
- S1 11:52 When you're coming down to it the reason for your status is the Honors at the end of that. So otherwise on music classes at UCF, non-Honors are fine. It really comes down to that Calculus class that was much more challenging and difficult than you ever anticipated.
- S2 12:14 And that was four credit hours while my music classes are one or two.
- S1 12:15 Sure, it carries a heavy credit hour load, so it even pulls it down, it impacts it even further. What about when-- as far as what you attribute to those experiences, it sounds like you did some things. You mentioned that you used the professors office hours, you went to a tutor lab. Can you tell me a little bit more about this tutor lab? Is it just math--?
- S2 12:43 It's just a math lab. It's in the math building on the bottom floor. I'm pretty sure all the-- well, not all the students that work there are math majors, but they are all in math concentrated majors, like forensics or something. They were very helpful, but because my class was so far ahead of pace of the other classes, it took them longer to help me with some questions or topics because they weren't necessarily prepared to teach them yet. I ended up hiring a private tutor as well, just because I didn't want to look back and wish that I'd done more.

- S1 13:25 Is this somebody that you found at UCF?
- S2 13:29 I wanted to hire one of the tutors that was in the tutoring lab that I'd had really positive experiences with, but our schedules didn't line up so she recommended somebody else.
- S1 13:37 Was it someone with UCF or was it someone outside?
- S2 13:39 He's a graduate of UCF.
- S1 13:48 Was that helpful? Do you feel like that helped you with--?
- S2 13:57 The tutoring lab as a whole, that was definitely helpful. Other than teaching myself, it's how I learned what I learned from that class. But I still don't feel like I have a very good grasp of a lot of those concepts based on the tests. I think what made that class so difficult was the homework assigned was-- I don't think he knew what homework he was assigning. It was like, "Work every other odd problem in each section," and then I'd get the test and see it, and realize I hadn't done a problem like that. So it was hard to prepare for the tests. My experience with math classes in the past has been that the teacher would assign homework problems that would correlate, at least conceptually, to the test problems. But these didn't necessarily seem to correlate at all. Some problems did, obviously, but not all of them.
- S1 14:56 I know you had mentioned a second major possibility. What was it again? I'm sorry--
- S2 15:04 Actuarial science is what I was thinking coming in, but I actually ended up taking some engineering classes last semester. I took Intro to Engineering-- actually, that's the only specific engineering class I took. And then Calculus was geared towards the engineering major. But I didn't really like my Intro to Engineering class, and after my experience with the math department and talking to a lot of math majors who basically told me, "Take your math classes at Valencia or somewhere else. It's too hard to find a good professor here," I started leaning towards-- now I'm leaning towards Health Informatics. But I didn't take any specific classes. I'm taking accounting this semester, which is a pre-req for that major, but I haven't definitively decided on anything, even to the point of taking specific classes.
- S1 15:53 Okay.
- S2 16:01 I was signed up for Calc 3 again, but after I got my professor, and looked on Rate my Professor, I said no.

- S1 16:07 That gets to what I was thinking about, was moving forward. That experience, has that changed your route? To health, right?
- S2 16:35 Health Information Manage. Health Informatics and Information Management, is the official title.
- S1 16:40 Okay, and that's under Health Sciences
- S2 16:43 Yes. It's half business classes, half health-related classes.
- S1 16:48 Okay, that helps.
- S2 16:53 I don't think the Honors experience in my Calculus class probably would be better than having a larger class size, which is, again, what steered me away from the math side of things.
- S1 17:06 But you mentioned that you had some friends who were taking Calculus 2 - not Honors - and what were their-- when you compared your experience with theirs, how did you feel at that point?
- S2 17:19 Even more frustrated. Like I said, I had more calculus experience than them, and they just seemed to be getting a more conventional experience. The teacher would lecture, give example problems that correlated to their test, they'd have quizzes, which helped lead you up to the test, so.
- S1 17:38 Sure. So for you, as far as how you feel right now. I know you've had a very high performance in achieving background. So, at the end of your first semester, when you got your grades, when you learned you were on this academic probation status with the Honors College, how did that affect your experience? What were your thoughts at the end of the semester?
- S2 18:12 Again, just really frustrated. But at the same time, honestly, I was just glad I passed because there was a while there where I really wasn't sure if I was even going to pass the class. Now the class doesn't really even matter for my major so it's in the past, but it's still going to affect my GPA, so it was frustrating. I can't really think of a better word for it than that because I feel like if I was in a different class with a different professor it would have been better.
- S1 18:44 It may have gone differently, sure.
- S2 18:46 It may have gone differently. There's no guarantee.
- S1 18:49 As your experiences-- how has that-- what your expectations were, what you've experienced thus far, how has that impacted

- your view of being in college and being in an Honors College?
- S2 19:06 I wish that the Honors college did have more control over the professor selection, because there's really no upside to taking an Honors class if you have a professor that isn't necessarily great at their job. And I'm not trying to bad mouth my Calculus professor--
- S1 19:25 Certainly.
- S2 19:27 Because like I said, he did definitely try and wanted to help us. So that just doesn't make a lot of sense to me that there would be Honors classes, but that the professors don't necessarily have a direct correlation to the Honors College.
- S1 19:42 They're not dedicated in that sense, right.
- S2 19:44 I'm sure some of them are. And I don't necessarily want to need a different class experience than what would be the normal class, but I'd, at least, like quality professors.
- S1 19:59 Fair enough. So how are you prepared at this point to move forward? How are you going to-- I know you mentioned, "I got to get these A's. I needed to--" how are you feeling? We're not quite in mid-term, but how are you feeling so far about moving forward - not just this semester, but moving forward through the program?
- S2 20:19 This semester I decided to take Psychology and Speech Honors because I felt like those-- my strength is actually probably more linguistic than it is mathematical. So I felt like those would be, not easy A's necessarily, but I should be able to get A's on both those classes.
- S1 20:38 So you strategically selected them to help you remain, or get back into that.
- S2 20:45 Yes. I have a 100 in my Speech class right now after-- we've only have one test. And I have speech presentation Thursday, which I feel pretty prepared for. Then, in my Psychology class we've only have one test, and I think I have an 85. We have a couple more tests, and now I have a better feel for how my professor tests, so I feel--
- S1 21:05 Is it Psychology 101?
- S2 21:07 Yes. So, I feel pretty confident. I'm not too worried about that. And then, I only have one Gen Ed left - biology - and I should be able to take that Honors as well. Then after that, I should be delved into the classes specific for my major. At this point, like I said, I'm thinking Health Informatics. So I'll have to look and see

- which classes of those are offered Honors. But generally speaking I think, as long as this semester goes as planned, I should be in a good place to bump up my Honors GPA.
- S1 21:44 And then just in terms of long-term, so you're looking at your courses, you're trying to find out-- how are you going to go about doing that? Have you met with Rex? Are you meeting with the advisers within that, or both? What's the process?
- S2 21:57 I haven't met with Rex about the Health Informatics major. That was something that I just decided after this semester started, but I have met with him. I met with him a lot last semester to try and decide what classes to take, and I completely changed it when I decided I didn't want to do engineering anymore.
- S1 22:20 But you haven't met with them since you made those changes?
- S2 22:22 No. I definitely will before I come to sign up for classes again though.
- S1 22:27 What about within the health and the music areas, have you met with advisers in those areas yet?
- S2 22:36 I have a music adviser. I haven't really had a need to meet with them because the music classes are pretty set in stone, as far as the progression. I haven't met with the Health Informatics head yet. I don't think I'll actually apply to the program until next semester, just because I have so many-- there's a lot of pre-reqs for that program too.
- S1 23:05 Sure. I'm aware that some advisers don't meet with freshmen so much until they get to a certain stage.
- S2 23:13 But I definitely do want to talk to the head of that major this semester, just to be sure that it is something that I'm definitely interested in. I've talked to another girl that's majoring in that, and she said that I should meet with her, that she's good about talking to students and making sure that it would be a good fit.
- S1 23:50 Based on kind of all that's happened and what have you-- you mentioned you used the tutoring lab, which I know is a UCF wide resource. Have you used any Honors College resources? Or any those types of offerings that they have?
- S2 24:17 I really haven't, other than the Honors advising.
- S1 24:24 What might you want? Currently knowing what exists within the Honors, is there something you would want there to be that's not there? Or enhance something that's there? What are your thoughts

about that?

- S2 24:41 I think there should be some sort of program implemented where students could rate their experience with an Honor's professor so that good professors could continue to teach those classes, and professors that didn't provide such a good experience wouldn't teach those classes anymore. Maybe some sort of tutoring lab within the Honors College would be good, but I feel like there is such extensive tutoring labs throughout campus that it's not really necessary. I didn't have any trouble finding good tutors outside of the Honors College. Like I said, my class was just not on the same pace, so that presented a challenge with the tutors.
- S1 25:27 Okay. UCF I know, itself, has a plethora of offerings and all kinds of things that - stuff that keeps rolling down - because there are so many that could be replication issues. But it's interesting to know what students might appreciate having at the Honors level. That may be a more of assistance, whether it's Gen Ed classes, whether it's specific classes, so forth. So, I know they're interested in that feedback.
- S2 26:02 I think it's great. Rex has always been available whenever I needed advising help, and that's probably the biggest honors class specific struggles - just, what should I take, what should I take honors? So he's been really good about being available.
- S1 26:18 Now do you live on campus?
- S2 26:19 I do. I live in the Honors, in Tower 3.
- S1 26:20 You do live in the Honors Tower. Do you think that's helped with your acclamation to college, with that? I know that some people-- I've known a couple people that live off campus, and I think there's "Grass is greener on other sides." But how are your feelings about living on campus, living with other honor students, and that sort of thing?
- S2 26:45 I definitely like the idea of living on campus, at least my first year. It's just super easy to get to class. I'm never really like, "Oh, class is so far away and it's raining. I don't want to go," because I'm already here. I don't really feel like the honors students have had a big effect on that. But I did random roommate assignment, and two of my roommates are fellow honors freshmen and I'm best friends with them. So I don't-- maybe that has had an effect, but other than that I don't really feel that it's much different than in, say, Tower two.

S1 27:29 So you could live anywhere on campus and feel like--

S2 27:31 But maybe I wouldn't have made such good friends if they weren't that caliber of student, and the printing lab is really nice too.

S1 27:39 Everyone loves free printing.

S2 27:40 How could you not? So I'm not sure. It's one of those things. If it wasn't the honors Tower, maybe it would be totally different, and I'm just not picking up on the [crosstalk] because I haven't lived in another place.

S1 27:53 You haven't lived in another place so you don't know.

S2 27:57 I am planning on living off campus next year.

S1 27:58 Oh, you are, okay.

S2 28:03 It was good the first year, but I just don't feel like what I'm paying is worth it for more than that.

S1 28:12 Well, in off campus, there's so many right around here that it feels like on-campus in some cases. But, what would you say your biggest reason for wanting to make the move-- is it financial?

S2 29:25 Yes.

S1 29:30 Okay. What about clubs or organizations? Are you involved in anything at that--

S2 29:35 No, I'm really not, and I wish I was. Last semester I was crazy busy and I just didn't have time. I think I'm kind of still reeling from the effects of that. But I definitely do have time this semester, so that's something that I've wanted to look into, but I haven't yet.

S1 29:51 What kinds of activities or interests do you have that you're--?

S2 29:56 Some sort of professional organization I think would be good as far as a resume builder goes. When I was in high school I had so much stuff to put on my resume. Now that I'm in college I feel like none of that's really applicable anymore. So that's kind of left me shell shocked. I used to have all these things and now I have nothing. But it's been hard to find one since I don't know what my major is. So, I feel like I have to wait on that. I'd like to start volunteering, at an elementary school or a hospital. I know those are different places, but I had a good experience with service learning and I do really like Math. So I think working with kids, maybe helping them with Math, would be valuable for me. Then, I was talking about the Health Informatics field, I think

volunteering in a hospital might give me a better feel of whether that's really for me or not.

- S1 30:51 Of course, we have a medical school now, not that it's close by. But the Medical Village, as we're calling it, because [?] is out there, and the Veterans Hospital, and all kinds of stuff is being built out there. That's quite the training ground to see, because that's a very-- you've got kids only, you've got veterans, you've got-- and you've got people learning - actual learning, living hospital kind of atmosphere. That would definitely give you a lot of insight as to what's going on over there.
- S1 31:23 So is there anything else you would add? Can you think of anything else that in your freshman year would have been helpful? Or going forward would be helpful?
- S2 32:25 My main complaint is about the selection of professors, just based on my experience with Calculus. I don't know if that's how it is around the board, because my experience this semester has been much better. So if some sort of process could be implemented to make sure that good professors are teaching the honors classes, I think that would be very beneficial. Service learning was a great experience, and I didn't think it was going to be. If there's any-- the program is built around the idea of working with elementary schools, but I think it would be beneficial to offer other alternatives.
- S1 33:06 Sure. Anything else?
- S2 33:15 I don't think so. I really like the small class sizes and that there're so many honors classes offered. I don't know if that continues to be true as you take upper level classes, but I think it does based on the limited research that I've done on that.
- S1 33:37 I don't know off the top of my head. I'm not an expert on that.
- S2 33:41 I can't speak from experience on that.
- S1 33:42 My understanding is - just from what I know - is that the honors college certainly looks at the number of students in specific areas/majors and try to accommodate course needs accordingly. Of course, there are always going to be some classes they just always offer no matter how many people they have in that major. I don't know how the professors are selected.
- S2 34:48 My understanding is that the honors classes they want offered are given to the specific college itself, and then they select professors internally. I don't know if it's-- if the professors want honors

classes. I would assume so, but maybe not.

- S1 35:07 Interesting. Anything else you can think of that you'd want to add?
How are you feeling at this point as far as moving forward?
- S2 35:19 I think that's pretty much everything. Even though I'm on
probation, I feel like I definitely do have the resources I need to be
in a better place by the end of this semester.
- S1 35:37 Good. Well, thank you so much, I appreciate all of this. I'm going
to end the official interview here.

Sarah

- S1 00:02 Okay - it is recording. It is February 20th, around a little after 1 PM, and I'm meeting with a freshman honors student who is here to talk about her experiences and perceptions of the first year, first semester that she just completed prior to coming into the second semester.
- S1 00:30 Prior to coming to UCF, what were you thinking about college? What were your expectations? Your dreams? What would it be like in general and then, more specifically, honors college once you learned you were going to go that road?
- S2 00:46 I come from a really small town up in Northern New Jersey. It's not even on the map.
- S1 00:54 You can't GPS it?
- S2 00:54 Yeah. Pretty much. You have to look for a bigger town next to it then you're like, "You go like a half hour east." And that's how you find my town. But within that, I didn't even go to a regional school, I went to a vocational high school. So the expectations for that are that you don't really even go to college, and if you do, you go right next door to the community college, you find a job in town and you kind of repeat the cycle. You have kids who then go, stay in town, go to the community college, find a job, settle down in town. So, I'm actually the only person I know who went this far away for college. One student last year, he graduated and he came down here for a year and then he dropped out of college and moved back up home, so I'm really the only one who's gone that far. So coming out of high school, expectations for college were new; I didn't really know anybody who'd gone far away to college. My extended family has always stayed pretty local. The furthest away, I had a cousin who went to Maryland but even then it was close enough that she could take trips back and forth doing driving.
- S1 02:01 Right. University of Maryland?
- S2 02:06 Yeah, I think so. But going away to college was not something I really knew anything about so I pretty much had TV shows and movies to go off of.
- S1 02:18 I see.
- S2 02:19 I think my main expectation leaving high school was just I knew that I wanted the ideal college setting. At my high school it was

vocational so we didn't have a football team. I was a cheerleader for basketball. We didn't have that whole quintessential this is high school team spirit kind of thing. When I decided to come here it was because it had the big campus and it would finally get to be an experience where it's like, "Yeah." I was like one of those students in that TV show, like I got to do the college experience. I went away to college, I lived in a dorm, and I hated having a roommate but I did it anyway. I had to buy a mini-fridge all of my own and half the time there was no food in it, but that's life.

S1 03:05

That's real. Yeah.

S2 03:06

Yeah. So that was pretty much for me - starting off, it was just completely new. I had information about what people told me. I had people telling me that gen eds are the easiest classes you'll ever take and people telling me that the gen eds are the hardest classes I'll ever take. So starting college....

S1 03:27

There were mixed reviews.

S2 03:29

Yeah. And I took actually 17 credits for my first semester which backfired a bit when I wound up getting pneumonia, but--

S1 03:38

Oh, goodness.

S2 03:40

Yeah. It was just a lot of my expectations were that.... I knew it was going to be something completely different than anything I'd ever done before - that was the one thing I knew for certain coming into college. I'm an only child; I've never shared my room. I've never shared my anything and I like it that way. I like having my privacy. If it's too hot out, I can walk around my room without pants, and that's fantastic. So I knew that coming into college, this was going to be a completely new experience. I was going to be a thousand miles away from home with absolutely no one to be like, "Hey, come get me. I want to bail out." It was go big or go home pretty much.

S1 04:26

Yeah. Did you look at any other colleges or did you--?

S2 04:29

I did. I applied to six colleges, and except for University of Georgia, I got into all of them. And what it wound up being was here versus NYU. I spend a whole month debating. I wound up getting full ride to NYU between-- I was getting \$44,000 a year in scholarships and in federal grants, so it wound up being more than I actually needed for tuition.

S1 04:53

That would be a very different experience, I'd think.

S2 04:58 Yeah, but I've been to New York for theater.

S1 05:02 Yeah, there you go.

S2 05:03 I do a lot of theater so I know my way around New York - living in it would have been very like, "Whoa, I'm actually living in New York," but it would've been somewhat familiar. And then I wound up coming here where I'm getting like \$11,000 a year in scholarships and I'm paying out of state tuition. It was a very big move for me and something that I haven't--

S1 05:27 So what made you choose between NYU and UCF if you--?

S2 05:32 What I finally decided was a big part of NYU is that the city is the campus - there's no actual campus. The dorms are all throughout Manhattan pretty much, with a couple of schools by Washington Square Gardens, and just different monuments throughout New York and that's pretty much how you find your classes, and you're walking throughout the city. I really did want that whole quintessential college experience. I wanted to wake up and be able to walk around the campus and find somewhere to just sit and just relax, and just have that whole enclosed, "This is my college. This is my life experience." And then I have a cousin down here who actually was pregnant, so January of last year, we came down for her baby shower and we wound up visiting, and absolutely fell in love with the campus. I still walk through it sometimes, and I'm like, "I actually go here. This is my campus. I belong here." I love that feeling. I love waking up and being like, "I'm in my dorm. It's going to take me five minutes to get to my first class," so I can leave at about 12:55, and still make it. The weather is nothing bad either. Loving it. It's like 18 at home.

S1 06:57 So bad up there right now with all of the snow that keeps coming down.

S2 06:58 It is.

S1 07:00 Are you living in an honors dorm?

S2 07:06 No, I'm in the Academic Village. I've never actually heard of UCF before I found it on - what's the website? It's the same website that you go to for like the SAT and stuff and it has like all of the colleges, but I did a search. I knew I wanted to go to a very urban or suburban college - I was done with the rural life - preferably some place warm. I knew I wanted to go to a coastal school. And then I was just scrolling through it and I found UCF, and that was the first time I'd ever heard of it. So I had no idea

about any of the programs here. I've never heard of Burnett, I never heard of LEED, never heard of any of it. And then I applied and I got in and I applied for housing for Libra because I'd mapped it out and it has the most space and the biggest closet [laughter], so that was what I based my decision on.

S2 08:00 Then after that, I'd already applied and I had everything done, and it was confirmed I'm going to live in Academic Village One somewhere. Then I found out about Burnett and I applied, and I actually got in. Afterwards, I found out that there were special housing, but at that point it was too late for me.

S1 08:21 Right. You already kind of committed to that one.

S2 08:23 Yeah. But my roommate, actually, she applied to Burnett and she didn't get in.

S1 08:29 Interesting.

S2 08:30 I think it's kind of weird that they do that. I don't consider myself to be an exceptional student. I do very well at school, I work hard, I like joining things, so I do a lot of extracurriculars, but I'm not a 4.0 perfect student. It seems like that's the kind of student she was - she was part of like ten different clubs and she got a solid 4.0. Then hearing that she didn't make it and I did was kind like, "What did I do to get in?"

S1 08:59 I know a lot of diversity and a lot of different talents and so forth that aren't necessarily on paper from what my experience has been. And I know the essay is important from what I heard speaking with Brandy who does the admissions and recruiting. You must have written a good one.

S2 09:51 Apparently [laughter].

S1 09:54 So what about your first semester in Honors college, what was that like? How many Honors courses did you take? So you took 17 total, but--

S2 10:05 Yes. I think I took Symposium, I took Honors Astronomy, Honors English Composition, I took regular Biological Sciences, regular SLS, and Honors Psych, so I took - including Symposium - four honors classes.

S1 10:26 So you took SLS and you had the Symposium?

S2 10:32 Yes.

S1 10:33 Interesting.

- S2 10:34 At the time, I was a part of the Social Work major, which required - I don't even know what it would fall under, but some kind of prerequisite class. The class that they had, I'd already taken something very similar to it in high school, and I really wasn't interested. So during orientation, I asked, "This looks a lot more interesting, my mom is really pushing for me to take Intro to College. Is this an acceptable substitute?" And they said it was, so I just took Intro to College.
- S1 11:02 Many institutions require it. Well, the Symposium is required in the Honors. So if you took SLS 1501 and then you took the Symposium, what were the consistencies and what were the differences? Were they like night and day or are there some similar ground covering?
- S2 11:54 The biggest thing is my SLS class wound up paralleling - what was it? It paralleled another one of my classes. I want to say my Composition class. I think it was actually my Composition class and my Psych class. So a big part of SLS 1501 is we learned about studying, and nervous habits, and stuff like that. Then in Psych we would also learn a lot about the same habits, and Maslow's Hierarchy and it wound up being in both. And then we would talk about writing essays and stuff, and that's when we started this huge essay writing project for my Composition class. I didn't really notice much between SLS and my Symposium class actually.
- S1 12:47 With the Symposium, I know that there's focus groups that break down and you have the leaders--
- S2 12:54 Team leaders, yeah.
- S1 12:54 Did you find those helpful to have that interaction with a student who was closer to your age and maybe related a little bit more?
- S2 13:05 Yeah. My team leader, actually I still talk to him. He works in Tech Commons and I pass through it every Tuesday and Thursday on my way to speech class, [?] ask and we wave, and sometimes we talk, but we definitely keep in touch. And I know that when I was in the process of going through Symposium, he was definitely-- he was an RA pretty much for Symposium. He was someone that I was definitely a lot more comfortable talking to him rather than Kelly or Dr. DuPuis or someone like that who's very professor, like, "I have to be very formal with you." But with Ryan I could just text him and be like, "I don't really get this. Can you help me?" I knew he was tech-savvy so at one point my

computer pretty much shut down, I was like, "Please help me."

S1 13:56 That sounds like something you needed at times last semester.

S2 13:57 He was definitely friend-brother -mentor like all rolled into one.

S1 14:04 Nice.

S2 14:04 And he definitely worked very hard to make sure he was very relatable and he organized fantastic meetings for us every week, and he tried to keep everything lively, and he brought us food sometimes. We would talk about the highs and the lows of our week, and then he would take part in this and he would tell us-- at one point, he was playing a game of soccer and he hurt his ankle so that was his low for the week. The high for his week was this girl that he really liked stopped by with a get well soon care package.

S1 14:35 Very casual then.

S2 14:35 And he kept us kind of updated on his love life and he would tell us about this girl [laughter] that he liked. He'd be like, "I really like her." I'm bringing her flowers tomorrow. We would all chime in and be like, "Yeah, right on." So it would go back and forth between we're all friends and then we would just sit down and be like, "All right, we actually have to talk about this for a little bit and then we can have more fun." And then we'd have these great discussions about whatever the Symposium was about and he'd try to really make us think about what we'd actually heard and actually learned and what we wanted to take away from that. It was a lot of fun. We got to talk about some controversial topics which I like. I do mock trials, so I love talking about controversial things and discussing different viewpoints and having open dialogue. So I loved that he allowed us to do that.

S1 15:36 I don't think I've asked you this yet. Do you have a major mind or are you still kind of thinking through?

S2 15:41 Yeah. I actually switched it to Interdisciplinary Studies, the Women's Studies track. What I'd originally planned to do with social work was I wanted to be a child advocate attorney. And then over winter break, I'd been looking at the social work classes and it's just I really loved the career that I had in mind. I love the idea of helping people - it's something that I have been doing since I was five and I ran a lemonade stand for the Red Cross. It's something that I've been doing and I love helping people. So I knew that I definitely wanted to go along that road and I love working within the law and stuff, and I find that so amazing and

fascinating, but looking at my classes for social work was just none of them intrigued me, none of them interested me, and I really didn't want to spend the next year and a half just kind of dreading getting through these classes.

S2 16:35

I didn't want my college experience to be something to get through. I wanted to be something like, "This class kind of sucks, but wait till you hear about this class. I cannot wait to take it. Can I take this 20 times please?" I wanted to be excited about it. So over Winter break, I did a lot of looking through the catalogue and I finally found Interdisciplinary Studies and then that was something where I could kind of make my own major. And Women's Studies is always something that I've been hugely interested in. I've worked with a women's shelter and I'm a part of the Vagina Monologues now, so learning about the culture that we're in and different cultures with different values and how that affects the way that we treat our women and the way that we treat our children is just something that I've always found amazing and I've always wanted to be a part of that. And then with Interdisciplinary Studies I can also learn more about philosophy and Greek mythology, and things that I if I didn't have to have a job and I didn't have to make money, I would sit in the library and read about this all day.

S1 17:37

Right.

S2 17:40

So then I found out about that, and I started being like, "What can I actually do with this?" And what I think I'm leaning more towards now is working on a broader subject of human and civil rights within law and potentially trying to move into Congress at some point. So we're finally at a point where I want to say about a quarter of the members of the entire congress are women - we're up to a quarter - but it's still at the point where last year alone there were over 700 laws proposed on women's bodies and zero proposed on men's. That's just not something I'm at all comfortable with. Especially now, civil rights, everything that we dealt with throughout the 20s to the 70s is all coming back now. I really want to be part of making a better change and knowing that if I have kids, I will have actually done something to help them and make sure that, God forbid, they never go through needing an abortion but not being able to legally get one, and needing birth control but not being able to pay for it because it costs so much and it's not covered by insurance.

S1 18:51

All right. I know you mentioned you had pneumonia, you took 17 hours, and you are first time away in a totally different

- environment. Other than those kinds of things, what else would you attribute to your experiences last semester from a resource perspective or a support perspective or any of that kind of stuff?
- S2 19:16 What I want to do, I think there was an activities fair maybe the first week and I went and I signed up for like 20 different clubs. Half of them I went to, never came back - not for me. I'm not a religious person. I actually wound up going to a very religious group by accident. Thought it was something different, we prayed for about 20 minutes. Did not go back. But one of the groups that I did find was mock trial. And apparently, what you were supposed to do is actually dress the part, prepare an opening or a closing, and interact and go and show them that. I did not get the message [laughter]. I walked in in a tank top, shorts and flip flops, so I was like, "Hey, I'm here [laughter]. Can I learn more about mock trial. "And they're like, "I'm the hippie one." Yeah. So they kind of gave me weird looks, and then chances of chances, I wound up making it in and I wound up in this team. We go by colors, so there's Black Team, Gold Team, and then White Team. So I ended up a part of White Team and I found some of probably my best friends and support system than I found coming into college. Over the summer, I found these three girls - it was a group of us - and we talked throughout the summer, and we were like all, "We're going to meet up at college," and then we never did because that's just the way it works out.
- S1 20:39 Especially on a 62,000-person campus.
- S2 20:43 Yeah, but then it wound up that this one girl who I talked to over the summer, was in my team.
- S1 20:47 Great.
- S2 20:51 She walked in and I was like, "I know your face. How do I know your face?" And she introduced herself and I was like, "Whoa. We talked over the summer." And then we just hit it off and we're like moving in together next year, to Neptune, she's going to be my roommate.
- S1 21:10 Neptune's the one that they just built, right? Over by the police station and that--?
- S2 21:12 Yeah.
- S1 21:15 Yeah, okay. That's the one.
- S2 21:17 It's all the way at the south end of campus.

S1 21:19 It looks nice.

S2 21:19 It is. But mock trial wound up being completely different than anything I'd ever been through before. I wound up double-witnessing and then I changed to attorney, and the result - it was so much information to process. And it's drilled into my head - I can still tell you my entire direct for Doctor [Campbell?] solo. Like, drilled into my head. But we wound up working three nights a week for hours, we would meet up on weekend, we would go to Panara together. And then of course we would spend Friday to Monday together when we went to invitationals. We had to drive seven hours each way up to Georgia and back, and if you don't bond with someone at that point, there's something wrong with you.

S1 22:03 Was the drive up there just for a one-time kind of thing or did you have to do that you do that multiple times?

S2 22:08 Well, what happened was we have an invitational-- we had two invitationals, like there was one in Atlanta at Georgia Tech, and then we were supposed to have regionals there but one of our members quit the day after our team roster was due, and that put us below the mark of people that we needed so we had to drop out.

S1 22:32 Okay. So you did the ones at Georgia and Georgia Tech though?

S2 22:34 Yes. And then we drove to Tennessee 13 hours - that was a process. We've driven up to Saint Augustine, we've gone all over pretty much the south-east, but we all know each other's music styles and the like weirdest, secretest fantasies and secrets. There is some kind of drinking game that you play with cards and stuff and it's like one is-- or ace is like a waterfall and two is you drink and three is me... Half of us are under age and we're not allowed to drink so what we did is-- I think it was maybe like 11:00, midnight, and we went in our huge van - it looks like-- you look like you could pick up children and offer them candy in this van. We got into this van, it was like 11:00 at night at least and we went to Walmart and we picked up this giant thing of Gatorade and red plastic cups and went back to our hotel room, because this one girl never had Gatorade before, and another girl never had Mac & Cheese before. We got all this food and this Gatorade and we went back, we wound up playing with these, and it was the weirdest, most bonding experience I think I've ever been a part of.

S1 24:05 Yes, it sounds--

S2 24:06 Our season wound up ending at the end of January but, obviously, I still see my best friend every day, and I still talk to my team captain, and we all know that we're coming back next year, and we're all going to know each other, and we're just-- it's the best thing I think I've ever been a part of except for theater, which you're kind of forced to be a part of and be close because you're seeing everyone half-naked and there's really no room for discomfort in theater.

S1 24:33 Right. True. So you're still doing some things in theater as well?

S2 24:37 Yes.

S1 24:38 Like with the UCF Theater or local theater?

S2 24:41 No, it's just a theater student is producing the Vagina Monologues which they do every year and a different student takes it over. So with mock trial, I got in a little bit of theater that way because as a witness, it's all very theatrical. You have to be this witness, you have to know their part, play them to perfection, know everything about them and their history. And then I wound up joining the Vagina Monologues, and now I'm a narrator for that, so I'm slowly working my way back into the theater scene.

S1 25:13 What about time consumption for that? Because it sounds like there's a lot of time dedicated, especially for your mock trial kind of thing. If you had to estimate the number of hours that you would put in weekly or whatever is easy, as monthly--

S2 25:39 It just consumed my life to be really honest.

S1 25:41 Yeah, sounds like it.

S2 25:43 Yeah. At some point I still want to say, "Your Honor," instead of "Professor." There is an entire thing Mock Trial Confessions where half of our seasons throughout the entire country are over, and we're still in mock trial mode, so we all write confessions. We're like, "I excellently did this." There is an episode - and I think they might have done this intentionally - How to Get Away With Murder. In our case, there was a character called Terry Chatham, and he was a drunk. Our whole thing was about parental negligence, and then the opening scene of this episode of How to Get Away With Murder, there's a professor, who's like, "Miss Chatham, can you tell me what negligence is?" And I'm pretty sure everyone who watches mock trials was like, "It's our case."

S1 26:28 Right.

- S2 26:29 Yeah. "We got this, you're covered Chatham, we got you." So, it was just like we all bond over that. I've met people from UGA throughout mock trial, and it just takes over your entire life. At one point I went to sleep saying the three things I needed to remember for my solo direct. I was like, "I need to remember, this, this, this, and my six factors, and my four warning signs," and I'd go to sleep repeating it to myself.
- S1 26:57 That's a lot.
- S2 26:59 On paper, we probably only practice six hours a week but you do so much more than that.
- S1 27:10 So what about with all that you had going on, with taking 17 hours, and all that sort of thing, how did you feel about time management? How were you able to keep things together, or not, in some cases? What happened with that?
- S2 27:31 Last semester, I honestly completely bummed it. I had pneumonia for about three months and I wound up missing a lot of my classes because of it. I had to walk out of my composition final which was worth 70% of my grade because I kept coughing up blood. So completely wrecked that semester. I had a lot of financial pressure on me. I'm not from a very well-off family, it's just my mom and I, my dad passed when I was nine, and then she got laid off the next year from Kraft and Nabisco just because they were losing money and needed to lay off a lot of people. So we're not very well-off, so I was like, "The more classes I take per semester, the sooner I get out of here, the less we have to pay." So I ended up taking 17 credits, which is the max you can actually take here. And then I got sick on top of that, and then I would stay up late trying to get all my school work done, but the later I stayed up, the less sleep I was getting. So I was sleep-deprived and I was sick, and it was just this whole cycle. Honestly, I think I went home after Fall semester and I probably slept for about a week straight. But this semester I changed my major, I changed a lot of things. I'm only taking 12 credits, three of which are in an online course.
- S2 28:54 The mock trial season is over and it's a lot more relaxed. And then I'm taking classes now that are very playing on my strength. I'm taking a Public Speaking class, I'm taking a Philosophy class, Sociology, and then Government. All things that I'm very comfortable doing, I know how to handle these, these are my strengths, like I got this. Whereas last semester it was a lot of the science-based classes that I just needed to get out of my way.

- S1 29:24 Right. Ones you just needed to get through.
- S2 29:26 Yes.
- S1 29:27 How have all the experiences you've had - the good, the bad, the ugly - how has that kind of affected your view of college life? And being in an academic-related future and all of that sort of thing?
- S2 29:43 It's made it a lot more realistic. I look at the TV shows now and it's like, "That's not what college is like. I don't know where you're going to school but that's not real."
- S1 29:57 Right. Not reality shows, they're not reality.
- S2 30:00 Exactly. I'm definitely not daunted by it. If anything, changing my majors made me a lot more positive about this. I can't wait to start Fall semester. I can't wait to start my junior year and my senior year and actually take all of my classes. I can't wait to be a part of this campus and do everything that I possibly can. What I started doing is I'm taking advantage of [cap?] services. I don't know if you know? So I'm going there about every other week just to talk about stress management and be able to talk to someone and be like, "To be completely honest, I failed this test. It's killing me that I failed this test but I did and I need to tell somebody." I'm trying to take a step back and not worry about finances, and not worry about the strain this is putting on my family, and just kind of focus on, I need to get my education and I can't get my education if I'm stressed out, and worrying, and making myself sick all the time. That's just not possible. I'm a very big achiever, I want to do everything, I want to handle everything, and I want it to be done right and perfectly. I'm trying to work on accepting the fact that sometimes I just can't do it all, it's just physically, emotionally, and psychologically impossible for me to do everything at once perfectly. I'm kind of taking that look on my life this semester and I'm try to apply it going forward, but-- it's working, I'm getting all As right now, then I'm definitely-- I can't wait to go and take some more classes and come back here again.
- S1 31:51 Great. What about from a stand point of you're so busy, you have so much going on, how do you structure your study time, or do you just kind of do it as it comes?
- S2 32:07 I'm really bad at this. I'm a really bad procrastinator. Not to the point where it's Wednesday night, "Oops, I have a ten page paper due, let's do it right now," but more of, "I have a week to do this. Do I want to do this, do I want to watch Netflix [chuckles]? I want

to watch Netflix, let's do it." What I do is I have on my phone-- I have a terrible memory. I'll say I'll do something, ten minutes later I won't even remember it. So as soon as I agree to do something, I put it on my calendar. I have my classes down there blocked off, so I know that no matter what I'm busy at this time, I can't let anything interfere with that. I have times I want to go to the gym on there to just work anxiety off, and just like burn some calories. I have extra-curriculars. I have it all blocked off, so it's definitely like a big, "Yeah," for me.

- S1 33:06 So you kind of think, "Nope, can't do it."
- S2 33:08 Yeah, and I use webcourses and I upload that to my phone so I can see, looking forward, "I have something to do on this day. I really should work on it. Sorry Netflix."
- S1 33:33 So you're using webcourses, you're putting all these things on your calendar. So far, were you doing last semester or is it something you started this semester, or what's the..?
- S2 33:48 It's something that I started last semester but not something I had to utilize as much since I was just laying around dead most of my time. But now that I'm healthy and I'm trying to be very proactive and be like, "This was what my last semester is like, I really have to accept that." I'm completely ashamed by how my grades turned out last semester, so I'm like, "This is how it happened last semester. That happened. That's okay, but don't let it happen again."
- S1 34:20 What about have you pursued-- because you were ill, and all sorts of things, any types of grade forgiveness, or opportunities to work with professors to make up work, or something like that?
- S2 34:30 What I'm in the middle of now - and I just heard about this - is there's this thing called Medical Withdrawal. So I went to the physician I was seeing over at Health Services, and I had them sit with my records, and I have paperwork that I've just submitted. And then it'll take about two weeks, and they'll review it, and they'll look over it and be like, "Yeah. The reason you did the way you did last semester, was because you were sick. If you hadn't been sick, this would be completely different situation." So I'm hoping that they do that, because then everything last semester gets wiped out. I'm not sure about Symposium because it doesn't count towards you GPA, so I'm not--
- S1 35:11 Right, it's a P/F.

S2 35:11 Like it was a class that I took, but it doesn't count towards my GPA so I don't know if that will be wiped out as well. But then everything will be wiped out and I just have to take those classes over again. But actually SANS 2 that I was taking only for social work but now that I'm not that major anymore, it would only be three classes that I have to redo.

S1 35:35 So did you get a P?

S2 35:37 Yes, I passed.

S1 35:41 Does it wipe everything out?

S2 35:45 Well, it's supposed to. It's supposed to be an all or nothing thing. So theoretically last semester never happened, grade-wise. And then you're supposed to get like your tuition back, and all this is supposed to happen, and I'll be like a 4.0 student again. So we'll see how it goes.

S1 36:01 You might want to talk to Dean DuPuis about it because he's the main contact for Symposium.

S2 36:05 Yeah. Because Symposium is really about like the experiences, not the actual grade, so... It's pretty much as long as you went to the Symposium, you discussed it and you did your service learning and then you wrote those two papers, as long as you put in the effort, you're good. It's not so much about like in a regular class, you attend class, and you have to take notes, and you get regular quizzes and tests, and it's all based about the actual number grade that you get. But because this is more of they want you to have these experiences and to have this learning experience.

S1 37:14 Right - to be part of that, the community, to take part in building that community and that sort of thing.

S2 37:15 Yes. So I'm waiting to see if this goes through or not, but if it doesn't I'm definitely going to have to talk to Dr. DuPuis or someone, and be like, "I went through this, I did get a pass, I did get my medical withdrawal so technically that grade no longer applies to me. Going forward, can I get like an honorary pass because I did already go through this experience and I did pass the class, or should I take it over again, or should I do something completely different?"

S1 37:46 He'll know how to handle it.

S2 37:52 It's not a very popular thing - they try not to tell students about it

so it's not like, "I had a cold for a week, and then I bombed my semester."

S1 38:01 No. That's a totally different-- of course they don't want to publicize that because, yeah, you'll get that.

S2 38:07 It's probably not a very common thing.

S1 38:13 I'd think not. Do you have any questions or anything that you want to add about your first semester and experiences with the Honors College? Like, have there been helpful resources for you along the way? Any of that kind of--?

S2 38:43 I think, honestly, the two biggest resources from the honors College is, first, free printing. God bless free printing.

S1 38:51 Everybody loves that.

S2 38:51 I love it. I have to print out a case notes which is pretty much 128 pages of a single case and if I had to pay for that, I would cry [chuckles]. Second, the fact that the classes are so small, I love it. My Philosophy class now is an Honors Class, as well as my Speech, and it's definitely such a huge plus. Like, Philosophy, we walk in, we put our tables in a circle, and we just discuss. It's pretty much all we do, we talk about the readings, we talk about different philosophers' points of view, we talk about how Kant were to think of this, and what Aristotle will think of this, what Socrates will think of this, and how each of their viewpoints comes into play. Last class what we did is we had this discussion of abortion from a philosophical viewpoint, if it's moral and ethical or not and under what conditions could it be. And that's something where, in a larger class where you have 100 people, there's nothing really you can do.

S1 39:49 That could get a little rowdy. Yeah [chuckles].

S2 39:52 And then my speech class, there's only about 21 of us, I want to say. So it takes two days to do speeches and you know everybody and you can be like, "Those are really awesome." It's a lot easier to give feedback and you get a lot of one-on-one time with the professor. I can walk in and be like, "Dr. Hanlin, didn't really get this concept. What exactly did you mean by this?" And it's a lot easier to do that when you're one of 21 instead of one of 100. Because then my professors they know my face, they know me, they are able to see how I'm doing in class because there's so fewer people to be like, "Have you been here before? I'm not really sure." Whereas, this is like, "I know all of you by name, I know how you've been doing because there's so few of you." I

- love that, I love having smaller classes, it's such a huge pro for me.
- S1 40:51 Well, you came from a smaller environment too - that's probably very comfortable for you as well in that sense. The school that you went to, were you able to take AP courses or any of that kind of like advance curriculum?
- S2 41:04 Unfortunately, the administration for my school is something that I very much disagree with but on this topic of academics they did not allow AP until this year, of course, when they started them, and they prohibited dual enrollments. The situation in my senior year was I was enrolled in a Calculus class, I was the only girl in the entire the advance math track and it was me and like eight other boys all focusing on engineering. And our teacher had not taught Calculus in 13 plus years, she was asking us for help on it, and the thing was if I wanted to actually take a calculus course with people who actually knew what they're teaching, I would have to drop out of that class, find something else to fill it with, and then out of my own free time at night or before school started, I would have to go over to the college and do it completely separate from school. I couldn't get a note from them being like, "So-and-so is not in class because she's at the college right now."
- S1 42:07 Got you.
- S2 42:08 Their standard is if you have a teacher avail-- if you have enough people to have a class, you have to take it there or not at all. It's not an option to go take it at the college, so I'd have to just do it at 8:00 at night or 6:00 in the morning, those were options. I had class until 3:00 and then I had practice until 5:00, theater until 6:00 or so, and then regular homework. Taking an additional college course on top of all that would have been impossible.
- S1 42:39 Yeah, that's a pretty heavy schedule.
- S2 42:40 I came in with absolutely no credits because of that.
- S1 42:45 I guess on the positive side you can take on Honors in those classes that some students wouldn't have to take because they'd taken their World History or whatever.
- S2 42:58 Yeah, makes sense, but I mean it definitely would have been nice coming in having something.
- S1 43:01 Sure.
- S2 43:02 I took an advanced math course because I wanted to not have to

take math in college and I was under the assumption that learning calculus, I would at least be able to test out of 8P algebra, get that credit. But then with the way the class was taught, she was doing like basic trig and it was just-- I was at the level where I was like, "I can definitely ace this, get like a perfect score, we're good to go." I was like, "Maybe I could do this but it's not worth the risk of spending the money and failing it."

- S1 43:33 Yeah, definitely. Going back to when you were looking at institutions, had your immediate family members, like your mother and your father before his passing, did they go to college or what was their education background?
- S2 43:51 My father was actually an immigrant - he came over from Italy when he was nine with two sisters, and his brother and parents. Then the rest of his family stayed in Italy so when he went to college, he only went for two years. He has his associate's degree.
- S1 44:09 So he has an AA.
- S2 44:09 But he wound up doing a lot of different careers. He spent time as a race car driver, he did a lot of carpentry, and then he wound up doing computer programming. But he never got his bachelor's degree. My mom did get her bachelor's degree in, I want to say Graphic Design, but the situation with her is she was living in [?] at the time and her father gave her this deal, "You can go away to college without your car or you can stay at home and go to college with your car. Those are your options." And for a 17-year-old who had just gotten her car, she wanted to keep it.
- S1 44:44 The car. Yeah.
- S2 44:46 So she stayed at home and she went to the local state college, and that was pretty much her experience.
- S2 45:31 Florida colleges especially are completely different than they are up north. Like there's a credit hour if I go over 132 hours, I don't even know what they're going to make me pay, because for in-state students you start paying out-of-state tuition, but I'm already paying out-of-state tuition. I have to pay even more if I go over that limit, whereas I've never heard of that. I've never heard of that, I've never heard of Bright Futures. These are all completely new concepts where it just doesn't exist up north.
- S1 46:06 Right, you've got to seek those.
- S2 46:09 Our experiences are completely different. She's a part of a parents' Facebook page for UCF students and that's where she obtained a

- lot of her knowledge. Between that and my orientation and just good old Google.
- S1 46:24 It's all on the internet these days.
- S2 46:26 But that's where all of the knowledge really comes from as far as my college experience because it's just so vastly different from what she did.
- S2 46:42 And even the college that she went to now is dramatically different. My English teacher from high school went there and there may be 10, 20 years apart - completely different college experiences even at the same university.
- S1 46:58 It can vary so much. It's harder now until you get there and you get in it. What it really is going to be like. Student testimonials are great. That's one thing but what's the real picture? What's really going on is hard to know until you get into it, for sure. Just another really quick follow-up. So you applied to UTA, NYU - where else did you look?
- S2 47:22 East Carolina, University of North Carolina at Charlotte, NYU, UTA, UCF and SUNY-Albany. At the time that I was applying I had, or at the time that I was looking, I had a boyfriend who was considering going up to Boston for an engineering school. So at the time I briefly considered Boston. Now I'm glad I didn't go since it's under mounds of snow!
- S1 50:30 That's too funny. Anything else you can think of reflecting on your first year? Any people within the Burnett Honors College? Have you met with Rex as the advisor or talked to anybody over there?
- S2 50:48 I've actually never met him. I'm actually trying-- at some point I had to take care of this, but they have my name down there as [variation of participant's name], all caps. I went for advising, my very first advising session which you have to do through Burnett in October or something. And they organized the song, we went into our little sections and they were calling names to get called into the room. And they called [variation of my name] and I was like, "Do you mean me?" "Yeah." And they totally butchered my last name. I was like, "I think you mean me."
- S1 54:56 Oh goodness. Well, are there any other things you want to share about your first semester experience or any questions you have for me or anything?
- S2 55:14 Freshman 15 is real [laughter]. That's about it.

S1 55:18 Especially when there's good food around.

S2 55:20 Yes. I discovered Einstein's Bagels Bros - not a thing in New Jersey - loving it.

S1 55:25 Yeah. They don't have those in New Jersey? Interesting.

S2 55:27 Well, there's one, but it's about like an hour and a half away and I'm not entirely committed to driving three hours for a \$2 bagel.

S1 55:34 Yeah. That's not--

S2 55:34 Like that's a big commitment for me. I'm not at that point in my life yet.

S1 55:39 I'd have to agree. Yeah, it's a little far. Yeah.

S2 55:40 So I'm keeping my addiction to down here. My cousins are giving me gift cards for Einstein's, which is fantastic.

S1 55:46 That's nice.

S1 56:26 Well, if you think of any other questions or anything, like you said, "Oh gosh I wish I would have added that," feel free to email me or call me.

S2 57:54 Oh. First Symposiums, I'd have to say, I loved a lot of the Symposiums but I had mine Monday night, and I had a friend Tuesday night, and he was not a fan of Symposiums and I was. So I'd have to tell him that it's a very big room and sometimes they play movies and it was late at night and I would sometimes get very sleepy. So through [?], I'll admit that I would put on earbuds, and I would listen to it so I would not fall asleep and disgrace the honor Symposium. So based on if I had to play music or not, I would tell my friend how good the Symposium was and the one [?] like this is fantastic. I would just tell him no music was required at all.

S1 58:37 That seems worth it.

S2 58:40 Yeah, there is the culture one. I don't even remember. I think her name was Belinda and then her last name was a city. I don't know, but I think her name was Belinda and she did culture. She was an African-American woman and I don't even remember the specifics of what she talked about, except it was this amazing whole thing. I remember she had us stand up and do different things. And it's like, "If you are upper class stand up. If you are middle class stand up. If you are below the poverty line stand up. If you are this religion stand up. If you are this culture, stand up. If you speak

this language stand up.

- S1 59:16 That's interesting.
- S2 59:16 You get to see how much you represent of the whole. And then she was talking about cultures and the views that she had. She said that she grew up in a farming city, and moving to a big city outside of Iowa, or wherever she grew up, was like this huge culture shock to her, and like two times she's been mugged. She was mugged both times by black men. Everything she talked about I was like, "Whoa." Then they would bring in someone-- there was someone, when we were going to the Orange County schools, they brought in a principal, and I'm sure he was a very nice man, but he talked in a very monotonous tone [laughter]. I had to play [?] for the whole time to stay awake. I could not concentrate on him whatsoever. Symposiums are good, but I would really concentrate on how the speaker actually speaks.
- S1 60:21 Right, yeah.
- S2 60:22 Definitely the more interactive stuff definitely keeps you more interested.
- S1 60:25 More personality and experience, yes.
- S2 60:27 The Imagineers came in and this one young woman, she talked about actually designing the rides and stuff, and the mining cart I guess it is.
- S2 60:54 But that was one of the more interesting ones because they had a lot of stories and everything, and very like, "And then we did this and we did this," and it's like, "Whoa."
- S1 61:02 You kind of feel like you're getting insider information too, which is fun.
- S2 61:05 The drum circle. We had one guy come and we had a whole stage of drums and that was fantastic.
- S1 61:11 That's great.
- S2 61:11 Because you're actually doing the beat if you're sitting down and then if you're on the stage you have like your drum and you're doing whatever with it.
- S1 61:20 There's a wealth of resources around here. I mean you can have anybody from NASA to--
- S2 61:26 That would be fantastic!

S1 62:14 There are so many opportunity for guest speakers to come in, and you know these types of companies have public speakers. You know they have those skills and they have those-- that makes the difference too.

S2 62:28 I kind of want to be one of those people. Grow up and come back and be like, "This is what I did with my life since being in the Honors College."

S1 62:35 Yeah. I think that's a great idea. I'm sure that when they had the team leaders that's part of the purpose of that, but it would be a great idea to have alumni that can talk to, their experiences and how things-- recent alumni, not like you know, "Back in my day there were no parking garages," you know what I mean, that kind of thing.

S2 62:57 They had the author Westmore came in after we read the book, and my team leader got to meet him and shake his hand, and he found [?] and he came back and told us, "I got to touch his hand." He wasn't an alumni but he was someone that the whole school knew about, and he had done something interesting, so it doesn't really matter where he went to. He just had those experiences and it was so amazing to hear from him.

S1 71:50 Absolutely. My pleasure. Thank you again for your help, I really appreciate it.

S2 71:56 Not a problem.

S1 71:56 Like I said I'll follow up, I'll give you some summaries on kind of what I found. If you have any questions or want to add anything anytime, reach out. I'm always around.

S2 72:07 I'm going to take some candy to go.

S1 72:09 Please. Take as much as you want. Go for it. Thank you so much again. It was great to meet you.

S2 72:15 No problem. It was great talking with you.

S1 72:17 You too. Okay, I'm going to officially end our interview session here.

Austin

- S1 00:00 There it goes. And we're recording.
- S2 00:02 Awesome.
- S1 00:03 So today is Thursday, February 26th, 2015 at 12:30 PM. I'm speaking with a Burnett Honors student who is currently on honors probation following the end of freshman year-- freshman semester I mean. Excuse me.
- S2 00:17 Yay [chuckles].
- S1 00:19 One of the first things I wanted to talk about was, prior to coming to UCF or even college-- and I know it's hard to think about it because you've had some experiences now and you're trying to think about-- and you're not muddling those two. But as most people do, you start looking at colleges maybe even sophomore, junior, or senior year, that sort of thing. What colleges did you look at? And what were you expecting that experience to be like-- just the college in general?
- S2 00:49 Well, I pretty much got exactly what I expected as far as the college experience because... Well, whatever [laughter]. But...
- S1 00:58 But did you do have-- were you looking at small schools, or big schools, or...?
- S2 01:01 I wasn't looking at really small schools. A lot of my friends like the small schools so they would apply to Florida Gulf Coast and places that are smaller and more secluded. But, I applied to USF, UCF, UF, and one other place, What other place? FIU, I think?
- S1 01:27 Florida International?
- S2 01:28 Yeah, I'm pretty sure.
- S1 01:31 Okay.
- S2 01:31 Yeah, because they actually wanted to give me a full ride, but I didn't want to go because it's too close to home [laughter]. No, don't get me wrong. I love my family. I love being home, but--
- S1 01:39 No, I get it.
- S2 01:40 My dad's like, "No, you're not staying here. You're going [chuckles]. You're leaving."
- S1 01:50 For the most part all those are pretty big schools. I don't know the

size of FIU right now, but it's not small.

S2 01:57 No, it's not small. It's not the biggest, but--

S1 01:58 No. Well, UCF is the second largest population-wise in the whole nation. That's--

S2 02:03 So, as far as big schools, I couldn't really get much bigger [chuckles].

S1 02:06 Correct [laughter]. You were looking for big schools. What was your feeling about why you wanted to go to a big school versus a small school?

S2 02:17 I don't know. I guess I was always used to being around a lot of people. My high school had a decent population. I've met a lot of kids who are like, "Oh, there was only like 50 kids in our graduating class." I'm like, "I had 700 kids in my class." We had 3,000 kids in our school. I was used to having a lot of people. I don't know, it's kind of cool that you can just never see the same person twice, unless you actually try to.

S1 02:43 Right.

S2 02:44 It's cool because it's more diversity. It's just-- I don't know, I like the bigger colleges. They usually have more resources and stuff too.

S1 02:58 So, putting yourself back there, first we're going to step on the college campus, what did you expect? What was just the first thing you thought would happen? How classes were going to be like? Or, what was going to happen in--? I don't know if you live on campus or off campus.

S2 03:14 Yeah, I live in Towers.

S1 03:15 Okay. So you live in the Honors Towers?

S2 03:16 No. My roommate was my friend from high school. He wasn't in honors and I didn't know

S1 03:17 [What's that? First I know?].

S2 03:18 My roommate was my friend from high school. He wasn't in honors and I didn't know if we could be in the Honors Tower with the-- [crosstalk] if he wasn't in honors. So we're in one of the other towers.

S1 03:34 Ah, okay. When you first walked on campus, first went to a class-

S2 03:40 Oh, well, my first impression was that I wouldn't have to study as much as I do because I basically made it through high school without studying ever. God, can you imagine if I actually studied? Oh, my God [chuckles]. If I actually tried my hardest, I could-- who knows where I would be right now? But, oh well.

S1 04:03 In classes where they would kind of-- and again I'm not talking about-- you can talk about both - honors or regular. But coming from a 700 person senior class, were you used to really large school auditorium type, or--

S2 04:20 No, no--

S1 04:20 --or seating?

S2 04:20 --no, no. Our school is pretty big, compared to most high schools that I've seen. The classes were maybe like 30 people, which isn't bad - 30, 35 at most. And honors is definitely different, because there's only what like 20 kids maximum in my classes. 15 in English classes, even though there's only 12 in my English class right now.

S1 04:46 And what about the Honors College? Did you get kind of recruited to go it? Did you know about it ahead of time and wanted to go?

S2 04:52 I had kind of-- I think I got an email or something. Or, I was just looking on the website just at all kinds of stuff. Actually it might have been in one of the letters. I think they sent me a letter, yeah. At first, I didn't really want to do it because I was like, "Oh, that's-- it's probably going to be hard or whatever." I didn't really know much about it, but then, during the application process and coming to...

S1 05:18 An orientation or--

S2 05:19 It wasn't an orientation. We came up here for something to learn about the Honors College. They said like, "Oh, we're having like a--" not really an open house, but Scholar's Day. That's what it was. All the kids that got scholarships, they brought them all in for something or whatever. And then, that's when they really talked about it. And then, I did more research on my own. I was like, "Okay. Well, I might as well do it." So, I applied just to see what would happen, and sure enough, I got in. So, here I am.

S1 05:46 So, you went to Scholar's Day, you had some information. So, when you were getting ready to go to your first honors class, what were your expectations of the class - the people who would be in

it, the community, resources, whatever?

- S2 06:10 At first I kind of thought like-- because you know there's always that group of really smart kids that are just really weird in high school [laughter]. I assumed that everyone was like that. But when I walked in I was like, "Oh, these people seem like people [chuckles]," like people I could talk to and have a conversation with. They're more down to earth than I thought. And the teachers, I thought they were going to be a lot meaner, honestly [chuckles]. But so far I've had my biology teacher and chemistry-- sorry, professor, forgot it's professor now. They're really nice and very helpful. And the way they taught was not like what I expected though. Because my dad always used to scare me like, "Oh, teachers will write on the board with one hand and erase with the other [chuckles]. And you need to learn how to take notes so fast." And then I get into class and they're like, "Yeah, so I made a PowerPoint for you guys and it's online."
- S1 07:03 Yes, WebCourses is used often because it's easy - you just stick it all on there. So does that make your classrooms-- since everybody had a copy was it more discussion based?
- S2 07:21 Well, for my Biology I class--
- S1 07:25 Now that was an honors class?
- S2 07:26 Yes, that was an honors class. Her lectures were amazing. I loved going to her lectures. Very well organized notes. She told you basically like if something wasn't on the slide but was going to be on the test, she'd be like, "You should probably pay attention to this because it might be on the test," which means [chuckles] it's going to be on the test.
- S1 07:47 Okay [chuckles].
- S2 07:50 My professors were very helpful my first year with the honors courses. I also took Chemistry in honors.
- S1 08:00 Chem 1 or--?
- S2 08:02 Chem 1, yeah. So, 2045 if you want to know the course number.
- S1 08:06 Oh, I don't need to. I just want to know which one-- just in general.
- S2 08:08 Yeah.
- S1 08:11 So, you felt comfortable with those courses, with the professors--
- S2 08:14 Yeah, yeah, yeah.

S1 08:16 --with your peers in there?

S2 08:16 My Chem 1, the lectures weren't-- it's hard because my Bio 1 professor was so organized and it's hard to compare.

S1 08:26 Yeah. Well, everybody has their own style.

S2 08:28 Yeah. Just whatever she did worked for me. Chem was nice though. I love my professor. Again, she was funny and very awkward like you would imagine a chemistry professor to be [chuckles]. She just made little chemistry jokes that no one else thought was funny except for her, and then she would make herself laugh [chuckles]. That class was fun [chuckles].

S1 08:51 That does sounds fun. In general, with those two classes, how did you feel at the end of the semester? Did you get the grades you felt reflected your performance in them?

S2 09:04 Yeah, not the grade that I necessarily wanted, but the grade that I deserved with the amount of effort that I put in. I got B's in both classes. Chemistry, it was a close one because everything was riding on my final basically, to determine whether or not I'd get a C or B. So I studied for like ten hours straight. Then, I ended up getting I think like an 85 or something on it. Something like that. I did it. I was like, "Oh my God." I called my mom, and then don't judge me [chuckles] because I had a mental breakdown the day before the test [laughter].

S1 09:37 I still call my mom – that's what they're for now, right? So, did you pick a major coming in or you're still deciding?

S2 09:50 Yeah, no, I picked a major. My major is chemistry right now. It's the Biochemistry track. So, there's a little more biology in there.

S1 09:58 Okay. Oh, what about symposium last semester?

S2 10:04 That was so long. That was so long [laughter]. I had this symposium and my-- the lab in the same day. It was all in the same day and right before that I had my biology lab which is three hours. So, three hours, then two hours, and then like another three hours. It was--

S1 10:25 Wow.

S2 10:26 That day was not fun for me.

S1 10:27 Those are rough days.

S2 10:29 My Tuesdays were not fun and now I have no classes on Tuesdays

so...

- S1 10:33 I hear you. Okay, so, with your-- what classes did you take outside of the Honors College last term?
- S2 10:50 The only thing was College Algebra, which I hated with all my heart because I like to do math on paper. You give me a piece of paper and I will do whatever you want. But typing and answer on a computer for a math problem, just doesn't make any sense to me whatsoever. I'm in trig right now and I'm struggling with-- it's the same reason I was on and off probation is just the math lab - the whole setup. I don't like busy work. It's so annoying. I miss my AP classes because they were like, "We're not going to bother you with homework. We know you know what you're doing. Just read this book, write this one thing or whatever and then take a test and okay you're good to go." It wasn't so-- it didn't feel like they babysat you like this.
- S1 11:41 Right.
- S2 11:42 Because now they're just like, "Oh, make sure you do your homework every week." And it's a whole bunch of problems. "Go to lab for three hours and I'll do this." It's just...
- S1 11:51 Now, did you exempt out of anything from your AP's?
- S2 11:55 The only thing was AP English. Those are the only two exams I passed for English. But you have to get a five on both to get credit for 1102 as well and I didn't.
- S1 12:03 Okay.
- S2 12:04 I didn't really take AP classes seriously in high school. I did for the actual class, but I didn't study for the test - the AP--
- S1 12:11 The main exams.
- S2 12:12 --exams, yeah. I wish I did, because man that'd be so much credit I would have. My little sister now, she is a sophomore. She's about to be a junior. She's gotten a lot of advice from me! Junior and senior years she taking nothing but dual enrollment classes, AP classes, up to what she can handle. And then, the electives that interest her. Because she's taking marketing and stuff like that which is what she's interested in.
- S1 12:42 Did you do any dual enrollment yourself?
- S2 12:45 I didn't do any dual enrollment. I was kind of swayed away from it because they told me colleges like to see you take a lot of AP and

supplement with dual enrollment. But, I just took all APs because the dual enrollment program at my school at the time wasn't that great, didn't have any courses that I really wanted to take. I wish I would have took College Algebra because that would have been a good idea [chuckles]. So, I didn't do any dual enrollment. We didn't-- we have FIU dual enrollment classes on campus at my high school right now. We didn't have that before. I didn't really take advantage of it senior year because I didn't really hear about it until it was kind of too late. And there were only a few classes and they all filled up with all of my friends basically. Because in AP classes you have the same kids in all your classes pretty much.

- S1 13:33 True. Yes. I do recall that from my days in those classes as well [chuckles].
- S2 13:36 Yeah. Tight-knit group of friends all our senior class was.
- S1 13:48 So, the total credit hours you took last semester-- so you had the lab, so in honors you had how many credit hours that you took?
- S2 13:57 Well, as far as GPA requires-- honors symposium does not count in your GPA.
- S1 14:01 Right. It's just P/F.
- S2 14:03 I did not know that. I was really pissed when I found that out. I was really mad. I wished they would have told me in a beginning. I just didn't pay attention, I don't know. I didn't go to the honors orientation which maybe they would have described it there. My graduation - where I walked the stage - was on the same exact day. I had to go to one of the Excel orientations or whatever - one of the alternate honors things.
- S1 14:30 But otherwise, from a credits perspective or hours perspective in the honors-- so you had biology, was that four?
- S2 14:38 That's four.
- S1 14:38 Chemistry--
- S2 14:38 Chemistry was four.
- S1 14:39 --four.
- S2 14:41 College Algebra was three. And then honors symposium was two, but that didn't count for anything.
- S1 14:44 Right.
- S2 14:45 Yeah.

S1 14:47 You had four, four, three, for your-- and then you had what this-- algebra was the three, right? Was it three hours?

S2 14:56 Yeah, yeah.

S1 15:01 So, what happened with your algebra? When you look back on everything, you didn't prefer to work on the computer and that was one of the things that threw you.

S2 15:08 Yeah.

S1 15:10 What about the resources? I know that you mentioned that they encouraged you to go to the Math lab? Were you able to get in there and do anything that helps?

S2 15:17 Yeah. No, the Math lab you have to go for three hours a week.

S1 15:19 Oh, okay.

S2 15:19 That's 5% of your grade as whether you go or not.

S1 15:20 Oh, wow.

S1 15:23 Did it help you at all to go and--?

S2 15:25 Going was a nightmare, but I learned a lot when I did go there. Because there is no way to cheat. You have to-- There's no way to use a fancy calculator and work out the problem or go on a website and look for help. You have to figure it out yourself. I really do learn like that. As much as I hate them all, I understand why it's so important. I still don't like it and I don't want to do it, but it helps me out. Because I've noticed that, I won't look up answers when I'm home either. I'll have it opened in case there's something that I know how to do, I just don't feel like doing it. But, if I don't know how to do it, I either do a step-by-step solution thing on Wolfram/Alpha or something like that to help me out. Or, usually just try and work backwards and do the Help Me Solve This whatever on each problem until I understand it. It does help. The math, as far as College Algebra, it's not that I don't understand it, it's just I don't like to do it [chuckles]. The motivation is really, really not there [chuckles]. That was my issue with College Algebra. That's why I'm on honors probation.

S1 16:30 What did you get in your class, on the final?

S2 16:33 On the--?

S1 16:33 The final grade.

S2 16:35 Oh, final grade?

S1 16:35 Yeah.

S2 16:37 77. So, like a C.

S1 16:41 But because of the 3.2, right? That's what--

S2 16:45 Because of what?

S1 16:46 The 3.2, UCF-wide? Right? For honors probation.

S2 16:51 No, it's three point-- Yeah, 3.2 UCF GPA. You're right. You're right.

S1 16:54 That's the part that-- with your honors is fine because you did-- you got Bs, right?

S2 17:02 Yes.

S1 17:03 Okay.

S2 17:04 Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

S1 17:05 You have the 3.0 for the honors.

S2 17:07 Yeah.

S1 17:07 You're okay there. It's the 3.2--

S2 17:09 Yeah.

S1 17:10 --that's where you're falling under.

S2 17:10 It's the College Algebra totally-- and I figured it out. If I actually would have went to class every time [chuckles], or did one more homework assignment, I would have ended up with a B. I was pretty mad at myself at the end. I was like, "Ah, if I only did like two more assignments, I would not be in this situation." And then once I realized how bad my situation was, I had an intense mental breakdown that I had to call my parents just to let them know what was going on, as far as financial wise. Because if I don't bring my grades up, I'm going to lose this scholarship.

S1 17:43 Right, the scholarship. Sure.

S2 17:44 I'm going to be on-- if I don't get above-- if my GPA from last semester and this semester don't even out to about a 3.0, then my bright future goes down to the next year. Or, even lower if I go even lower. But I can't imagine I would at that point.

S1 18:00 Right, okay.

S2 18:01 I'd hate myself [chuckles].

S1 18:05 So, everybody has their moments where they're just like, "What am I going to do?" Did talking to your parents help you--

S2 18:12 Yeah.

S1 18:12 --to get back to where you needed to be? You haven't been like, "I still need help." Or anything like that?

S2 18:18 I still have those moments where you just get really stressed and overwhelmed.

S1 18:20 Of course.

S2 18:21 But, I guess that's normal.

S1 18:23 But you're not like, "I'm going to jump out of the window."

S2 18:25 No, no, [laughter] no, no, no. When I felt the need to call my dad and my mom, I was like, "Oh man, this is not fun." That was intense. I was very stressed, all kinds of stressed. Just going through some crazy stuff.

S1 18:40 But that was an outlet that brought you back and allowed you to refocus.

S2 18:42 Yeah, for sure, for sure. Well, my main goal was not-- not my main goal. My main problem, I think, first semester was I let girl drama get in the way of my studies.

S1 18:53 Got you.

S2 18:53 And--

S1 18:55 Those girls, geez.

S2 18:56 I know [chuckles]. They suck. My dad was like, "No partying this semester. No doing anything fun. You're going to lock yourself in your room and study." And I'm like, "First of all, Dad, that's not going to happen, I'm sorry [chuckles]." I still go out just as much as I used to. I just don't let the drama get in the way of my stuff. I just usually just do what I got to do.

S1 19:15 From a standpoint of extracurricular, are you involved in any official clubs or events on campus?

S2 19:22 No. Not at the moment. I was going to be in LEAD Scholars, but I got out of the program before I actually did anything. Because-- all right. You have to take a bunch of classes that will increase the number of credits you're taking. And because if I want to go to pharmacy school - which is the plan, sort of, at the moment. It's

kind of like an option - I have to take a lot of extra classes that are not a part of my degree program. And you know that if you have over 132 credit hours you have to pay like double tuition or whatever that is, like the cap. I couldn't afford to do LEAD along with Honors Symposium, because you have to pay for those classes too. I don't know if they count or not towards that.

S1 20:09

Got you, okay.

S2 20:10

I couldn't do it so. I was kind of bummed about that because it seemed fun and it was a way for me to get involved, which I still need a way to get involved, but that would have helped. But, I couldn't do it.

S1 20:22

Yeah, it's difficult to balance all that. But there's such a-- and there's so many clubs, organizations, whatever, out there. It's kind of difficult, especially-- until you like really narrow down from a professional club or organization perspective. Now there's other things like volunteer and those types of things that are general or whatever. But it's difficult to find those kinds of professional organizations you want to get involved in until you're sure, this is what I'm going to do. This is where I'm headed. This is where I want to go to. But, yeah. Let me see. So you kind of mentioned, after you got your grades, you were like, "What's going on?" What were you going through when you got your grades? What were your first thoughts?

S2 21:13

I was expecting a C because in my labs there's no way to see your grade. You have to calculate everything. I calculated it. I put it down on a sheet of paper. I was like, "I got this many assignments. That's this much percent on my grade." And I calculated it all and I figured out what I needed to get on the final. I figured out that even if I got a 100% on my final, I couldn't get a B, or something like that. I don't know, something like that, but I calculated it and I was like, "Okay, I'm--"

S1 21:40

Before going in, you already had that?

S2 21:42

Yeah. I know-- if I got a 100, I couldn't get an A. I would have been at like--

S1 21:47

Okay, okay.

S2 21:47

I ended up getting I think a high C or a low B on the final. I can't take tests on the computer for math. I just can't do it. That just one of the things that I have accepted that I'm never going to be good at. I can't do math on a computer. If they made me do my homework and my quizzes on the computer, fine. But, if I had a

test just give me a sheet of paper and a pen and I will do it for you. I know that it sucks because it's not practical for the professor because they can't grade 400 tests every time we have a test. Because my College Algebra and trigonometry class are not honors, so it's 400 kids in each class. I understand why they can't do it on paper, but I just can't do it for the life of me [chuckles].

- S1 22:32 But they don't provide-- there's not like a stack of paper and you walk in and can grab a piece.
- S2 22:37 Yeah, and it's-- you have to have the green book or whatever. I have scratch paper, that's not the issue. It's inputting it into the actual the computer.
- S1 22:45 I see. So, it's not like you come up with the answer and it's A, B, C, or D. You actually have to provide the answer?
- S2 22:52 Sometimes, yeah. Very rarely is it multiple-choice. Normally it's just a fill in the blank, which is hard because the formatting on the computer is-- it's kind of picky. Like if I put an extra comma at the end of my answer - the whole thing is wrong. I got the right answer. If there's four different answers and I give three right ones and one wrong one, the whole thing is wrong. So, it's like there's no partial credit. There's no nothing. It's just-- For some parts if each section-- some problems have more than one section to them, you get partial credit for each section you do right. But if there's one section that requires multiple answers and you get one wrong, the whole thing is wrong. There's no like partial credit or anything like that. I'm used to in high school when you have an actual piece of paper and a human grading it. It's a lot different. I'm struggling with that. That's-- I can't do it. Some people can do it. I'm not one of those people.
- S1 23:45 Yeah. Okay. What did it mean to you, at the end of fall, when you got the myhonors information and it says, "Hey, here's where you are. You have to fill out this form or look through this form," and whatever. What were your feelings about being on an honors probation status at the end of the first semester?
- S2 24:13 I was very mad at myself, very upset. Very, very, very upset. I wasn't too shocked because I know what I did wrong the first semester. It's the same thing I'm struggling with this semester really as far as my math class because no matter how well I do with my homework, the tests that I have to take in the mall are just a nightmare for me.
- S1 24:35 After your algebra class-- so are these prerequisites for the

direction you're going with the Biochem?

S2 24:44 I have to go up to Calc 3, so-- and you can't get into Calc 3 without taking lower math.

S1 24:50 But that was like, the algebra's so rough now you're doing trigonometry?

S2 24:58 No. I still have to take pre-calc, Statistics, Calc 1, Calc 2 and Calc 3.

S1 25:03 Wow.

S2 25:04 Calculus I'm not going to really struggle with too much because I did take AP Calc and I took calc honors. I took pre-calculus in high school. Calc 1's not going to be easy for me, but I'll at least know some of the concepts. So, I'm not too scared about that. But...

S1 25:20 Okay, yeah.

S2 25:21 The lower level courses are another thing.

S1 25:21 So this is part of it. You need to take trigonometry. It's not a choice that you made.

S2 25:27 No, no, no, no, no, no, no way. Absolutely not.

S1 25:35 After that, have you met with Rex to talk about any of this? Or, have you talked to any advisers?

S2 25:39 No, they reached out to me at some point. I filled out something or checked a box that said, "Hey, contact me for something." Someone called me and they were like, "Hey, did you have any concerns, anything we can help you out with?" I was like, "No, not at the moment." He's like, "All right. Well, here's Rex's number. If you want to set up an appointment with Rex, here you go." I still have that paper on my desk. If I ever need to use it, then I will. As far as, the Honors College, they're good [chuckles] about helping me. Without even really me asking. That's always good.

S1 26:17 Yeah, and Rex now has-- bless his heart, he was the only guy when I first talked to him. Now he's got a couple of GAs. That's who probably called you was one of the GAs to follow-up to see if he could get you an appointment or whatever. If you needed to come in and talk about it with him. So, based on what's happened so far, and even into this semester, how have these experiences affected your view of college, and being in college that may have

- differed from what you thought would happen?
- S2 26:46 It is a lot harder than you probably think it is in high school. If you were me, where you could just get As on tests without trying. You're like, "Oh, I can just maybe study a little bit and I'll be fine in college." But, not for my major, you can't do that. You can't just BS a biology test or a chemistry test. You can't. You can't do that. No one lied to me when they said, "You have to try really hard in college [chuckles]." That's the truth. That's the one thing they did not exaggerate on. It is not a walk in the park, like high school was.
- S1 27:26 So, when you're thinking about moving forward, have you changed some plans? Are you making some adjustments? Like what are your thoughts about moving forward in the program, getting back in good standing, academically? You've got your scholarship and that's sort of thing that you are now are concerned about it. How have you kind of planned for yourself? How you're going to get to the next level?
- S2 27:48 Well, for chemistry right now-- because right now I have Chemistry 2, I have Trigonometry, I have English 2 and one more class. I'm taking Psych online. So, that's fun. I just did a [?] yesterday.
- S1 28:05 Is it 101?
- S2 28:06 For what?
- S1 28:06 Psych? Is it Psych 101? Or is it--?
- S2 28:09 Yeah, yeah. Whatever the actual course name is, I don't know. Yeah, it's intro.
- S1 28:12 It's usually 101, okay. Now the Chem 2, is that the honors?
- S2 28:17 Yes, that's honors. That is the only honors course-- No, English is also--
- S1 28:21 And English.
- S2 28:21 --honors. It has to be honors.
- S1 28:31 Your Trigonometry and your Psychology are ones that are most critical in the sense of getting that 3.2 up for your overall UCF GPA since those are the classes that will count for that.
- S2 28:44 Right. But trig, I'm still-- yeah. The test, the first one I got like a 74 on. I was so mad after I took it. Because I looked at what I did and I was like, "I got a good grade on this." And as soon as I hit

submit, it was like, "Oh, a 74." And I was just deflated I was like, "No, why?"

S1 29:00 Did you get a chance to look at it again or--?

S2 29:02 Yeah, once-- after that week is over because they're not going to let you review it.

S1 29:06 The make-up tests and stuff.

S2 29:07 Yeah, they're not going to let you review it until the test is completely closed for everybody. I went back and reviewed it, and it was stupid mistakes. It was like, forgot a comma right here or added an extra parenthesis by mistake, and it's like, "But, I did it. I got it right." So, each one was either a dumb mistake on my part, like I just-- right now, we're dealing a lot with the unit circles. So, in the wrong quadrant or whatever, and I was like, "Okay that's my bad, that's a dumb mistake." But the other ones were like, "Yeah, see that comma? That's not supposed to be there. Wrong." So, I'm just like, "Oh, okay. All right, thanks [chuckles]."

S1 29:43 Yeah, that's tough. Are you still required for math lab - three hours a week or something?

S2 29:49 Yeah.

S1 29:51 Now, I know they have you on computers and they're doing all that. Do they have people who can help, like if you get stuck?

S2 29:58 Yeah, plenty. Yeah, you just type in-- it's like a button. You're just like, "Hey, I need help," and someone shows up at your computer, like "Hey, what do you need?"

S1 30:05 Oh, okay.

S2 30:06 And they know everything [chuckles].

S1 30:08 Are there any of them who can help with like, "Okay, here's some things you ought to think about in this class." Or, make sure you're-- [you ask many?] of those kinds of questions to see if they have any hints for you or helpful advice?

S2 30:22 The people in the math lab?

S1 30:23 Yeah.

S2 30:24 I've never talked to them, ever. Honestly.

S1 30:26 Oh, really.

S2 30:27 They're there to help, but usually I just work it out on my own. I

- don't ask them to do like, "Hey, how do you solve this?" I'm just like, "Oh hey."
- S1 30:53 So they aren't mentors or able to assist you beyond that kind of thing? I don't know what the environment is like.
- S2 30:54 Yeah, it's just a big room of computers and you sit down, no phones or nothing like that. No distractions. I haven't really talked to them. Most of them don't seem that friendly, so I don't really like to talk to them. A lot of the people there are... I don't know. Not very friendly or like approachable. Some of them are, and I'll talk to them every now and then, just making conversation. But, nothing against people that are math majors or anything, but the ones that happen to be in the math lab are not the friendliest. They know their math.
- S1 31:36 They're probably not the most extroverted people.
- S2 31:37 Yeah, exactly, exactly. They know their math, for sure. They will help you solve a problem, but as far as approaching them for advice as far as, like you said, like a mentor it's not something I'd be comfortable with just because it's not the type of person I normally talk to. I don't want to scare them either, because some of them seem a little shy [chuckles]. "What, why are you saying words to me?"
- S1 31:59 This is also a large class, probably. Is that correct? Your Trig class?
- S2 32:05 Yeah, yeah.
- S1 32:06 I'm just wondering if there's anyone in the class who's doing well that you might tap their brain.
- S2 32:11 I know zero people in that class because I only have that class for 45 minutes every week. I just sit there and I focus on whatever he's talking about. Or, do the clicker questions or whatever I have to do. Because that's a part of your grade too, is the clicker questions, which is, I think also 5% of your grade. So the mall actually-- this is what I struggled with last semester. The mall hours, I didn't do them all the time. And class, I didn't go all the time. And that's collectively, those two parts are 10% of your grade right there.
- S1 32:38 Got you.
- S2 32:39 That was me being stupid. Sorry I keep going on a rant.
- S1 32:45 It's okay. What about, and I don't know the answer to this question

so I'm asking. Is there some type of-- I know there's the myhonors, I'm not sure how that's configured because I know it's not part of myUCF. Is there a community within Honors College where you can say, "Hey, is anybody taking this Trig class?" I'm trying to think about ways you can find somebody more willing, able, and knowledgeable.

- S2 33:15 Yeah, there might be, but I haven't reached out to anybody or anything so far. Like, the actual content is not really the issue. I can figure that out. It's like I said, it's just the software that we have to use.
- S1 33:27 Yeah, but maybe somebody has a tip about that.
- S2 33:29 Yeah, yeah. I don't know if they even have anything for trig. I assume they do because it's fairly difficult to people who've never taken that before.
- S1 33:37 Sure.
- S2 33:40 They might have some advice. I don't know. I've always been a-- figure it out myself, which is good in the sense that you don't rely on anyone else to learn, but at the same time, there's no advice or other viewpoint that you're hearing. It's just your own perspective.
- S1 33:58 Yeah, I'm just wondering if you need a couple of study buddies.
- S2 34:01 Yeah, that would-- [crosstalk] it would probably help. It probably would. But, I don't know anyone that's in that class.
- S1 34:08 Do you know if there are any honors people in that class?
- S2 34:12 All the honors kids I know have already taken calculus and stuff.
- S1 34:14 Already done it. Okay.
- S2 34:15 Yeah, so when people are like, "Oh, what math are you in?" And I'm like, "Trig." And they're like, "But you're in honors, and you took like a million AP classes in high school." I'm just like, "Sorry [chuckles]."
- S1 34:29 I apologize, okay.
- S2 34:31 No, but I'm going to see if I can test out of pre-calc so I don't have to take that, whether a [CLEP?] exam or some other kind of exam, I don't know. But man, I don't want to do this again. I'm going to run into the same problem I had last semester as far as my math class goes. Because right now my first test was 74, and my grade-- I actually made an entire Excel spreadsheet where all-- there's each one is like a formula for what percentage of your

grade it is or whatever. It got a little complex. I was kind of losing my mind after that test and I was like, "All right, let's make this--"

S1 35:08 Simplify it [chuckles].

S2 35:08 Yeah, this way I can check my grade whenever I want. So, now I have like-- each time I have a new assignment I just put it in and it recalculates my entire grade.

S1 35:15 Perfect.

S2 35:18 I forgot what I was-- where I was even going with this. What was the question [chuckles]?

S1 35:22 No, it wasn't a question. We were just talking about-- you were saying you were going to try to test out of pre-calc--

S2 35:26 Oh, okay.

S1 35:26 --and that maybe there might be some people around that could help. I don't know. It could be something that you can ask Rex about because it could be a sophomore or junior in the Honors College. It may not even be somebody who's a freshman. You never know. He might know or he might be able to reach out to somebody to help with that. It's always a possibility. But, I know that it seems like you get the content. It's just really, just kind of mastering getting it--

S2 35:50 Yeah, just the act. Getting it onto the screen is my issue.

S1 35:54 Right.

S2 35:58 It also sucks because some of the ways we do the problem-- math labs does it in different steps and I have to basically fill in the blanks and see-- using the method that they use. But there's a million ways to solve some of these problems and I do them totally different. I write down my answer and I figure it out. And I'm like, "But nothing I did is even remotely what they're looking for, even though we got to the same answer, which is the main goal." But they want you to do it in the steps that they want you to.

S1 36:30 Got you.

S2 36:32 So sometimes it's the way they do a problem is different from the way I do a problem. Following along when they do, "Okay, do this step. All right, now do this step." It's hard because I don't think that way.

S1 36:43 That's not the--

- S2 36:43 Yeah. My brain doesn't work like that. For me this is easier, so I do it like that, or... I don't know.
- S1 36:50 So, it sounds like that some of the things that you're doing, you made this spreadsheet to kind of keep yourself along to know where you stand. Making sure that you're in class and the labs, that 10%. How you're going to make sure you get in there? Are you having any issues with any other classes, like your Chem class, your English class, your Psych class? Everything else there seem okay?
- S2 37:15 Psych, it's online. It's pretty straightforward. It's just go online, do these modules, here's your grade basically. Four hours. That was a drain [chuckles].
- S1 37:33 But your other honors courses, like your Chemistry - is it the same person teaching this one or is it a different person?
- S2 37:39 No. It's different. It was actually a little hard at first, because my Chem teacher had-- all right, right now I'm at 2046 was Chem 2, 2045 was Chem 1. And he had kids that were in his 2045 class, in our class now. They went ahead last semester. They went ahead a chapter. So a lot of the kids already knew what was going on, and me and the kids that had a different professor, we were like, "What? What's that? Why do you guys know this? What's happening?" That was rough at first, but then we realized, oh they just went ahead a chapter. Chemistry is not bad at the moment. The chapters that we're working on are pretty straightforward. Honestly, I haven't been to class in a while [chuckles]. It's been mostly review. And my English class is actually cancelled for a week and I don't want to wake up super early for 50 minutes of class. Sometimes I just kind of sleep through my [chuckles] alarm, unfortunately. But even without going to class, the material isn't too difficult for me.
- S1 38:44 Now do they have attendance tied to grades?
- S2 38:47 He says it's mandatory.
- S1 38:51 You've never seen a roll call or that kind of thing?
- S2 38:53 Roll call I have seen, but there's nothing that affects your grades at least. I think it's just he says, "Oh, it's mandatory on the syllabus," because he doesn't want people to not come.
- S1 39:02 Right, right. Usually, they'll say, "One, two--" sometimes they're very specific about [crosstalk].

S2 39:07 Yeah, sometimes they'll be like, "Oh, if you miss three lectures, you'll get kicked out of the class." Or something like that.

S1 39:12 Or, it drops you a letter grade. Or something. That's usually what I've seen.

S2 39:13 Yeah, yeah. There was nothing in the syllabus at all to suggest that. I don't think there would be a penalty for it because nobody knows about it.

S1 39:24 Okay, yeah. I just want to make sure that you weren't losing easy points.

S2 39:27 Yeah. No, no, no, no. That's what I was so mad about last semester.

S1 39:31 Okay, so. Let's see. As far as your experience in the Honors College, working with the Honors College resources, within the Honors College, what have you found to be helpful or useful? What do you think is missing that might be useful for you or for other students?

S2 40:01 Specifically, in the Honors College?

S1 40:02 Yes.

S2 40:02 I haven't really used any resources. Because like I said once before I'm more of a "figure it out yourself" kind of person. I know there's tons of resources available to me. If I ever did need help, I'd know that there's someone that would help me. The Honors College is really good about that. I know there's resources all over as far as the Honors College goes that'll help me out. Plus, scheduling for classes early is awesome. That is my favorite [chuckles].

S1 41:07 You get early registration as an honors college student.

S2 41:08 Yeah. Right before I schedule-- well, when I was scheduling my fall classes, I could already register for spring and kids can't register for spring until spring. So kids are like, "Oh, did you make your schedule yet?" And I was like, "Yes, I could've made it a few months ago," even though I still procrastinated until the day before everyone else gets to schedule classes. It's nice because there's so many kids that go to UCF. That a lot of classes-- that there's not many professors or many labs or whatever, that can fit a whole bunch of people. It's very limited. So, having first dibs on classes is nice, because I don't have to wait, "Oh, I have to wait until next semester to take that."

S1 41:50 Right.

S2 41:51 It's like I can take whatever I want right now. So, that definitely helps as far as how I plan to graduate [chuckles]. As far as the order of classes that I take.

S1 42:02 Do you have something set out there for yourself? It's early. You don't obviously not having all four years figured out, but how are you going to make sure? There'll be a major adviser, I assume, and at some point that you'll meet with the UCF thing, and of course Rex is there.

S2 42:17 I have a lot of advisers actually. There's the first year adviser, you have an honors adviser, and there's also an adviser I think I can talk to within the College of Sciences. I think I have at least three advisers that I can talk to at any given point.

S1 42:35 But you haven't talked with any yet. You've just kind of been--

S2 42:38 The only time I talk to them is when you're supposed to, to schedule classes or whatever. When they go over it with you and like, "Okay, this is what you should take, this is what-- don't take this, blah blah blah whatever."

S1 42:48 Right.

S2 42:48 Usually they'll give you some advice, like, "Yeah, everyone hates that class, you should probably take it with this or in combination because they relate to each other or something like that." Advising in that sense is very helpful.

S1 43:00 Well, that's good. Anything else you can think of? Specifically, Honors College related. Anything you wish was there? Haven't used but expect to use at some point? Have you been up on-- do you follow-- I know there's Twitter, there's all the different things to Honors College. Have you been following those kinds of things to get updates?

S2 43:24 No. I haven't really [chuckles]. If there's anything I need to know about the Honors College, usually I'd get an email. They email me all the time.

S1 43:37 I think once a week or something, right?

S2 43:38 Yeah, it's like, "Here's, what's going on this week in the Honors College." And then I get one, "Here's what's going on at UCF." It's like all right, this is the stuff that's going on. Usually just checking my email is enough to stay in the loop as far as Honors College,

- which is actually how I found out about this.
- S1 43:52 Right. From Rex.
- S2 43:53 Because Rex sent out an email saying, "Hey, help her out."
- S1 43:56 Thank you Rex!
- S2 44:08 The only thing I actually wish for sure that was different about the Honors College is when they evaluate you to determine when you're on probation. Because the first semester in college, I think that's a pretty bad reflection on a lot of people as far as their first semester. Because there's a lot of people like me that are like, "Oh, I was awesome in high school, I don't have to do anything except to just show up to class whenever I want."
- S1 44:30 Right.
- S2 44:32 And a lot of people have a rough first semester, which I obviously did, along with all the other people that are on honors probation. If it was like Bright Futures or like any other anything ever they evaluate at the end of spring. It's like-- they give you not really a throw away semester, but they give you a chance to redeem yourself to kind of a counteract. Then, they evaluate you. As far as, Bright Future goes when they recalculate what scholarships you should have or whatever they're like, "Give you two semesters. See how you do and then we go from there." But Honors College is like, "What you fell below a 3.0 or a 3.2 or whatever, yeah? You're on probation now. We don't care that this is your first semester." That to me was-- it just seemed a little... most honor students wouldn't struggle with that I guess because most honors students are really on their game. But for the ones that kind of mess around their first semester, it's kind of like-- I don't know. It's like, "Yeah, you could possibly get kicked out right now. I know it's only been one semester but we think we have a good enough idea of who you are as a student to tell you that you might not be here [chuckles] after next semester." I don't know. I just felt that one semester wasn't enough data to properly evaluate someone, on kicking them out or keeping them in the Honors College. I don't know. That's really the only problem I have with Honors College. Other than that they're pretty much on their game and will help me out with whatever I need.
- S1 46:06 Okay, good. Anything else you can think of?
- S2 46:10 No, not really.
- S1 46:12 Okay, well, we will end our official interview now. It's just a little

bit after 1:00 PM.

Chloe

- S1 00:01 And we're live. It is March 2nd, 2015, and I'm sitting with a Burnett Honors College student who has completed her first semester and is in her second semester, to talk about her first semester experiences at the Burnett Honors College. Can you tell me a little bit about-- when you were in high school, I know many students looked ahead, even as early as middle school, they start looking at colleges and universities. What were your thoughts about what it would be like?
- S2 00:40 After my ninth grade year in another state, my family moved to Florida. So I started sophomore year in a Florida high school, and I was part of the East Program, which is based in Cambridge. It's a set of examinations much like the IB program, which is a little bit more popular. You get college credit if you pass the test, like EP. It's one of those programs-- primarily one of those reasons we did move to the place that we did, was for the education of my sister and I.
- S2 01:14 Anyway when I got here, I did start looking at different colleges. At the same time, I was figuring out what I wanted to do. I've always wanted to be a doctor. I knew that I wanted to be a surgeon for a long time. I knew that I was going to try to find somewhere that have got good pre-medicine program. So I was looking for a good premed program in different schools, making sure they had majors that I wanted. I also think that sophomore year, I signed up for a couple of sites like Cappex--
- S1 01:42 What's Cappex?
- S2 01:44 Cappex is a website that helps you search for colleges and get information on them.
- S1 01:50 Like C-A-P-X?
- S2 01:51 C-A-P-P-E-X.
- S1 01:53 P-P-E-X, okay.
- S2 01:53 It's really fun. I think it's a really great website. It helped me a lot, even though I ended up not going to any of those schools that were in there [chuckles].
- S1 02:09 Where did you apply? Once you--
- S2 02:11 I applied to Notre Dame, Stanford. I applied to Vanderbilt, I applied to a couple of other colleges that were part of the--

colleges that participated in the QuestBridge program, which I was a quarter finalist for. I got through and then I didn't make it all the way through to get the QuestBridge scholarship.

S1 02:32

What's the QuestBridge?

S2 02:35

It is a scholarship for students who have good academic standing but have a special financial or life situation, where it's going to be hard for them to receive college support. I did not receive the reward, but another friend at my school - the other person who was nominated for it - did get it. Now she's going to the University of Virginia. So it really worked out for her. She came from a much more dire situation than I did. It went to only a limited number of people every year, and the people who got it are the people that deserved it. I was able to find other ways to pay for college. I didn't apply for any Florida schools besides the University of Central Florida. Originally, I was not intending to go here. I did not want stay in Florida. I wanted to leave. That was a huge motivator. I wanted actually to go back to the West Coast primarily, where a lot of my family is.

S1 03:17

Is there where you going to move from when you came?

S2 03:20

Yes, I moved from Washington.

S1 03:22

Oh wow.

S2 03:25

I received an application in the mail from UCF that they sent out for the honor's college, and I said, "I need to apply to their school first." So I went on and I applied to their school, and before I even got a response - because they do rolling admission. So you hear back at from UCF really quick. Before I even got my response from the University of Central Florida, I received my Honors packet in the mail to apply. It said in the package that, "This is not a guarantee that you even got in. This is just a supplemental," and I was like, "They wouldn't sent me this if I hadn't gotten in," I assumed.

S2 04:01

So I applied for the Honors, I filled that out and I mailed it back in. A couple weeks later, around Thanksgiving, I found out I got into UCF. This was when I was sending out all my other applications, and then I found out that I got into the Honors program with a Pegasus scholarship, the Silver scholarship. So it looked like a really good backup plan for me. I did get into other schools. Vanderbilt wait-listed me. I didn't get into Notre Dame. I got into some of the smaller private colleges in the Northeast. I think one of them was Oberlin College.

- S2 04:36 I'm pretty sure I got wait-listed for Stanford. A couple other schools. I know I heard back from them on the Common App. Oh, I also applied to PL - Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington, which is close to where my dad lives. I was really looking at that school. I have a friend who is going there for pre-psychology or psychiatry, so pre-med, and they love it. I really wanted to go there. They offered me a \$20,000 scholarship a year, but it's \$40,000 and it was just about the same as going here, full, but here I got more scholarships.
- S2 05:06 The cost decision to end up enrolling at UCF, which was not my plan, junior or even the beginning of senior year-- it wasn't something that I had planned; it just worked out for me. It really was a blessing just to find a school that was close by. We went and we toured the school and I really liked it, looked into their programs. When I look at a school, I don't just look at my pre-med program. I looked at overall, because you don't want a school that's only good at one thing because then there's nothing else on campus for you.
- S2 05:30 I was like, "This is a huge public university." I didn't want to go to a public university because the ones that I had seen before, I didn't like. I don't like UF. I went there once. I went to FSU for Girls' State. That was nice, but I would never want to go over there. I feel like they didn't take it seriously enough. Something about FSU, I felt like they wouldn't take me seriously. I'm not sure. I just got that vibe. I was like, "I want to go to somewhere where they're a little bit more focused." I don't know why I got that vibe, but I did.
- S2 06:02 So I ended up going to the UCF, and I got into the Honors program and I was like, "Okay, Honors College." My stepdad when he went to school there was like different colleges and stuff in the University. That's when I started to understand that the university is not all one college. It's like a college of business, college of science, college of arts. That's when I first saw. I was like, "What's the College of Honors? Will I get all my classes in Honors. I want to be in the science program."
- S2 06:25 It was confusing, but then I found out you had to take this seminar class. Then it just meant that you had different class sizes, but it wasn't necessarily a different curriculum. That's what really interested me. It's like, "Okay, so I can meet part of this program but I don't really have to change what classes I'm taking. It's not going to get in the way of my plans. Actually it's going to help

them." So I was looking forward to it.

- S1 06:48 Once you learned about that - that you could take classes in the Honors but you'd have the opportunity to take whatever else you needed, you only needed a certain number of credits and the Honors - what was your expectation going into the semester at that point? How many Honors classes did you sign up for?
- S2 07:03 I signed up for-- besides the Honors Seminar, which was one, I took Honors Chemistry Fundamentals and Honors Theater Survey, and then I took two non-Honors classes. I had three Honors classes my first semester to the five classes that I took. In those classes - they did say the classes would be smaller - I assumed it would be full of students. If it was smaller, it was going to be a little bit more intensive. For the Chemistry class, I thought it was going to be a little bit more accelerated than the regular Chemistry class which, in hindsight, I'm glad it wasn't.
- S2 07:34 Then for Theater Survey, I'm not sure what I expected. I didn't know what that class was going to be like at all. I thought it was going to be more like a drama class, and it was more academic than hands-on, which was fine. It was still a lot of fun. I made a lot of friends. Most of the friends I've made in classes have been from my Honors classes. I'm taking Honors classes now, and it's the same case. The non-Honors classes that I'm taking I don't talk to-- I haven't made the same amount of friends or people that I want to study with her, or collaborate on. I'm not sure why that is. Probably because the classes are small. It's a bit more personal, and because I do live in the Honors dorms.
- S1 08:08 That's what I was going to ask. Do you live on campus in Tower 3 [crosstalk]--
- S2 08:11 Yes, in Tower 3. So a lot of the Honors students were around me. So I'm definitely in the Honors community a lot. I am part of Honors Congress. I don't know what I was expecting with that. I thought I was going to be doing a lot more volunteering. But as I have found, because of my schedule with classes as well as just studying, and now a job, I do not have time to go to a lot of meetings. All my evenings are built up.
- S2 08:33 I thought I was actually going to be volunteering by now, either at a hospital, or just doing stuff on campus, but I really haven't found the time. I do need to try and fit it into my schedule, and talk to some people who've already jumped into that. I don't have a car. So it's really hard for me to go off campus. I can't go over to-- it really limits what I'm able to do and when. That's just something

that-- but that hasn't really affected my grades. What was I expecting? I was really expecting it to be a lot more like lecture classes, where you go in, you listen, and you have to study and do assignments and stuff. But most of my classes had either weekly assignments or attendance was taken. I had no idea what the iClicker was before I got here. That was a shock. I was like, "What is this?"

S1 09:20 That's a new thing, yeah.

S2 09:19 I didn't understand why. It reminds me of the clickers on a game show where everyone votes [chuckles]. But you get graded for it. \$20. You have to go. When I started doing things with the Honors Congress, like going to some of the social events and the seminar, the seminar wasn't what I expected at all. I thought it was going to be really boring and they were going to come in there and talk to us about the importance of academia and scholarship. But it was a lot--

S1 09:46 You're talking about Symposium?

S2 09:47 Yes. The Honors Symposium class which I had to take also had a small group, which was interesting. That was fun.

S1 10:07 The Symposium classes break down into team leader sections, right?

S2 10:11 Yes. My team leader, who was Josh, he was really cool. I really liked him.

S1 10:18 How did they break that out? So your focus is pre-medicine--

S2 10:22 It was random.

S1 10:24 It was just random, okay.

S2 10:24 The kids in my group - there could have been some sort of PID or last name organization, but as far as I know it was arbitrary. There was a couple other pre-med kids in my group, but it was varied, boys and girls. We were all freshmen, our first year in the Honors College, and that was really interesting. I was expecting that more to be the talk about the lectures or possibly have debates or Socratic seminars or something and bounce ideas off each other, but it was a lot more talking about those things. Then we also did things like we went around and said our high and low of the week, and we played games. He brought snacks. It was a little bit more casual, and it was fun, but it did take up a lot of time. The whole thing was like--

S2 11:07 Then going and doing the service learning off-campus, I think would be a great intern or volunteer opportunity for somebody who is going into that kind of thing. Actually, anything from any kind of humanities, to education, to social work, really anything. I felt like besides just getting experience, going and doing something where you had expectations and you were leading other people, I felt like it was a huge obstacle for me. It took time out of my day. It was hot and you had to dress nice. I have bad feet so it really hurt to wear heels. It was just a lot of things. I only have one dress. I don't have any other formal wear.

S1 11:46 This is the--

S2 11:47 The service learning.

S1 11:49 --where they work with children?

S2 11:48 Yeah, everybody who was in the article has to do it and it goes on for five weeks. I was expecting that to be-- I thought we were going to go into a class and actually teach them stuff - actual things - but it wasn't really substantial. Like we talked about anger one week, we talked about setting goals, one week we talked about stuff in college. It was really just exposed in a college and see. It was more just have them meet somebody who's in college, and just remind these kids there's opportunity, because they were all inner city schools, I think. A lot of the kids my class spoke English as a second language or something, so it was interesting.

S1 12:27 What grades were you--?

S2 12:31 It was first through fifth, but I went to a second grade class every week. I feel like it would have been a lot more fun if would have been able to drive there. I didn't like taking the bus.

S1 12:48 Was that a carpool bus?

S2 12:51 There were shuttle buses for Olson's. You had to go on the one for your school.

S1 12:53 The UCF shuttle. Okay.

S2 12:54 It was hot and the bus ride was long. It was about an hour and a half of driving, and then you were only there for 45 minutes.

S1 13:03 Were you still in Orlando or did you go--?

S2 13:05 Yeah, you were in Orlando, but I have no idea where the school was.

- S1 13:10 If it was in inner-city, it was probably like in downtown, across the I-4 exchange?
- S2 13:18 I was definitely away from campus. Not too far but far enough to what was like a trip. You had to get yourself into a bus and go. It was all right. It's still felt really inconvenient because it's right after class. Overall, first semester, I feel like the actual extra things that came with being in the Honors College besides my actual classes, overall I think were good experiences. Overall if I had to choose-- I don't know. I would choose to be in the Honors program again.
- S2 13:49 I guess that would come with it, but I don't feel like they hindered me being able to succeed. I don't feel they took-- it didn't take up enough time out of my week to where that would have influenced my study time and my volunteering. It would just mean Tuesdays are really, really long.
- S1 14:07 That happens, for sure. You mentioned you took two outside the Honors. Which one did you take?
- S2 14:13 I took American History, like 2010 or something. Then I took College Algebra, because even though I got up to calculus BC, and I got a five on the Calculus II test, I had to take a Math class at the college. For a lot of medical schools, they want to see you take at least one Math class at the college. So I could either take a Math class, or I could take Statistics II. I did not want to take Statistics II. There's no reason for it, even though I'm good at statistics. So I thought, "Okay, I'll just take a Math class." Well, I'm far better at geometry and calculus than I am at algebra - by far.
- S1 14:51 Did you know that going in, or did you learn that [crosstalk]--?
- S2 14:55 Overall, no, because I transferred in the middle of high school. I took Algebra II, and Pre-calculus my sophomore year. I did very, very well in Pre-calculus and I got a 90 in Algebra II. So that should have been a sign that there are certain concepts in Math that I'm better at and other ones that I'm not. I'm better at theoreticals, and I'm not really good at applicational Math, which is why I'm not an engineer. So coming here I was like, "College algebra, this is going to be stuff I did sophomore year. It should be easy." I took algebra and geometry in middle school and did fairly well, better at geometry.
- S2 15:26 Math was one of those classes that I've liked, and I have always had to work to get an A. Not testing, not my exams or anything,

but actually doing the homework and stuff. I usually end up with an 80 or 89 in the class through middle school and high school. So it's definitely not one of those areas where I don't need to study. I do need to study Math as opposed to other classes where I don't need to do the homework at all.

- S1 15:48 But you tested out for certain classes like with AP? What was that?
- S2 15:54 Yeah, I got college credit for AP Statistics, AP Calculus 1 and AP Calculus 2. So definitely if I had been continuing Math in college for a degree, I would have gone into Calculus 3. I probably would have done really, really well, because Calculus is easy to me. Algebra was not. There was about a 100 questions you had to do every week that I did not have time for, on a Math website that is not part of WebCourses and my Math classes was not on WebCourses at all.
- S2 16:25 There was no section on WebCourses for my Math class, so I had no way to check my grade. I had no way to see what assignments to do. I had to log onto this completely separate Math website that was hard to use. It was outdated. It took forever to load, and you had to have mall hours. So I had to go into the mall three hours a week, to the Mathematical Sciences building. I just spent three hours a week--
- S1 16:46 To the lab?
- S2 16:46 --doing homework, instead of doing it in my room with music. You're not even allowed to listen to music, and then you can't bring food. I need to have a very specific environment. So I would usually just go there and do practice problems. If I had done like 90 of the 100 questions, I'd use the three hours to get the next ten done because it was really hard for me to make progress in there. Then, there was iClicker questions in that class but it was a lecture hall of 200 kids or 300 kids. I didn't want to go to class because it was on a Wednesday in between two important classes that I actually had to work in the class.
- S2 17:14 So I was like, "This is taking up the hour I have between these two classes, where I could be rushing to this class. I can use that to actually eat for the second time that day and possibly study. Let me stop back by my room to get a coke." It was really inconvenient scheduling. I didn't schedule properly, I think. I just tried to fit in my classes wherever they were available. If I had more than 20 minutes in between a class, I was like, "Okay, great." Now I'm thinking that was a mistake. I need to make sure

my classes are a little bit more spread out, even if that makes work hours or stuff hard. But I live on campus, so I don't need to worry about coming and going. It's just whatever.

S2 17:50 So I stopped going. Like the last five classes, I didn't go. Then I got a 79 on my final exam. So I ended the class with a B, which for a Math class wasn't surprising. I was like, "All right. I was expecting this," but since it was a class that I had taken so long ago, I felt like I'd be better at it. I had to relearn everything. I had to relearn everything about Algebra. I'd forgotten all of it. Then at the very end when we got into semi-Pre-calculus stuff, I got 100s on all those. So I feel like that's one area of Math that I really, but I do have a couple of learning disabilities. So I feel like the way the class was being taught probably just wasn't good.

S2 18:30 I should have just dropped the class and done the Math class later. I should have taken Biology last semester. It was a bad idea. I don't know why I was doing it. The lady at orientation told me I need to take a Math class at the college. So I was like, "Okay, I'll just take one." So I signed up for this one. I'm like, "I didn't need to take it right away. I could have waited," but I wasn't thinking. So it was a poor scheduling choice, and I'm spreading out my Golden Rule classes now and figuring out my schedule. I have the next three years planned out. So I'm not going to make the same mistake. I'm talking to the senior and junior students rather than the advising office, because they weren't very helpful at all.

S1 19:05 In the Math? Which advising office are you talking--?

S2 19:08 The Honors. The Sophomore and Second Year Center, because I'm technically a sophomore.

S1 19:16 Because of your credits?

S2 19:19 Yes. I didn't do very well in my... In my other non-Honors class, History, I did really well. That was my A because History was easy and my tests were all multiple choice and writing essays, which was super easy. Even the one time I totally forgot about a test because I was gone that weekend, I still came back and I got a 79 on it even though I hadn't studied at all. I thought I was going to fail and then my essay brought it up from a 70 to 79. It was like, "Great work." He was like, "You got a lot of facts wrong, though. But you were able to blah, blah, blah."

S2 19:54 Anyway, I was like, "Okay, great." But that's always been one of those classes where I've been able to do that - Language Arts, and History. Never had to lift a finger and I've always done really,

really well, which you'd think, "So why aren't you going into a topic where it's a little less like Math and a little bit more like comprehension or something like that?" Something that's not sciencey, because I'm actually really good at science too.

S1 20:14

Right. That's what you want to focus in.

S2 20:21

But it's harder. I do need to study my classes and stuff. If I was an English major, it would be the easiest thing. I know kids who are English majors, so I know the work that they're doing and it's a lot of writing and reading, and that would not be a problem for me. I could get that all done super easy. It would be so great, but that's not what I want to do.

S1 20:37

That doesn't get you to your goals.

S2 20:36

No, it doesn't. So I had to make that decision that I can't take all the Anthropology classes that I want, I can't take the Criminal Justice classes that I want because I really do like that stuff. I like learning about things, learning about ideas. So science can be okay, but we're not at the part of science that I like. I'm still in the general thing.

S1 20:58

So you took Chemistry in Honors?

S2 21:00

Yeah.

S1 21:02

And then the Theater Survey. Where did you end up overall at the end of the fall, and how did you feel about where you are?

S2 21:10

I got the B in Math and I got the A in History. My Theater Survey class, all of our papers in that class-- the only 100 I got is in PowerPoint presentation on Musical Theater because I know lot of Musical Theater. The content of what we're talking about didn't matter. The structure and how we followed the rubric was how we were graded. So if you were writing a critical review on a musical event that you had seen at the school, if your essay did not follow exactly the guidelines that she had set up or the department had set up, you got so many points taken off. I got points taken off for grammar.

S2 21:45

I got points taken off for minuscule things, and I got like 88s on all of my assignments for things that I think are petty for a Theater Survey class, which really should be focusing on how well do you actually understand what's going on? Do you have a clue? But no, it is based off of technicalities. I understand the point if it was writing or an English class, but it wasn't. It's Theater Survey. It's Theater basically for non-majors and to make sure that you

understand Theater concepts. She was like this really laid-back, liberal, hippy person who was a stickler for following the rubric.

S2 22:17

I tried to follow the rubrics to the best of my ability, but then I got all these tiny, little things marked wrong. I would like not cite something properly. So I ended the class with an 88, and so I got a B. I was actually shocked, because she never put in our grades during the year. So on webcourses I couldn't see. She was one of those teachers who did not update webcourses. I know what grade I had on the class. I don't understand why they give me webcourses because if your class is absent from the list, I look on there and all I see is a grade for attendance. That's giving me, "Did you receive my assignment? Have you been graded? I don't know."

S2 22:50

It gives me a lot of anxiety because in high school I guess, the grades went up every week or the teacher said, "Sorry, I'm finishing grading your essays this weekend and they'll be up." But everything was on there also because your parents saw. So it was very accountable. webcourses they are not accountable. I know my Biology teacher has already graded my binders from like a week ago. She graded them and gave them back to the class with the grades. It was 12 out of 12. It was 12 points for each chapter. She hasn't put those in the grade book yet, and all that it takes is like two seconds. So I'm like, "That's affecting my grade." My grade is lower than what it should be because half of my major projects that I got 100s on are not in there.

S2 23:23

I guess it's just an overall complaint. I feel like a lot of times onerous teachers aren't very good about doing webcourses. Don't tell us to look on webcourses if you're not going to put things there. If you're going to put your PowerPoint under modules and not under the PowerPoint section, tell us so that people don't jump to class saying, "We didn't check the modules section because that's not even in the syllabus."

S2 23:45

I read the syllabus, so I expect it to be what the syllabus says is what the teacher says. But when a syllabus is one thing and then it's another, and the teacher is like, "Oh, I assume that you guys would look around for hours and until you figured out what to do." "What?" Anyway, overall it was a good class. Will I take it again? No. I would pick a different General Education class to fill-up my GED. I'd pick something else. I'd probably pick a class that wasn't Theater because if I'm taking a Theater class I actually want to do acting in the games and stuff.

- S1 24:11 Like, more involved?
- S2 24:15 Because I was when I was in school.
- S1 24:17 So, was it more about behind the scenes of how things were put together?
- S2 24:19 Yeah, it was just different types of Theater and behind the scenes and what the different jobs do. So it was an overall-- someone who is like, "I don't know what the Theater is," this is the class you'd give them. It's like intro, it's Theater Survey. It's what it says on the tin, but looking back at filling out General Education requirements I probably would have picked something else. I might have taken a Theater class for fun to fill up my credits anyway.
- S2 24:42 Then my Chemistry class, which is the class that really brought my GPA down, I think I ended that class with somewhere like-- my grade for it, since it was a C, is a 2.0, but I think my overall grade in the class is a 2.5 or 2.6. I did have like a 78 towards the end of the semester and then I got a 68 on my final. Out of 70 questions I got like 40, but nobody got over a B. I think it...
- S1 25:10 It was a tough exam.
- S2 25:09 Yeah, it was. I think a couple of other people got-- I'm sure like this one kid got-- there's only nine kids in my class. That class was only nine kids. There was another Chemistry class that had multiple, so we were the runoff, I suppose. I don't ever have an issue understanding accents of teachers. He had a Russian accent. It wasn't that big of a hustle. However, he was mostly a graduate teacher. So I think this was only one of his only undergraduate classes. With that said, I think he was the wrong person for the job. He often came late, which is fine for professors to do because if it's over 50 minutes, we can leave.
- S2 25:49 He would come, he'd put up PowerPoints. We usually spent two classes going over a chapter. Then the last day reviewing. We had a quiz every Wednesday on the chapter before. So we moved through chapters 1 through 13 incredibly fast out of the textbook. Right now in my class, we've only gone through four chapters, and it's such a better understanding of the actual content in my new Chemistry class. So, this guy rushed through. He did not want to be there.
- S2 26:12 The class was in the morning. The class was-- no it was not in the morning. The class was at 2:30 in the afternoon. You think

everybody would be a little bit more up, but it wasn't. Last semester I only had one day with morning classes, which had to do with Honors and stuff, but most of my classes started afternoon. I did get up in the morning, and no, I did not sleep in every day, but it was definitely a different schedule for me. I felt like it was better. I have classes the morning now. I feel like it helps me get up in the morning now.

S1 26:39

You can get up and get going with it.

S2 26:40

Yeah. It is a whole other issue. With this class and then-- with the Chemistry class comes a lab. So, we have a lab component, but it is not actually a laboratory in Chem 2045C. Your lab component is actually just in that room or another room. My lab was right before my class on Wednesday. So, it is just another room in the building. The TA came in, who is apparently a graduate student that he had picked to be our TA. This graduate student not only could not speak up, could not command respect of the class, could not get the class's attention, didn't know what she was doing, gave us practice problems but didn't figure out the answers beforehand. So when we all solved it she had to solve it real quick to see if we had gotten the answer right.

S2 27:27

Often got things wrong on the board that I had to correct her. Then she would give us a quiz at the end. Basically, she was so little help that in times she actually misinformed us. This was the wrong person for the job. She was the TA for the other Chemistry class and in that class she had graded everybody's quizzes wrong. That [professor?] actually came in and was supervising for the rest of the semester for that class. My professor never did that, even after this person was clearly not doing their job. My professor did not give a damn, did not come in to see what she was doing and we were also fed up.

S2 28:00

I never wanted to go to the lab. I had to because the quiz that was part of my lab. That was the only lab grade we had. I kept getting like seven out of nine on because she wasn't helping. I don't want to get personal. I don't want to make it personal, so I'm going to stay away from personality/teaching style. Her teaching style was not developed. We had a sub come in one time when she was sick. This kid who wasn't even a Chemistry student, but he said, "Oh, I read the chapter last night, just so I had an idea," and he's like, "and based off of what they say in the book, here's how you do it." He explained more in that 15 minutes than she had all semester.

S2 28:30

So clearly this is a student who not only is not at this time

teaching material - needs a little bit more counseling - did not know Chemistry, which was really disappointing that this was the TA they had gotten for all the Chemistry Honors classes. My other friends who had other professors had this lab teacher too. That was really disappointing. So I feel like the only complaint I have for UCF was, they need to better monitor their TAs, their graduate assistants because that's just unacceptable.

- S2 28:57 My chem lab assistant for this year, Don-- well, I mean Donny, whatever. Forget the name. You can cross that out. They do so much better. They're actually studying Chemistry, they've talked about it. They're doing a stellar job. We're actually doing lab this time. Seeing the contrast, looking back on it, I feel if I actually had a lab teacher who was helping us review before tests, I may have done better in the class. Of course, we have Mastering Chemistry, which is part of the textbook curriculum, and that was fine. That was never an issue, but we never took time in class for the teacher to answer questions. He never answered our questions.
- S2 29:39 That overall class, I really did struggle, because I had taken Chemistry for two years in high school. ACE Chemistry was actually organic. So I learned about aldehydes and ketones and all that. But this was just basically Chemistry. Like atoms and molecules through up to properties, like solubility. So it was just chapters one through 12 of general Chemistry.
- S2 29:59 It was a lot of broad material and I feel like he didn't cover it properly. I feel like it was rushed through. At the same time, because of the apathetic demeanor of both my lab assistant and my professor, I found myself not caring about the class. So I would put off doing the homework to the last minute. I never studied for the quizzes on my half. I probably should have been a little proactive about self-teaching or gone down to Stark and gotten some tutoring. I didn't get any tutoring last year. I haven't had the need to this year, but I might just for help. I didn't seek out any extra help and that is my fault. At the same time, I feel like it was just an overall bad class. I would not recommend that teacher to anyone. I don't do reviews though, so....
- S1 30:52 So at the end of the semester, when received, "Hey, here is where you stand," that kind of stuff, what was your reaction? How did you digest that?
- S2 31:03 I found out late one night when I was checking my email. Up to this point, I had no idea how to see my grades for the end of the semester. After the final grades had been put in, they deleted it off

of webcourses. So I logged onto webcourses one day and all my classes were gone. I almost had a panic attack because I could not see my grades, and I did not know how to access them. Then I go to check my Knights email for somebody else who's helping me out with housing for some personal issues, and I get this letter saying, "Your Honors status this is on the Honors website. Please log in to go see."

- S2 31:34 So I log in, this is over winter break like a week before Christmas. It's like 11:00 at night, and I log on and it says, "You're on probation because your GPA is a 2.95--" literally, right below-- "and like your Honors and your general GPA both get like 2.9-ish. They're both around that area."
- S1 31:54 So just barely under--
- S2 31:56 Under 3.0. Then general, we needed to be 3.2 but that would be something else that I needed. Anyway, I was like, "What? How?" I assumed that I had gotten a C in Chemistry but an A in all my other classes. Then [all I've done?], I've got a B in Math. I was like, "All right. I can live with that." Then I got a C in Chemistry and then I got a B in Theater Survey. I was like, "I thought I was going to get two As, a B, and a C. Then it will be like a 3.0 and it would be fine." But I was actually really shocked because I didn't know what my grades were at that time. So I emailed one of the deans of the Honors College, that guy with the hair and the glasses.
- S1 32:29 Wang or DuPuis?
- S2 32:31 DuPuis, I'm pretty sure. Then I was like, "How do I check my grades? Webcourses is down. Nobody's told me how to do this." I don't know if you've been on myUCF before. It's so cumbersome. It is the worst setup that I've ever seen. I've made blogs and stuff for random fan things, and I've done better HTML and programming for a website than this. It's ridiculous. The interface is terrible. It's not user-friendly. I hate it, but that's another bag.
- S2 33:01 Anyway, so I go on there and it's like 4.0, 2.0, 3.0, 3.0, 3.0. I was like, "That sure averages out to 3.0. It was just below because one class was like... I don't know, whatever. The overall grades on my grade report are 4.0, 2.0, 3.0, 3.0, 3.0, but one of them is like-- the 2.0 is slightly less. One of the 3.0s-- it's not a full 4.0. It's like a 3.7, because I got like a 97 in the classroom, a 96. So it drops down to like a 2.95. So my GPA right now is at 2.95, but my classes-- if you just have the points for waters it's like a 3.0.

- S1 33:38 The Chemistry would have been a four hours, right? So it would have been a heavier...
- S2 33:41 Yeah, it's heavier because of the labs. That's understandable. I was like, "Ah..."
- S1 33:45 That could pull it down because it's weighed more with that extra hour.
- S2 33:46 It did pull it down. I'm taking Honors Chemistry and Biology this semester, and I'm trying to do better at paying attention in class and stuff, but what I found is because sometimes I find for my Biology class, I'm doing work in that class for my next class. So I'm not paying attention in Biology and I want to study on my own. I'm doing better putting time aside, just spend studying. I've definitely been more proactive. This last semester it took me a long time to get involved. I stopped going to the Honors Congress meetings after a month and I didn't join any clubs or anything. I didn't really do a lot besides one or two friends that I had.
- S2 34:23 Then I got involved in some other places on campus where people hang out. So I was able to make some friends that way, talk to people. In November I scheduled an appointment with CAPS and now I'm going and I see somebody twice a week to help out with stuff. I do feel like some of that stuff did affect my grades. I'm trying to work on that just so that I have more energy and time. I have time where I'm able to focus on my schoolwork and be motivated and not be worried and not wasting hours dealing with other things that I shouldn't need to be dealing with. Trying to shorten the time that I'm spending taking care of myself so I have more time to study and do things for school to succeed in extracurricular and stuff. So I'm working on that.
- S2 35:13 At the end of the day, looking back on what I expected my first semester would be like, I thought it would be a lot different. Not so much, but I felt like my classes were going to be a lot more self-study, which I'm glad they weren't because it kept me accountable. I felt like because it was the Honors College those teachers would take it a lot more seriously. I'm not sure how they choose Honors College teachers, but I was expecting some people that were a little bit more substantial.
- S1 35:47 My understanding is that they send their requests for courses to the actual colleges. I'm sure it's a different process for every single college. They make recommendations or say, "This person..." So I don't believe that the Honors College has direct control over who

teaches in the Honors classes if it's coming from another college.

- S2 36:09 I know that both my Theater teacher and my Chemistry teacher mostly have graduate classes. I almost feel like it was a side project for them. To me, I don't want to sound dramatic, but as an Honors student, regardless of your grade, if you really are trying hard in the class, and they give you these teachers in these small classes, you can have a different freshman experience than most people. It's insulting to be given teachers who care more about graduate school than undergraduate, especially when most of us are freshman, and talking about their graduate stuff in class.
- S2 36:48 When you go onto a review website or talking to people who have had this professor, most of them are graduate students. It's like, "Don't you have people in the undergraduate pool that could teach these classes that would be more invested?" Because I felt like for some of them, this was just like another class for them that they really didn't care about, which if it was a regular freshman class would be fine. It would be expected in my case.
- S2 37:06 As an Honors classman, my Chemistry class had 9 kids and my Theater class had 11 kids. I feel like the teacher would be a little bit more present.
- S1 37:15 So you had 9 in the two that you took aside from the symposium. It was 9 and 11 people?
- S2 37:21 Yes.
- S1 37:21 So it was pretty small. It came down to the numbers.
- S2 37:25 In my Theater class, the students, we all got really close. The teacher was friendly. It still felt half-assed a little bit. I always felt like they were thinking about other things in their head. So were the students, but we're paying. They're getting paid. So it's a little different.
- S1 37:48 When you got the news and were like-- I'm just going back to how prepared you are to move forward in the program. You've mentioned that you've focused more on schoolwork lately. You're getting some things sorted out for yourself in your personal life, I assume, so that you can get that out of the way and you can focus on your schoolwork. You're going to CAPS regularly. You mentioned something earlier that caught my attention and said that you might have a couple of learning disabilities. Have you met with the learning disabilities group?
- S2 38:27 No, because they don't have anything there for me. I have non-

verbal learning disorder, which is a subset of last-- when I was in high school I got diagnosed with Asperger's, or high functioning autism. But it's never been an issue where it's affected school, as far as I know. If I ever took the time to actually look back or talk to my parents about it they may have been like, "Yeah, there were a few things." But, for the most part...

S2 38:55 I found out by accident. I was going to see a counselor because I came out to my mom and she wanted me to go see a psychologist. I mostly talked to the psychologist about things that were stressing me out, compulsive behaviors that I have, things that bother me. I was like, "I'm going to a psychologist. I may as well talk about things and see, work out stress, vent." The psychologist was a great person. She was like, "Let's just do some testing." She told my mom. She thought I might have Asperger's. Then we did testing and stuff, and I tested for ADD. It was like 50/50, and she was like, "It could just be something else."

S2 39:30 So I took this other testing, and she found out that I did have-- the way they do testing for non-verbal learning disorders, they do all these different sections and based stuff with your over IQ or potential level, if it's a certain level below that, it counts as learning disability. So someone has like an IQ of 150 but their Math skills are a 115, that's a big enough gap to-- where it's a learning disability for them. For their brain, that is actually concerning. My non-verbal learning and analysis subsection of the similar psychological tests I did, was like 20 IQ points below my IQ. It was actually below average.

S1 40:09 In what way?

S2 40:09 I don't know. I'm not really sure. It was more than 20 points below, and she was like, "That's enough to account for learning disability. So she was like, "Let's do some other testing." She's like, "Yeah, you do have this learning disability." Because most things in school are verbal or doing homework by yourself, she's like, "It shouldn't really be an issue, but you do need to be aware of that." I looked into the disabilities, I got a pamphlet from them. I went in there and I just asked them, "Do you have a list of all of the different disabilities, whether mental or physical, that you accommodate? Could I see what things you have there?" She's like, "No, you have to schedule an appointment and you need to talk to us, then we tell you what it is."

S2 40:42 I'm like, "That's so much work. Why can't I just read it online? Why do I have to go in and talk to somebody and do a test and

make this big deal out of it? Why can't I just look at what you actually have? I don't understand. It seems like a whole lot of work and especially for people who may have other things going on like anxiety, or depression, or who don't want to go in there and actually have an interview or file a legal request for accommodations.

- S2 41:04 I don't want to file a request for accommodations. I just want to know, if there is anything, if possible, if it would interest me, then I would go look into it." I talked to my CAPS counselor about it and she was like, "Well, you need to go down to the office." I was like, "I did. Could you look it up for me? Because I don't want to sit down with somebody and this to go on my record. If they don't have anything, I don't want to waste my time, I don't waste their time, I don't want to cause problems." Maybe that's just me.
- S1 41:28 Actually, while I'm thinking about it, I know someone who works there. She's very knowledgeable about that sort of thing and an amazingly sweet, really thoughtful person. So I'd be happy to reach out to her if you'd like.
- S2 41:51 That would be really nice. Thank you.
- S1 41:52 I can give you her name so then you could talk to her.
- S2 41:55 Because I don't think they would have-- I can't imagine what they would do. I don't need help in class. It's mostly non-academic things that-- but that can affect your academic performance. I do understand that, which is one of the reasons why I'm going to CAPS and stuff, just to talk to her.
- S1 42:07 Absolutely. Are you still seeing a psychiatrist with that or are you're just going to CAPS?
- S2 42:11 No, not since I've been back to school, but I need to. I'm dealing with a lot of stuff recently that I feel like I need to go see a doctor for. That's the thing that I need to get on top of. I don't know how to do that because she told me that If you have to go see a psychiatrist you have to pay.
- S2 42:35 I know that if you don't show up to an appointment you have to pay. Like to any kind of counseling like the no-show fee. I assume you could schedule an appointment with a doctor on campus because checkups at the health center are free. Besides just meeting with them for a consultation, if you actually you ever wanted to start seeing somebody, or doing test, or get treatment, or any kind of medical-- one of my friends is taking antidepressants and I know her insurance is covering it, but she had to go and

actually pay to get that prescribed. So besides just meeting with a psychiatrist if they decide that, "Yeah, I feel like there's something that we could do," after that you have to pay for it. My concern is, one--

- S1 43:17 Pay for the sessions or you're paying for medication?
- S2 43:20 Anything. If you're doing something other than just talking to somebody, you can go to CAPS, talk to somebody, but if you're doing cognitive therapy--
- S1 43:31 Medical, pharmaceutical...
- S2 43:31 --medical, anything like that, you do have to pay. My concern is one, CAPS. I told my mom I was seeing a counselor for stress. I didn't tell her why, but she doesn't know anything about that. There's confidentiality. However, if you do anything that needs insurance it will show up on insurance. I don't want my parents-- if I go on any kind of stuff--
- S1 43:49 So, you're not on student insurance, you're still on your parents'?
- S2 43:52 I think I have student insurance because all my checkups and all my dentist stuff is free, but I don't know if that covers medication, because it doesn't cover the medication that I get right now for...
- S1 44:23 You get it right from the UCF pharmacy [crosstalk]?
- S2 44:24 Yeah. My concern with that, which has caused me to stress, and to some extent, it's made me really concerned about whether, can I continue doing the major that I am? I'm having this hard time setting aside six hours to study. I can't do that. I get too distracted.
- S1 44:44 Maybe you need to break it up, put something in between, or--
- S2 44:48 I've tried a couple of times to do homework or study with other people, and I can do it, but I find myself getting really antsy, or impatient with this person. They make me irritable. Then I'm in a state of mind where I just can't--
- S1 44:58 Can't focus--
- S2 44:59 It's too much going on. So I've tried it. Studying with other friends, sometimes that helps. I'd schedule my classes for the morning, so I'd get up so I'd have a better sleep schedule. Last semester, I used to study really late. I went to bed at like 2:00 or 3:00 every night. Which that can be an issue, but it's usually because I couldn't fall asleep. When I was a kid, I had problems sleeping all the time, and it kind of came back this semester.

- S1 45:26 Have you ever been on sleep medication?
- S2 45:28 No, my parents never believed in that stuff. Even for ADHD - my dad has it and he would never take medication. They just don't. They said because it dopes the kids up and they can't focus. My mom doesn't want me to be sedated so I can't focus on school because my grades are more important. So I was never on any kind of medication as a kid.
- S1 45:52 I'd be happy to talk offline with you about that afterwards if you'd like to. So going forward, how prepared do you feel to move forward now in the program, in the university?
- S2 46:04 I feel like the probation-- if it had been a "kicked out", I probably would have spiraled downward, and I would have been so upset. I probably would have been-- I would have just dropped out. I would have just gone through premed not as an Honors kid. Because people can do that. The Honors College is really, really nice, and I think it's really going to help me with the smaller classes, but overall, I don't think it's necessary to do what I want to do, but it'll definitely help. I really want to stay in.
- S2 46:31 But since it was just probation, I have this chance to redeem myself. "You have one more chance" [laughter]. I'm like, "I have to do it." There's been a couple of times this semester where I've put off doing work because I was busy or I spent all Saturday too upset to do any work, and so I couldn't study. Then I kick myself later because I'm like, "I have a test tomorrow and I have to study for it."
- S1 46:55 But you just couldn't get there.
- S2 46:57 I just couldn't get there. Then I'd be like, "I promised myself I would study better this semester." Overall, I think I have. I did my Chemistry homework three days before the test, because it's due the day of the test, and I felt really good about that because that's way better than I usually am. I did it with somebody else and I studied. I didn't really look up a lot of answers so like I did it all by myself. I've been making flashcards for Biology. So I've actually been studying. Whereas last semester I didn't study at all because I didn't do it in high school. It was just hard making that adjustment and everybody says that when you go to college, you're going to have to study more and I didn't listen. Like last semester, we had to read Westmore for our Honors symposium and answer things. I didn't read until the day it was due.
- S1 47:40 The procrastination [crosstalk].

- S2 47:42 That is like my whole life. Everybody does it, but for me, I never get the guilt. Some people procrastinate and then they feel bad about it. I never feel bad about it, which is a huge issue because then later when there's actual consequences I'm like, "Oh no, why didn't I panic and do things?" Back when I'm like because at the time, I didn't feel no anxiety about it whatsoever. I don't feel it's like I don't get anxiety about procrastinating until after I've turned the thing in. Then I'm like, "I waited so long." As far as this semester goes, I even tried to go to SAC. I did get a job so I have money, so I can...
- S1 48:14 So are you looking at jobs on campus?
- S2 48:17 Yeah, I found a job. I was applying for jobs on campus and I wasn't getting anything back. Then I applied for that UCF Knight Line, which is the UCF [foundation?]. I have a friend who we carpool. He drives [?]. He even drives me the days that he does not work. Have you realized. I just got the job last week, so I just started working. It's only 10 hours a week overall. I feel like-- it's really stressful kind of calling of people and asking for money. So it is a little bit of pressure but it's a nice environment. Everybody is really nice.
- S2 48:49 I think that will be good for me, because I am good at talking. I am on the phone - following the script and doing that properly. The thing that I need to work on is my communications skills and my overall energy and personality on the phone. So basically overall social skills. Since it's not a person that's on the phone, I can just focus on the audio part of that and then-- but it is a step in the right direction.
- S2 49:12 If I was doing something like tutoring or filing papers or working, making finger food - it's just stuff that I did when I was in high school. I am not really doing something that's going to push me to grow. That was I was thinking while at the job. It's really helped me feel better about this semester, because I feel like I'm making progress. Last time I felt like I wasn't making-- in fact, I felt like I was not making progress. I think I've gotten back up to where I was before I started college, as far as overall. I feel a lot more prepared for this year. I actually looked at my classes in the future, and what I need for them.
- S1 49:43 That's another one of my questions is, how these experiences that you've had affected your view of college, and--
- S2 49:52 I definitely decided I need to be more proactive, and I need to ask

more. I need to get more networking connection with my friends and other people. I usually don't talk to anybody ever, which is not good. I don't call people until they call me, and it doesn't bother me if nobody calls. That's the issue, because some people are like, "Why does no one ever call me, and I'm so alone?" I'm like, "No one ever calls me. That's fine because I don't actually want to go do anything." But now have been talking like, "Hey, you want to study?" Or, "Let's do this and this and this" and even if it's like not what I want to do.

- S1 50:24 You mentioned that you had connected with some juniors and seniors. Were those folks in the pre-med program or the--?
- S2 50:31 Yeah. One of my roommates, who's my age, she is a transfer. She is a junior in the pre-med program. She's about a year above me. The classes she's taking right now are the ones I'm taking next year. I've gotten a lot of advice from her about what classes to take and just watching her doing it and the amount of time she spends studying, but also going out. So it's really nice to have her as a roommate.
- S2 50:51 She won't be my roommate next year, but I definitely think she's been a positive influence, because she goes out and does things. She spends a lot of time studying and she's given me some advice on what classes to take, and we say hi... It's better than having roommates like-- I don't know. Who is like not doing well in school. She's really doing well in school. It's a nice atmosphere, and living on campus has been really good because it kept me connected. I really wanted to live off campus for several reasons, but I don't have a car and I feel like living on campus is the best idea for me right now.
- S2 51:31 I've definitely made more preparations this year, like I scheduled an appointment with the advising office and I saw them.
- S1 51:37 In the Honors College, so you saw Rex?
- S2 51:39 No, with second year advising, scheduling. You may have more information, but besides just Honors stuff like Honors and the major, what can Honors help me with scheduling? Wouldn't it be better to go to the second year scheduling because they're--?
- S1 51:59 If you're not having a positive experience with that group, you should definitely set up an appointment with Rex. If he doesn't know it, he probably has a solid connection to someone he can call about it. Usually, he just says to call front desk and they'll give you a time that he can-- you can work out a time that works

- for both of you.
- S2 52:50 I'll definitely look into that, because last time I went in for-- last time they helped us - last semester - with scheduling and stuff, they were in a rush because they were all trying to go round talk to everybody. It was really not helpful. I was like, "Why am I even here?" So I left. I signed their little paper, pretended to sign up for classes, then I enrolled on my own [laughter].
- S1 53:07 Yeah, the rush of that early on.
- S2 53:08 It wasn't helpful.
- S1 53:10 This is a one-on-one session, and that's very different.
- S2 53:13 One-on-one, yeah. It'll be better.
- S1 53:16 He's looking specifically at your curriculum, your needs, your major, your focus, and all those things. He'll be able to tell you and steer you in some directions that he's done for other people who are following a similar path.
- S2 53:32 I found that sometimes some of the counselors I've talked to, both in high school and college, have really not either tried to give me different priorities or not understand my priorities. They say things like, "You should take this, take this, or take this." I'm like, "Okay. Well, this is my goal. Is this class going to help me reach that goal? Is this class going to help me understand? Is this class going to help me get into a good medical school? Does this school fulfill any Golden Rule requirements or not? Why should I space out my classes, when it would be better to get all the general ones in the beginning? These are my goals. What you're telling me and the things that you're saying aren't important to me."
- S2 54:03 Not only like I'm not making the decisions, but they're saying, "You may need a non-science class this time. You may want-- don't take Physics and Chemistry at the same time." I'm like, "Why not? I did in high school." Taking Chemistry and Biology is fine. If I need to raise my level of studying, I can do that. That's not an issue. I just didn't take school seriously then after the first semester... Now, I do take it very, very seriously and I understand that. They were trying to tell me things and I'm just like...
- S1 54:29 If it's a little overwhelming, and they don't really know you.
- S2 54:34 No, they don't.
- S1 54:35 That's the benefit of the Honors advising. Rex really takes time to learn about you and what you need and how you study and what

you're best at and all those types of things and helps you with that. I would highly recommend making an appointment and calling front desk there and they'll set you up at the time. He's very easy to talk with, work with - super nice guy.

- S2 55:03 That's good.
- S1 55:02 Let's see. I think you've answered all the main questions that I've had. Do you have anything that you wanted to add? Are there any resources that have been helpful within Honors College in particular or outside of it?
- S2 55:21 It's hard to describe, because on one side, if I had to give advice for anybody who was in the Honors College, or was looking at it, I'd definitely say if you meet all the qualifications to get into the Honors College when applying, you definitely should, because the worst that could happen is you drop out of the Honors College. That's not really overall going to affect you poorly. If you decide to leave after first semester - and besides getting kicked out. Even that, I know because that's happen too and they're seniors now and they're doing fine. But I want to stay in.
- S2 55:55 I would say they're going to have a lot of events listed that you can do. You're not going to be able to make it to all of them and that's okay, but try to go to the ones that you can, even if you're feeling really upset. I understand that taking care of yourself is important, but go check it out. If it looks like it's worth staying, stay. If it looks like it's not really a thing you want to do, leave. But it can't hurt to just check it out.
- S2 56:13 They're not really going to talk to you a lot about the academic things that Honors College provides. They really don't talk about like, "Hey, you should come in and talk to these people." This is the first time I've heard the name Rex ever. I feel like in the little letters that we get from the Honors College in my email this hasn't really been talked about. They're mostly-- it's like what's going on right now. Well, I don't care what's going on right now at the Honors College. What resources do you have for me?
- S1 56:40 Rex is the adviser. He's been there for a while so he really knows his stuff. He's extremely meticulous. Like I said, he's so easy to talk with about your plan of study.
- S2 57:15 As long as he's concise.
- S1 57:18 Yes, he's definitely concise.
- S2 57:20 If I ask a question about a class and they don't give me the answer,

- I'm like...ugh.
- S1 57:24 Oh, no. He'll give it to you straight.
- S2 57:53 Right now, I'm going to need help talking about what classes I should take over this summer. My issue right now and one of the issues with scheduling is, with all of my non-science classes I'm in junior standing. Besides two classes, all of my General Education is out of the way. The only class I have to take from here on out, besides Government, is my science major classes. So Organic Chemistry, all of the Biology and medical things, which means that I have two or three subjects taken up every semester, and two or three openings where classes are supposed to go.
- S2 58:31 I can't graduate early, because I just started taking my science class. I've got no credit for science. So I'm starting with freshman science and work my way up. It's going to take me four years to get all my major classes out of the way. My last two years of school, junior and senior year, I'm basically going part time. I can't do it if I want my scholarship. So I have to find ways to fill in those classes, not only with something to major in, but possibly other classes that aren't listed but required from a major that it would be fun classes to take.
- S1 58:54 There are some that are definitely within the Honors College that are very interesting, because they'll take two different subjects under one theme and make it work for both.
- S2 59:05 That's fine, but I don't want it to be-- at the same time, I don't want it to be too much work, because I'm going to be studying and stuff. I don't want to take more hard classes than I need to at that point in time. I did that senior year, where I took all AP or ACE classes and it was the stupidest thing I'd ever done.
- S1 59:17 That's tough. Yeah, that's tough.
- S2 59:18 No, there was no reason for that.
- S1 59:22 Very tough, yeah.
- S2 59:25 It was a mistake. It was a mistake and I got all-- since I was so good at Language Arts and History and humanities and learning second languages, I got all my APs out of the way. I took AP everything. This semester I've taken one-- my History and my Theater class were the only General Eds I needed.
- S1 59:42 So you're taking Chem and Bio within Honors. What else are you taking outside--?

- S2 59:45 I'm taking the SLS medical careers class which is required, which I don't like.
- S1 59:51 So far it's not working for you?
- S2 59:52 There's a course pack that he goes through talking just why it's important to know about all these different schools. I'm only interested in medical school. I would have taken SLS class where the only speakers who come in are doctors. The only postgraduate plans we talk about are medical school. I don't care about pharmacy. I already know what career I want. This is a class for kids who want to go into the healthcare industry but know what kind of nurse, or doctor, or technician, or orthopedic, or dentist they want to be. It's all healthcare things that are within the College of Sciences and some Health and Public Affairs majors. I just want a class that's about doctors.
- S1 60:26 Is there a one online that's more specialized?
- S2 60:28 No, you do that when you get to medical school and you do your rounds and they tell you what kind of doctor you want to be. I already know what kind of doctor I want to be and that's going to affect the classes that I take junior and senior year. If I want to be this type of surgeon, do I really need to take virology? Do I need to take a class about infectious diseases? Possibly, but probably not. I want to go into emergency care. So I really need to take classes like dissecting, possibly some forensics classes, possibly some EMT classes, but I don't know that. Because unless I go and talk to a doctor, an adviser who knows about medical careers, I'm not getting it in this class. It's a lot of information and most of it's useless to me.
- S2 61:01 But it is required for my major and I do understand the merits of it because it's given me more information about what I need to do to prepare myself for medical school in general, but I could have gotten that from a one-on-one meeting with an adviser. I don't need to take a full class-- I don't need to take a semester-long class telling me why I should be prepared for medical school and what I should do to get there. You can get that from a-- that shouldn't be a class. That should be other sources. That's my personal opinion. I'm also taking French - an intermediate French class. I skipped the first year because I did take three years in high school. So I just went into the second class and I'm doing really well, and that's been a fun class, so that's just for fun.
- S2 61:45 I'm thinking about minoring in it, but even to minor it, you need to

- take 18 credits which is a lot.
- S1 62:18 There might be a cognate option where fewer hours are needed. It sounds like that's a subject that interests and engages you.
- S2 62:21 That might actually go somewhere. One day I'd like to say I speak it fluently. Almost.
- S2 65:01 That would be great. Anything else you can think of that you want to add or...? This is not an end deal. If you come up with something later and wish that you'd said, you certainly can email me.
- S2 65:16 I don't know. I feel like a lot of the things that-- I could complain, I could say that this wasn't shown to us like a resource or something, I'd probably could have gone and found it on my own. So there's a level of accountability that I have to take up for that. That's another thing.
- S1 65:35 Are you following like the different Honors there's things like Twitter, or Facebook, or whatever?
- S2 65:39 No, I don't use a lot of that social media stuff.
- S1 65:41 So you're not with it, because I know a lot of information is communicated that way.
- S2 65:57 I get the emails and sometimes I look at them--
- S1 66:00 Once a week I think they send emails.
- S2 66:00 --but those are usually talking about a luncheon, or an event, which can be fun sometimes. But that is precious time, and I don't have two hours to go somewhere and do something that's not beneficial to me, as selfish as that sounds.
- S1 66:17 No, I understand. That's what you're-- you're trying to get as much as you can get done. So that makes sense. What about as far as your track is concerned? Have you looked at-- I know meetings are an issue for you, but have you looked at any medical groups, like pre-med groups or...?
- S2 66:34 Yes. I was going to join AMSA and I still may to get the free pack of MCAT flash cards and a jacket but they meet Tuesday afternoons, which is when I work. Then same thing with the small group that I was going to with the church that I go to on Sundays, I'm just checking it out. It's not really serious. We're not serious or anything. I was going to one of the small groups on Sunday nights but now I work during that time, and I need the job. I need the

- money because I don't have any spending money at all. I don't get any from my parents. All my money is going to towards tuition. So I think--
- S1 67:07 I'm wondering if you could ask the first group that you mentioned, especially if there are other ways you can participate since you're not--?
- S2 67:14 They have events and stuff. So as long as I stay connected, I'm going to join-- one of my friends is a minor officer in it. So, I'm going to join-- when I get back from spring break, I'm going to start going to their events and stuff, and hopefully fit that into my schedule--
- S1 67:28 That might help a lot with finding good mentor, people that can really talk to you at the level that you need to understand. This is the route they've taken. They know what you're getting ready to go through.
- S2 67:38 I know that I've always wanted to be a doctor since I was really little, but I've wanted to be other things too.
- I'm one of those people that has the potential and the passion to do a lot of different things. I could see myself doing several things. I honestly just picked the one that would make the most money, because I don't love being a doctor more than anything else that I want to do. I've also wanted to be like-- I wanted to teach History.
- S2 67:59 I want to go into criminal justice, I want to work with the police, with forensics for a long time, but I'm also really good at writing music. I like medical stuff a little bit more. That's why I decided to be a doctor.
- S1 68:11 You'll have to narrow it down.
- S2 68:12 You have to pick one. When you get to college you just have to pick one.
- S1 68:16 You have to pick a direction. Sometimes it changes, but at the end--
- S2 68:21 You can have hobbies and you can still learn and do stuff.
- S1 68:24 Of course.
- S2 68:24 Your job doesn't always have to be the things that you love to do.
- S1 68:28 That's the other disadvantage in the sense of your not having your own transportation, although but I believe there are shuttles that go to the Med School, out--

S2 68:38 College of Medicine, yeah.

S1 68:39 Yeah. You might want to check out there and see if they do tours for students that have got-- just get a feel for everything. Have you interned, or done any work at any hospitals before?

S2 68:53 I did a little bit of work at Mayo Clinic one time, but it was really temporary. I am looking at options, my friend volunteers at a nearby hospital or clinic, and I'm thinking about doing that, too.

S1 69:03 To get experience?

S2 69:05 But she was getting transportation from somebody, and now she has her roommate drive her. So I would need to ask and pay for gas, etc. because our shuttle does not go over there.

S1 69:17 I bet there are shuttles from here to the UCF one.

S2 69:21 The College of Medicine is a completely different college. They probably do have resources and stuff. I'm thinking that any kind of positions or volunteering or interests they have, are going to be for the grad students. Right?

S1 69:36 I don't know.

S2 69:38 I could always ask.

S1 69:40 It's always helpful to ask.

S2 70:13 I really wanted to get a job at the Baptist Hospital nearby, but I wasn't allowed to get a job in high school. So that wasn't an opportunity. I really wanted to volunteer. I did volunteer at the library and stuff.

S2 70:29 I'm trying to find an internship or a volunteer job. I know there are volunteer jobs in the fall and spring that our SLS classes talked about. So I'm going to look into some of those. I am going to go to Career Services and ask them.

S1 70:41 Good idea.

S2 70:42 Since I am calling people on the phone and asking them to donate money to UCF, I know all the facts about UCF now. I'm like, "Well, some of our money goes to Career Services, which is a free service for all of our alumni. You can come back, even if you are not going to this school, and you can do mock resumes..." Anyway, the whole spiel. I know about it, and so I'm like, "Oh, I should probably go check that out because I haven't yet." Last semester, I didn't go places to ask for things.

- S1 71:06 You do have to put yourself out there to some extent. That may be even-- I have no idea, because I have no knowledge of the UCF Medicine. But there may be an opportunity to shadow somebody for a day and you can just see what happens in a day.
- S2 71:20 I feel pretty confident that I'll be able to graduate with my major or a major, and do it well. I do have a little bit of leeway as far as timing and credits go. Because in my junior and senior year if I did need to change a major, I would have to do it this summer.
- S1 71:33 Yeah, because you're really getting to the--
- S2 71:36 Besides whether my parents are happy with it or not doesn't really matter. It's what I want to do. I have a lot of-- I don't want to say anxiety. I don't want to appropriate that term, but I have a lot of apprehension over whether or not I feel like I can go to school for this amount of time, with the amount of intense work that it is. It is hard work to be a doctor. Part of me is capable of doing it. I think I'm smart enough. I think I'm passionate about it that I think though it's worth it.
- S2 72:03 But there's another part of me that-- if I need to stay proactive and positive and stable. A lot of those things are really hard for me. So do I want to put myself through hell emotionally and mentally to get through this and come out on the other side, and have a lot of issues that I spent too much time in school and it wasn't really probably good for me? That's my only real concern, but then I feel like I'm copping out and being lazy like, "Oh, this is a lot of work. I don't know if I can do it," and that makes me feel really bad.
- S1 72:39 I don't think that's at all unusual.
- S1 76:10 Okay, I know you have another appointment or class to get to... Like I said, you can absolutely email me with any other things that you think of, or that you want to make sure I get on the record for this, but I really appreciate your time. I'm going to go ahead and end our official interview session.

Ethan

- S1 00:01 Okay, we're recording. It is Friday, March 6th. It's around 9:36 AM, and I'm speaking with a student who has completed his first year, first semester in Burnett Honors College at the University of Central Florida campus. Let's get started. Can you tell me about the places you applied to or considered before deciding to come to UCF? What were your considerations for what you wanted when you thought about universities and the university experience?
- S2 00:41 The first university I applied to was MIT, then I applied to Stanford. But as back-up colleges, I applied to UCF and UF, along with The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Those were the colleges I knew I wanted to go to and I knew I wanted to study engineering, so those are my options to myself. I got accepted to UIUC, but it was much too expensive, and I didn't want go to UF, because Gainesville, and UCF-- I liked UCF, because I toured the campus and it just kind of connected with me. I saw the campus. I saw the students. I saw some of the faculty. I saw how some of the classes were taught, and I was just like, "I need to go here." That's what set my mind to UCF. And before I came here, my expectations were different. They were definitely different. I was expecting kind of like a more relaxed setting than high school, obviously, with more a lot more independence about being classes and in class and everything, but wasn't necessarily expecting the math.
- S1 02:10 Okay.
- S2 02:12 I think that's what just got me. It was just like the math here is so different the way they do it.
- S1 02:19 From what you had in high school?
- S2 02:20 Yeah.
- S1 02:23 What math courses did you take?
- S2 02:25 My first semester, I took college algebra.
- S1 02:27 Okay.
- S2 02:31 It wasn't necessarily a hard course, it was just a lot of work and there was the math lab requirement, three hours per week. I think that's what really impacted my grade in that class, and just like everything else, because I almost overloaded myself with the amount of classes I was taking.

S1 02:55 Okay. So, math, was that within the honors college, or was that outside?

S2 03:04 That was outside honors college.

S1 03:05 Okay. So, what other classes were outside the honors college that you took?

S2 03:09 I took chemistry for engineers, I also took an ROTC class, the development of air power. Or actually, excuse me, sorry, it was the Air Force Today. Those are the classes I took outside the honors college.

S1 03:27 And then within honors college, what did you do?

S2 03:28 In the honors college, I took Survey of Rock Music, and that was my only honors class last semester.

S1 03:36 And symposium?

S2 03:37 Yes. I almost completely forgot about that class [laughter].

S1 03:43 Okay, so the math class, the lab-- I'm not in the math area at all, so I wasn't aware the facilities of the lab. Based on what I have heard from other students, I understand some folks have experienced difficulty with working with the computer, because it's outdated or it's transferred information into it leaves room for error and that sort of thing. Did you experience those issues, or what were your experiences like?

S2 04:10 I did. I honestly think that the program they use is very ineffective. It's somewhat outdated, and I definitely had some trouble inputting my answers, and oftentimes, I got the answer wrong, only because of just the way I inputted was different, even though it was the same answer.

S1 04:31 Like put an extra comma or something or somewhere in there. Did you feel like the math lab - I don't know if they're GAs or what - are helpful when you needed it?

S2 04:47 Honestly, the graduate students that work there, I feel weren't really too helpful. They were almost-- they had somewhat of an uptightness about them, and if you send a request for help, it goes on the TV screen, and anyone can answer. So, if a graduate student answered, I usually didn't feel as I knew as much about the topic after they were done than if a math professor were to come help me. Because I feel that they were almost not necessarily clearer, but just focused more on the whole concept than just

answering that one specific question.

S1 05:24 So, they were a little more helpful in getting the concept for you and you could kind of go with other similar issues from there?

S2 05:31 Yes.

S1 05:36 You mentioned you took chemistry for engineering, how did that class go for you?

S2 05:43 That class was definitely hard. Not necessarily hard, it was mostly the same thing as chemistry in high school. So, it wasn't too bad, but the way that the professor taught it, it was very confusing. I felt like after I finished with the class I knew less than I did coming in, because just the way that he taught it, it was so confusing.

S1 06:07 Okay. And so, what things contributed to it being confusing? The text, the lectures, the assignments?

S2 06:13 I think mostly his lectures. It was definitely his lectures, just the way that he was lecturing and his PowerPoints were very confusing, and his answers to questions were also even more confusing, so it wasn't really helpful. I found that if I just stopped going to class and started focusing on the book more, I actually learned more than if I went to class.

S1 06:37 Okay. Got you. And then your ROTC class, was that something that you were interested in down the line is looking into the Air Force or what's your--?

S2 06:46 Yes. Hopefully after I get my degree and I'll be finishing the program, I'll get my commission and I'm going to try to be a pilot.

S1 06:57 Wow. That's exciting.

S2 07:03 But that class was, I think, the easiest thesis class I had that whole semester, because it didn't really require much, it was more of an instructional class. Like, "This is what the Air Force is today."

S1 07:12 So, it kind of gave you an overview of the Air Force as a system and organization.

S2 07:16 Exactly.

S1 07:16 Okay. So, it wasn't like, "Here's how you disassemble and reassemble a plane"?

S2 07:21 Yes.

S1 07:21 It was more of, "Here's how it's structured, here's how it works."
And then, how about your rock music?

S2 07:34 That was a very enjoyable class. I think the professor was
definitely very helpful in that class, very instructional. He made
the class something you wanted to come to because you were
interested in it. It wasn't monotone. His lectures were interactive
and the tests were structured in a way as they built off his lectures.
So, as long as you paid attention, you knew, and you didn't
necessarily have to research the book too much for things that you
weren't supposed to know. It wasn't listed in the syllabus. So, he
stuck pretty well to the syllabus, which was something I really
enjoyed.

S1 08:17 He wasn't trying to trick you. Get in class and did your work, you
were all set.

S2 08:23 Yeah. When it comes to professor, there was the syllabus, and
there was class, and they were just going into [crosstalk]. They
were just in two completely separate locations. But with this class,
he stuck to the syllabus, so you knew what to expect. You knew
what was coming, what was next, what you had already covered.
It definitely helped.

S1 08:43 Okay. That's good. Then your experience in the symposium.

S2 08:48 Symposium was interesting. I'd never been in that kind of class
before. My team leader was very interactive, she was very helpful.
I think that most of the speakers were interesting, but some of
them made you lose interest very quickly, and I think those are
the...

S1 09:11 Dry?

S2 09:13 Yeah. I definitely think that there's room for improvement in that
class.

S1 09:19 Like what? Give me some examples.

S2 09:22 First of all, the speakers-- I mean, they are amazing speakers, but
some of them definitely could be different, because I didn't feel
like they really helped the topic at all, topic of the class.

S1 09:35 Do you have-- because I don't know the answer to this, do you
have the opportunity to provide any feedback about those things?

S2 09:41 Yes. Yes, we do.

S1 09:41 That's good. What else would you think would be good for the

- symposium or the-- you would rather do without?
- S2 09:54 I think the main thing with the symposium was just the speakers. The service learning part was definitely very helpful. It was definitely an experience that I'm glad that I did, and the only thing with that is that is I feel like the materials we were provided to teach the students with weren't very specific. They were very broad and oftentimes short, so you would just-- you'd finish the lesson that they gave you, and then you just have almost the majority of the class left and you kind of just had to come up with something.
- S1 10:33 What grade did you end up working with?
- S2 10:35 I worked with third graders.
- S1 10:39 That's interesting. They're all interesting.
- S2 10:45 It was definitely very interesting. It kind of put things in perspective as of how far I've actually grown.
- S1 10:53 Well, that's good. Gave you some experience, made you get in front of people, even if they were small people [chuckles].
- S2 11:01 Yeah, it was a good experience [laughter]. It helped me overcome my fear of just public speaking in general, and it kind of showed me some better ways to teach, if I'm ever in that position, along with a view into possibly the less-- I don't know how to word this. It showed me a side of Orlando that I normally wouldn't be going to or having interaction with.
- S1 11:39 Sure, were you down by the Citrus Bowl area or over on the--?
- S2 11:43 No, I was over by-- I was off near Orange Blossom Trail in Sand Lake.
- S1 11:48 Okay, yeah, that's the reality for several teachers that end up, first year especially, because all the good jobs are being occupied by experienced teachers. They get to go to A schools, and so a lot of the times, the teachers who don't have as much experience who start off and--
- S2 12:09 It really shows me how little that these teachers often have to work with, which was definitely something instructional to see.
- S1 12:18 Yeah. So, it sounds like that was a good experience overall for you. Okay. Did you feel like all along you knew where you were, academically speaking, throughout the semester?
- S2 12:52 Not necessarily. I thought that - up until I hit midterms - I thought

- that I was doing pretty well, that all of my classes were going well, and then midterms rolled around, and after midterms, I felt completely lost. I was like, I didn't even know anything on that test, what am I doing in this class?
- S1 13:12 Specifically which class or classes are you thinking about?
- S2 13:17 Math and chemistry mostly. Math and chemistry.
- S1 13:18 Okay. So, when you received your final grades--were grades for your classes kept on WebCourses to let you track your progress and your standing and all that sort of thing?
- S2 13:37 To an extent. Not to a very large extent. I feel like they could definitely utilize web courses more, because oftentimes, I try to find my grade on WebCourses, and it just wouldn't be there or it wouldn't be up to date.
- S1 13:50 Some delay in putting in there? Okay.
- S2 13:54 My WebCourses would say one thing, but if I went to my professor, it would be completely different, and it was very often like that for my chemistry class and my Survey of Rock class. My math class, I oftentimes just didn't know what my grade was. If you look on the program that they use, it tells you individual grades, but it doesn't tell you an overall grade or standing in the class, so I was just very confused about where exactly I was, like how I was doing in the class.
- S1 14:29 Okay, overall. So, it was really just kind of like-- so, they gave you, here's what you got on this assignment, this whatever, this test, but not here's where you stand as a whole?
- S2 14:39 Yes.
- S1 14:39 Did they provide you with any mechanisms to figure that out? So, for example, this test is worth 25%, do you know what I mean? Did they break that down at all for you?
- S2 14:48 They did. That, they did. That was definitely helpful.
- S1 14:51 So, they kind of wanted you to do math to figure out your math, right [laughter]?
- S2 14:53 Yeah. [laughter]
- S1 14:55 But they weren't keeping a tally of grades throughout the semester?
- S2 15:10 It was like, okay, I could just calculate out all of this long list of

- assignments and figure out my grade, or I can just look at this, take a guess where I am, and just work off that.
- S1 15:26 What kind of things do you attribute to-- I know you said math lab was difficult to work with. Were there other issues that may have held you from getting some of the things you wanted to get done or resources that weren't available or things you wish you had known at the time?
- S2 15:45 I wish I had known not to schedule morning classes [laughter]. That's definitely something I just-- most of my classes were in the morning, so that was something that I tried to avoid. I feel like that was one of the reasons why oftentimes I didn't go to class, because I'd try to wake up and it just wasn't there.
- S1 16:03 Right.
- S2 16:05 Other than that, I wish I had more classes in the honors building. Which, I mean, I understand, because most of these classes weren't honors, but I wish there was almost a more central location where my classes were, they weren't so spread out. Because sometimes I had to go from one end of the campus to the other in ten minutes. And that's kind of on me for scheduling them so far away.
- S1 16:27 Race and jump on skateboard or something?
- S2 16:29 Yeah [chuckles].
- S1 16:32 Okay. What about study habits, study skills? Did you look back and say, "I should have done it better this way"? Or have you made plans for how you're approaching things this semester that might help you, looking back on last semester?
- S2 16:51 Yes. One of the things with last semester was most of these classes didn't have the supplemental tutoring that the university often offers, it wasn't offered for these classes, so when I wanted to go to get that extra tutoring, they said they don't offer it. I was like, "Okay, cool. That's on me." I think that definitely would have helped, if that was available.
- S1 17:17 But that's something that you're able to take advantage of in the classes that you're in this term?
- S2 17:23 Yes, some of them.
- S1 17:25 Some of them. Which classes are you in this term? Which honors college classes?

- S2 17:28 I'm taking ENC1102, Com 2, and I'm also taking macroeconomics. Those are the honors classes I'm in this semester. For non-honors classes, I'm in pre-calc and trig, along with The Air Force Today, too.
- S1 17:49 All right, and so thus far, how do you feel those courses are going as compared to where you were this time last semester? Your midterms are coming up, had come up, around this time?
- S2 18:16 I think I'm actually doing better than last semester. I'm confident that I will be able to pull my GPA up so that I'm not on probation anymore. I'm glad that I have resources to help now with these classes, like the extra tutoring I was talking about the university always offers for most of the classes. Along with, I've learned to reach out to other students in the class and work with them more. I've started devoting more time to studying than last semester.
- S1 18:50 Did you feel a difference between when you were in high school? Did you feel like you had to study less and get good grades and now it's shifted for you?
- S2 18:58 Yes, definitely. High school wasn't much effort. It was one of those-- it was different mainly, because in high school, they used to expect you to memorize something then say it back. Whereas here, you're actually learning, which is-- I enjoy that.
- S1 19:18 So, you kind of realized the effort there, but you need to step it up at this next level kind of thing--
- S2 19:23 Yeah.
- S1 19:23 --to get to where you are? Okay. You just kind of mentioned that you were taking some different approaches study-wise, you feel much more confident about how you were doing this semester.
- S2 19:37 Yes. I started going to more group study sessions, and I've started organizing more study groups for my classes. And I just feel like if two or three students are studying one topic, it's a lot helpful than just one person doing it alone, because then you have those other students there to kind of help you along, and you can help them. And by helping them, you also learn more about the topic yourself.
- S1 20:01 If you can teach it, you really know it.
- S2 20:03 Exactly.
- S1 20:04 It sounds like you're being proactive in setting up some of these groups and participating in some and actually reaching out and

saying, "Hey, let's get together and do that."

S2 20:35 Right.

S1 20:38 What about when you're studying on your own, where do you tend to study? Do you study in your room? Do you study in the library?

S2 20:50 I would like to study in my room, but unfortunately, my room only has one ethernet port and I don't get WiFi in my room, because at this university, WiFi is absolutely horrible, and oftentimes, whenever I try to go to study, it's just like, "Okay. There's no WiFi here. I guess I have to find somewhere else." But one location I found is in classroom building, too. I'm usually there on the ROTC, inside of the building, there's a room on the bottom floor. I get a really good WiFi signal. So, I can just set up my computer there and just study for how long I need to, get whatever assignments I need to get done.

S1 21:29 So, is that a designated place for people who are in ROTC to go or is that just--?

S2 21:35 Yeah. It's technically open to everyone, but it's mostly ROTC kids in there.

S1 21:43 What about within resources within honors college? Have you felt like you've been able to utilize any of those?

S2 21:51 Not really, no. No. I feel like-- not really. If I go to the honors study room that they have there - the study lounge that they have there - I feel like I'm just not as motivated to study and get the work I want done, because it feels...

S1 22:15 Are you referring to where everybody's out in the atrium kind of area? Or are you talking about computer lab?

S2 22:22 No, I'm talking about the room next to the computer lab.

S1 22:25 Okay.

S2 22:25 The little kind of lounge area that they have there with just the sofas and then the one table.

S1 22:30 I see, okay.

S2 22:32 And I mean, it's definitely a great room. And I feel like I could definitely study there more, but the WiFi there is really kind of spotty. And then oftentimes, I'm focusing more on trying to get-- accessing the materials I need to use than I am actually studying.

S1 22:55 Have you used the computer lab at all yet?

S2 22:59 No.

S1 22:58 Okay.

S2 23:00 I live in the towers, so we have the computer lab on the second floor, which I use a lot. That has definitely been-- I'm very happy I live in Towers - the Honors Towers - at that--

S1 23:11 Tower 3.

S2 23:11 Yeah. I'm very happy that the honors college has a computer lab there, because it has been so tremendously helpful this semester.

S1 23:23 What about services? Have you met with Rex?

S2 23:27 Yes.

S1 23:29 And how'd that go?

S2 23:30 Rex is definitely amazing. He definitely helped me figure out what I needed to do and where I needed to be at the end of the semester. And he's been a great help with honors classes-wise, like planning them out.

S1 23:49 Okay. I think one of the things is making sure you get a certain number of credits, so that can be difficult once you get in certain higher level of courses. So, that's really-- is he able to help you also a little bit with you know, helping your direction, are you an engineering major is that what you're--?

S2 24:14 Yes.

S1 24:15 So, is he able to help you a little with charting that course?

S2 24:17 Yes, definitely. He's definitely really great to work with. If I ever have any questions, he's always there. And oftentimes, whenever he comes to tower three lobby to kind of help with those advising sections, I try to meet with him, because he's always helpful. If I ever have any questions, no matter what it is, most of the times, it is honors related, but if I have a question by the university, he can always point me in the right direction.

S1 24:49 He's been around and back.

S2 24:50 Yeah, like one of my AP credits that was supposed to come in somehow wasn't there and we were looking at it and he helped figure all of that out and straighten all of that out, and that got me out of a class that I would normally have to take, and now I don't have to take it.

S1 25:06 That's 3 credit hours right there.

S2 25:08 Exactly.

S1 25:10 How many AP courses did you take in high school that you got through?

S2 25:13 I did the IB program. But I only took two or three AP courses. I was in the IB program.

S1 25:24 And when you came in to the honors college, or into UCF in general, what did that get for you? Were you able to get out of certain-- which classes or what?

S2 25:35 I got out of most of the gen eds, which was definitely very helpful. It helped me progress-- or start on my degree-specific classes sooner, I feel like. I'm definitely glad that I did the program, because I feel like I'm starting in a much better position than most freshmen would. I think that it definitely helped me get ready for honors classes, because IB courses are a bit more worldly than regular courses would be and...

S1 26:09 Broad. Okay. Have you had any advisers or mentors or leadership kind of in engineering yet - informal, formal, however?

S2 26:24 Not really, no. I haven't really been involved too much with the engineering department yet, because one of my credits got me out of taking the Intro to Engineering course the first semester, but I'm taking the second part of it this semester. And I feel like once I start taking more engineering classes, I'll be able to connect more with faculty in the engineering department, but right now, I hadn't really-- I hadn't much interaction at all with the engineering department, at all.

S1 26:52 I know there's a zillion clubs and organizations. I'm sure there's some engineering ones and probably specifically in the area that you're interested in. Have you explored any of those options yet?

S2 27:04 I haven't really had time to, honestly. I feel like I'm just-- I've been focusing so much on classes and ROTC this semester. I guess, in a way, ROTC is one of those campus organizations, and that takes up a lot of time.

S1 27:18 Yeah. From the ROTC perspective, what does that look like as far as how many hours a week is dedicated to--?

S2 27:27 Well, every Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, there's PTE that's from around 6:30 to 8:20. And then on Thursdays, there's a lab, which is also around 6:30 to 8:20. And then there's also some

supplemental stuff, like just meetings or just duties that you have, taking down the flag, putting up the flag or something. I kind of hold-- I hold a position in the ROTC, so I have more responsibilities that I have to get done, some more paperwork.

- S1 28:02 What position do you hold?
- S2 28:04 I'm a general military course adviser, which means that I help advise most of the under classmen to the upper classmen, kind of a bridge between the two so that they're not so isolated, and I bring up any problems that they have to the upper classmen.
- S1 28:21 Okay, now, do you tend to-- because this is really kind of a general question of knowledge for me, because I don't know a lot about ROTC, is it broken up by branch as far as what people are interested in, is it segmented, how is that?
- S2 28:35 Yeah, this university has Army and Air Force ROTC, so it is very separated. You will have some interaction, but not much at all in Air Force ROTC, and most of my interactions was with just my peers in Air Force ROTC, so yeah. And I think it's the university stuff we helped out, we have a great facility, it's definitely helpful. I mean, that study room that we have downstairs in classroom building two, it's amazing. I definitely utilized it a lot this semester.
- S1 29:11 And the instructors that you've had so far in these courses, and other members, are they helpful as kind of almost informal advisers or mentors?
- S2 29:21 Yes, definitely.
- S1 29:23 So, you feel like you're getting good support on that then?
- S2 29:25 Yes. If I have-- they definitely help me. If I have any questions about-- not necessarily university-related questions, but Air Force related questions more, or just what exactly I need to get done to get to that final end goal, to that degree that I need, they've definitely been helpful with that. One of the things they have me do is plan out all four or five years of my degree, so I know what classes I need to take, I know how I need to do to get to where I need to go. And that was definitely helpful.
- S1 30:01 That's great. And so, some of these instructors and folks that are involved in it at the leadership level, are they retired Air Force, or are they people who--?
- S2 30:11 No, they're all active duty Air Force.

S1 30:12 They're all active duty, okay.

S2 30:13 Yes.

S1 30:13 Okay, so they are kind of doing both. They seemed like they come here or there.

S2 30:19 Yeah, their assignment is ROTC. This would be their duty station.

S1 30:25 So, it's not as likely that all of a sudden you're going to have instructor change because he has to go to Afghanistan or something like that.

S2 30:30 No, this is their duty station. Here.

S1 30:37 Okay.

S2 30:39 So, they've definitely been very helpful and, along with the program itself, it's been something that I'm definitely happy that I joined. I'm looking forward to my career in the Air Force after college. And I think that is great that I kind of have that job to look forward to.

S1 30:56 Yeah.

S2 30:56 Instead of just kind of scrambling to apply to one.

S1 30:59 To have direction is certainly comforting in a lot of ways. What was I going to say? I forgot, oh gosh. Okay, so were you-- are you from instate or were you from--?

S2 31:14 Yeah.

S1 31:15 Okay.

S2 31:16 I'm from a little town about two hours down south. I'd heard of UCF, but the first time I actually started looking at UCF was when the university held confident information session down at high school. I'm very glad that they did, because if they hadn't, I don't think I would have ended up here.

S1 31:36 Yeah, so they actually have people come to your high school?

S2 31:38 Yes.

S1 31:39 Okay, and give you information? That's interesting. I know they do lots of recruiting, but that's cool. So, that was something that actually, "Oh okay, well, this could be a possibility."

S2 31:50 I mean, before it was just like, "Okay, UCF is a thing."

S1 31:54 It's there, yeah.

S2 31:54 But I didn't know anything about it. The town I came from was definitely Gator town. It's like, "All right [laughter], when you graduate high school, you go to UF." That's a thing.

S1 32:06 Right, like this is where we head next. And you're like, "No [laughter]."

S2 32:08 No, no. And then I came here, I toured the college, I saw the campus. And I just fell in love.

S1 32:16 Yeah, it is a beautiful campus. There's no doubt. From a standpoint of the honors college, one of the big selling points is that you have all of the resources of this type of institution with a more intimate setting in the honors courses. Is that still kind of what they were telling you about?

S2 32:48 Definitely, yeah. I didn't hear about the honors college until they reached-- I heard about it at orientation, kind of, but then I got the invitation to apply. And then I started seriously looking at it, and I realized how helpful it would be. I saw how the classes would be smaller, and I really wanted that. That was my main selling point.

S1 33:09 Was your high school smaller?

S2 33:11 Yeah.

S1 33:13 You felt more comfortable in that environment?

S2 33:15 Yeah.

S1 33:17 That makes sense. Have you found that to be the case that the classes that you taken at the honors college?

S2 33:21 Definitely. Most of my honors classes have maybe 10, 15 students, except for symposium, obviously. Other than that, it's been smaller-- I feel like I've personally connected with the professor more that they've been able to help me one-on-one more than they'd normally would, and I feel like because of that, I feel more comfortable talking to the professor. I've talked to all of my honors professors one-on-one, like office hours, but for my non-honors professors, I very rarely talk to them or visit on office hours, mainly because they feel so impersonal.

S1 34:00 I understand. Some of those classes you took were probably large?

S2 34:04 Yes, about 300 students.

S1 34:08 Yeah, like a big auditorium kind of setting. So, after the end of the semester, you got your grades, you got the information saying that, "Hey, click on this link, figure out where you stand," that sort

- of thing. What was your initial reaction to receiving that information? Were you expecting it? Was it something that you kind of were surprised on?
- S2 34:29 I was a little bit floored. I was kind of expecting it, but it still kind of impacted me. Even if you expect it, it's just like, "Oh, God."
- S1 34:47 Yeah, it's in writing. It's out there. What was your immediate steps after that? I know it comes with a checklist and all that sort of thing. Did you kind of--?
- S2 34:59 The first thing I did was eat a lot of chocolate [laughter]. I ate a lot of chocolate. After that, I figured out what I needed to do next, in regards to honors probation, and then what I needed to next semester, so that I could get out of that and get back into good standing with the honors college. So, I think that the list that comes with the email is definitely helpful, like, "Okay, this happened, but this is what you do-- this is what you need to do next so that you can figure out where you need to be next semester."
- S1 35:36 Okay, well, that's good. And having had that experience, does that make you view your education, professional experience, everything ahead of you differently or no?
- S2 35:54 Definitely, yes, yes. I feel like because of that, I'm more invested almost in doing better in my classes. I know how easy it is to kind of just fall.
- S1 36:10 Got you. So, that's when you started thinking, "Okay, how can I study? Where can I make some changes?"
- S2 36:19 I started thinking about what I did wrong last semester, where I messed up and how I can fix that to do better next semester, especially in regards to math. I feel like that's definitely one of the major obstacles. It's not necessarily because it's hard, it's just the requirements that they put on math here at UCF.
- S1 36:39 Right, and facilitating the lab and that sort of thing. From an engineering perspective, you take a lot of math classes, is that correct?
- S2 36:48 Yeah. I'm actually looking forward to Calc 1, which I'm planning on taking over the summer, because that means that I won't have to take-- I won't have to do three hours in the math lab each week. I won't have to work in that kind of setting, because I feel like math here is only-- it's more hard than it needs to be for the lower levels. But I know that higher level math will be harder, but the

fact that I won't have that lab requirement is definitely-- I'm glad that that's gone, because I feel like I'll actually learn more math this way.

S1 37:30 Did you have-- about the math lab-- did you have an assigned time that you had to be there? Or was it that you were logged in and you recorded your hours and--?

S2 37:36 Yeah. You could go any time. As long as you had three hours that week.

S1 37:40 And didn't have to be three hours in a row?

S2 37:42 No.

S1 37:42 Okay, and what was your preference in that sense? Were you kind of--?

S2 37:49 I tried to do an hour a day, and oftentimes, I tried to go with a friend so that it wasn't as boring or lonely. But it was still-- it's just a sense of dread the moment you walk into that math building.

S1 38:05 Right. You kind of felt a little-- it just got heavier [chuckles].

S2 38:08 It's like you're running around the whole day and you realize, "Oh, I have to do an hour in the mall today," and it just falls like an elevator.

S1 38:16 Did you try to do it as early as possible you get out of the way? Did you procrastinate it? What was your planning around that?

S2 38:22 I tried to spread it out as much as I could so that I just didn't have to spend...

S1 38:26 You didn't wait like Friday to go, "I got to do three hours today"?

S2 38:30 Exactly. I tried to avoid that as much as possible. I tried to spread it out like, "Okay, I can do half an hour today or an hour." I tried to take a friend with me so that it wouldn't be as bad.

S1 38:41 So, you had some familiar faces. Especially since it seems like when you were asked the questions, it could be anyone that comes over, so you don't necessarily build a relationship with one particular math TA or whatever.

S2 38:55 I think the math professor I had this year for pre-calc, I really enjoy his class. I hope I can take more classes by him. I'm really connected with them, which I think is amazing. And I feel like that's the reason I'm doing better in pre-calc this year than I am in trig. My trig professor is kind of impersonal. I barely ever see him

in the lab or ever to actually talk to him.

- S1 39:19 Yeah. But is that one of the classes where you're able to get some assistance, like you mentioned the tutoring options and that sort of thing that you have, is that one of the classes--?
- S2 39:28 I haven't looked at tutoring for math, because I feel like with the mall, that is kind of that extra tutoring. But no, I haven't looked at tutoring for those.
- S1 39:35 Okay. I'm not aware, that's why I'm asking. Because if the professor is not quite getting through to you, it might be helpful, depending on who you have at the mall to help, certainly makes a difference.
- S2 39:48 I feel like one of the things with the mall is, if it wasn't a requirement, then I think it would be better. If it was just an option that was there where you could go, then I feel like I would have probably actually used it more than just three hours a week. Because there's restrictions like, no headphones. If I could just listen to music and kind of just focus, it builds a bubble around me almost, where I can just kind of focus on math and just do my thing. With the no headphones rule, it's like, "Okay, well, I can study math outside the mall, do my thing, and just kind of actually learn, or I can just do my time in the mall and leave as soon as possible and not actually learn anything there."
- S1 40:32 Got you, okay. Let's see if I covered pretty much everything. And so, it seems like how you feel about preparedness, you're kind of more energized - it sounded like - from that's kind of, how you took where you were, it was like, "Now I've got to step it up. I'm going to get these things done and be more thoughtful of my planning of courses and planning my day," all that sort of thing.
- S2 40:59 Definitely. After that, I definitely realized I needed to get myself more organized. I started using a calendar so that I know when my assignments are due and everything. I've started planning on my day more - almost hourly - so I know where I need to be, how long I have to get there, all that kind thing.
- S1 41:16 Living on campus probably helps a little bit, you don't have to--
- S2 41:19 Yes, that's definitely true.
- S1 41:19 --drive or your parking spot and all that kind of thing.
- S2 41:22 I'm very happy I don't have a car this semester. I had a car last semester; parking was just bad. I barely ever touched it, mainly

because of the parking situation. But, yeah, honestly, living on campus has been very helpful. Especially I'm very happy that the Honors Tower 3 is there. It's been a great resource. The events that go down in the lobby has helped me connect with the other honor students. And then they, in turn, have helped me with some of my classes, which is definitely great.

- S1 41:50 Do you plan to remain on campus?
- S2 41:52 No, and I wish I could, but Tower 3 is just really expensive and I just can't afford it after this semester, so I'm going to be moving off campus, mainly because it'll be cheaper.
- S1 42:09 Now, did you come in with scholarships or any of those types of--?
- S2 42:12 I have Bright Futures and I got a grant, but that's about it.
- S1 42:25 Let's see if I think I have any notes. So, anything else that you can think of, particularly as it relates to the honors college? Have you felt like it's lived up to what you expected? Do you feel like the resources are there that you need? Do you feel that the people there are approachable when you have such issues? How are you feeling about that?
- S2 42:46 I feel like the honors college is definitely a great place. It's a great place for me to go study sometimes. Oftentimes, my friends will kind of want to study and we'll be like, "Where do we want to study?" Oftentimes we end up in the honors garden, the garden in the back. It's a really nice place. The people there are definitely great. Rex is outstanding, amazing. Kelly Astro, she's a great resource, as well. But I think that the honors college overall has blown my expectations. It's a great place, and I'm hoping, hoping I can continue in it.
- S1 43:29 Yeah. Do you follow on the social medias at all? They have Twitter and Facebook, and all that sort of thing. Do you follow updates from the honors college on those, or how do you get your event information, that sort of thing?
- S2 43:43 I'm a member of Honors Congress, so I follow them on Facebook and all that kind of stuff, so most of the information I get is actually through just the flyers that they put up around campus. Well, not around campus, in Tower 3. So, I'll be walking to the elevator from to start my day, I'll see a flyer for an event in the lobby, and I'm like, "Okay. Hey, I can go to that."
- S1 44:05 Got you. So, maybe if you're off-campus, you'll probably want to

be a little closer with them.

S2 44:12 Yeah.

S1 44:12 Get the tweets, and all that good stuff.

S2 44:14 Definitely.

S1 44:14 Anything else you'd want add about your experience, where you're headed? Any kind of feedback or thoughts?

S2 44:24 I just think that the honors college is really great. And one of the things that I wish it could do better is just be a little bit more personal, almost.

S1 44:47 So, how do you feel-- what are some examples of how that might-
-?

S2 44:51 Mainly with symposium, because symposium-- there was the breakout session after symposium where you work with your team, and your team leader - your breakout group - and I think that that was definitely a great experience, but mainly-- maybe if those sessions were a little longer and the symposium session itself was a little bit shorter, that would have helped, because you could have interacted more with those students that you're talking with, that you discussed the symposium session with.

S1 45:27 Okay. And from an ongoing perspective, because obviously, symposium is just that first semester, do you have any thoughts about how to maintain that personal connection with honors college or what might be a good way - from a student perspective - to do that?

S2 45:46 I think just those advising session that Rex holds in Tower 3 are definitely a good start, because you can kind of come, talk to Rex. Oftentimes, I don't have-- I want to go see Rex, but I'm trying to find time in my schedule, but then if he's in the lobby, then I can just catch him when he's there.

S1 46:07 Right.

S2 46:11 I think that it's definitely-- resources are definitely there, they're definitely available, and I think that's very great. But I think more-- if the students in the honors college knew more about what resources were available and how exactly to access them, that would definitely be helpful.

S1 46:32 Okay. You mentioned that there's gathering and so forth that happen in Tower 3, is there anything kind of honors college-wide,

like where people meet and have any honor college type events and that type of thing?

S2 46:53 Yeah. All these events are open to everyone in the honors college.

S1 46:58 Okay, but they happen at Tower 3?

S2 46:59 Yeah. They happen at Tower 3, and I think that if there were more events at the honors college building itself, that'd be nice.

S1 47:12 Because I'm thinking about when you're off-campus, it may-- so, okay. Anything else that you can think of, or any other thoughts?

S2 47:27 Not really.

S1 47:29 Okay. If you think of anything, please feel free to reach out to me in email or anything. I'm going to end our official interview session.

Adam

- S1 00:02 We are officially recording. It is 7:15 PM on Saturday, March 21st. I'm speaking with a student who was a first-semester, first-year, first-time-in-college honor student last fall, 2014. Can you tell me about, before you even got to University Honors College and so forth, what were your expectations of what college would be like, just based on really anything - pop culture, what your friends would say, what other people told you, that sort of thing?
- S2 00:38 I knew it was going to be very difficult from seeing my older sister go through it, and when she would come home on break and everything, hearing about her experiences in college. She is three years older than me, so she was [?]. So I knew it was going to be hard, but I didn't know-- I was not ready, [inaudible] because high school is so much easier than college, so it kind of surprised me.
- S1 01:09 You had a sibling who is ahead of you, and able to kind of give you some--?
- S2 01:15 Some help and some pointers.
- S1 01:17 --yeah, experience with that. Did you say she went to UF, is that what you said?
- S2 01:23 UF, yeah, she is about to graduate this May.
- S1 01:27 Is she in the Honors College there, or is she--?
- S2 01:30 No, she's just normal.
- S1 01:32 All right, where are you from? Where did you go to high school?
- S2 01:41 I did my freshman year down in Fort Lauderdale, and then before my sophomore year started, I moved to Fort Myers area, Cape Coral, a city called Cape Coral.
- S1 01:55 So, you're from the state of Florida?
- S2 01:57 Yeah.
- S1 01:59 You obviously knew about-- you left, since your sister was there; I'm imagining that you probably visited a few times.
- S2 02:07 Yeah, a couple.
- S1 02:09 What were you looking for based on - again, what you thought it might be like, what your sister may have given you in terms of advice, or other people - what were you looking for from a college? From a college in terms of resources, and what kind of

experience you might have?

- S2 02:25 I expected to have a lot of-- how do you say the word? One-on-ones with the professors. And the reason why that didn't happen, is probably because I didn't take any honors classes the first semester, my first fall. I took big lecture classes. And I wasn't used to any of that, so I kind of tried tackling things on my own, and it didn't work quite as I wanted it to [chuckles].
- S1 03:00 Your first semester, when you came in, you didn't take anything within honors except-- did you take symposium, I'm imagining?
- S2 03:08 Yeah, symposium was required. I had to take a general chemistry class, chemistry for engineers. The thing is, prior to that, my 10th grade chemistry class was honors in high school. We had three different teachers throughout the year, and each one started at a different location. I didn't remember much, but the professor assumed everyone already knew certain things, because it was principles of chemistry. A lot of people there had already taken AP chemistry. It was kind of like a, learn from my classmates rather than learn from the teacher. That pretty much ate up all my time. I couldn't-- since I had taken pre-calculus in high school and did really well at it, I was taking it here, in the Excel Program, which is like the STEM Program they used to have. I blew off the first test, I was like, "Okay, I know this. I got a lot to study." That really messed my grade up, and that's how I ended up with a bad GPA.
- S1 04:19 So you had general chemistry for engineers, pre-calculus. What else were you taking?
- S2 04:27 Then I was taking a symposium seminar, and the Excel seminar, which don't-- they're satisfactory, non-satisfactory grading. Then the one credit hour engineering class.
- S1 04:43 Only one credit. Okay.
- S2 04:46 Yeah, and then pre-calc was five credit hours. That's why it was-- and chemistry was four. Things got so bad in chemistry, I even got a tutor, but I managed to end up with a B. That's a miracle.
- S1 05:06 So one of the things you did-- when you realized it was starting to go kind of wrong in the chemistry area, you sought somebody out. How did you find this tutor? Was it somebody on campus?
- S2 05:17 People told me I could go to-- UCF has this tutoring place, right by the Honors College actually, that is usually stem-related fields, but the chemistry class I had didn't offer sessions in it. They didn't

- have anyone who could help. I ended up just Google-ing tutors in the area and got one, a former UCF student.
- S1 05:47 So you found that to be helpful. The investment basically in that paid off, in the sense that you were able to pull your grade from wherever it was to a B--
- S2 06:10 Yeah, seriously.
- S1 06:13 That's pretty amazing. What about with the other class that you - the pre-calculus class - that was a 5-hour credit class, which is definitely going to make an impact on your GPA. What happened there? Did you have-- for pre-calculus, you mentioned you had taken something similar in high school, is that correct?
- S2 06:35 Yeah, I took pre-calc and calc in high school, and got A's every quarter. You could say I felt really confident, but it was almost as if I felt too confident. And since every time my math and my chem test would be on the same day, I would devote more time to chem, because it was-- you could say, not completely foreign to me, but really foreign, because I hadn't taken it in a while, in two years. And I didn't retain anything. I was like, "I did well in pre-chem", but when I did bad on the first test, I had to learn to split the studying between the two classes, because the tests were always on the same day.
- S1 07:28 It sounds like again this is another adjustment that you made during the course of the semester, when you realized things were seemingly getting out of hand. How did you do that? How did you split that, as you mentioned, in terms of making sure you were dedicating an appropriate amount of time to both of those subjects at that point?
- S2 07:48 I started planning out when to study, and trying to do a little bit every day - especially with chemistry - because I was trying to learn, teach myself, and the best way I memorize and retain things is just daily practice.
- S1 08:09 So you're a pretty independent learner, it sounds like, in terms of, you teach yourself. You've mentioned that a couple of times. Is that also how you did things in high school? Did you have to study as much, or a lot--?
- S2 08:29 No, high school was really easy compared to college. You could just study maybe the night before a little bit, and get a hundred on a test.
- S1 08:40 So it was a little shocking when you got here? When you got to

UCF, and all of the sudden it's like, "Okay I can't study the night before, I've got to actually--"

S2 08:51 Yeah, you've got to actually study the whole week.

S1 08:55 So what about when you received your grades at the end of the semester, were they what you had expected them to be? Was there anything that was a surprise?

S2 09:07 No. In my mind, I was going to get a B in pre-calc, and a C in chemistry, and an A in engineering. It ended up being an A in engineering, but a C in pre-calc, and a B in chemistry.

S1 09:21 It kind of flip-flopped, those two. So the five hours you thought you'd have the B, but you had the C in the end in the five hour credit, which was what pulled you down a bit there.

S2 09:34 Yeah.

S1 09:39 So that's-- a C is what, a 2.0? And then you'd have a 3.0 in the four credit one, and then just the one credit, right? The engineering was one credit?

S2 09:53 With the A, yeah.

S1 09:55 Then symposium was a pass/fail, so it didn't contribute to your GPA.

S2 09:57 Yeah. Basically it's like two classes with a one credit hour intro class, which doesn't count as much, but that's why-- I made sure to take easy general education classes. This semester, I'll bring it up.

S1 10:21 So your strategy is-- as far as when you got your grades and said, "What am I going to do now?" One of the things that you thought was, "Let's go back and take some gen-ed classes." Kind of just to reestablish your footing and to help with your GPA. Is that--?

S2 10:38 Yeah, pretty much that was my thinking. I'm in American History now, American Government. I took an online intro to film class, because I needed to take it anyways, so I can get it out of the way, and Intro to Engineering - the second part - another Excel Seminar, and calculus. And I'm doing really well in calculus, compared to pre-calculus.

S1 11:07 That's great. The other intro - intro 2 basically - is it also one credit hour?

S2 11:14 Which one? Yeah, but--

S1 11:16 The Intro to Engineering 2. So you have two history classes, the

- online introduction to film, then you've got a calculus class, your Introduction to Engineering Part 2, and then I think I missed one.
- S2 11:35 The Excel Seminar, which is pass/fail.
- S1 11:39 Is that going to be every semester, or is that just something that happens the first year?
- S2 11:45 That happens the first year, because it's supposed to-- the second year of it, you're supposed to be able to research-- have an undergraduate research experience with a professor that goes-- the program is run through them. The course is pretty much, you just go to a room, and a professor comes in, and gives a speech to why you should research with them.
- S1 12:10 Okay, I got you. All right, and you're feeling-- like you said, you mentioned that you're feeling much better about calculus. Is that one-- are you taking that in the Honors College? What classes are you talking in Burnett Honors College?
- S2 12:22 Yeah, that's another thing, the Excel classes didn't let me. Because I was going to take Honors government and history, but the Excel seminar, and the Excel math class that I have to take - the Excel calculus class - this year-- it only had one of each, so I had to take the math and seminar class.
- S1 12:49 It basically interfered-- the ones you wanted to take in the Honors College interfered with the ones you had to take this semester. You didn't have a choice in that, it seems then. Right now you're not actually taking any classes in the Honors College. Have you been - for example, as far as resources are concerned - first of all, do you live on campus? Are you in Tower Three? I know that's the place--
- S2 13:15 No, I'm in Nike, the academic village.
- S1 13:19 You live on campus, but you're not in the Honors housing. What was your decision there? In terms of, why you decided not to live- - if you're going to live on campus, why didn't you decide to live with the honors student group?
- S2 13:34 I liked the feel of living here, this part of campus better. Also, it was cheaper. I guess you could say the real estate of it attracted me more.
- S1 13:51 Let me take your mind back for just a second. With the symposium class, I know that's a large class in general, because you have about 500 entering freshmen, but then it breaks down

into different groups, and you have team leaders, so what was your experience with the symposium? How did you feel about that one?

S2 14:13 It was a fun class to take. It was easy, because it was pass/fail, so the pressure wasn't really on.

S1 14:24 Did you have a good dynamic within your-- when you have your team leader section, did you have a good dynamic there, as far as the other students in that group?

S2 14:35 What?

S1 14:37 When you broke-- I know that class is so big it's broken down into the smaller units, with the team leaders. Did your group there-- was that a good dynamic? Was that a good mix of folks, in terms of everybody was easy to work with, personalities were--?

S2 14:52 Yeah, everyone got along pretty well.

S1 14:55 How did you--

S2 14:57 It was actually--

S1 14:58 Go ahead--

S2 14:58 Huh?

S1 14:59 Go ahead, I'm sorry.

S2 15:00 It was just nice going to that class once a week, just to see what they had, or see if it would be something interesting.

S1 15:09 What did you think about the service learning project?

S2 15:13 That was fun too.

S1 15:16 What grade did you get?

S2 15:16 It was a great-- huh?

S1 15:18 What grade did you get? What kids-- what grade level?

S2 15:21 I had to teach second graders, and they all made me a card on the last day. They were all so awesome. It was fun.

S1 15:29 That's so nice. I bet they were excited to have a college student in there.

S2 15:33 Yeah, seriously. They were [chuckles]. They asked so many questions.

S1 15:42 They do at that age [chuckles], that's for sure. From your

- perspective, you really only had the one Honors course in the symposium so far. And that went well, you enjoyed it, it was a positive experience for you. Have you had a chance to-- have you met with Rex, as far as advising, and--?
- S2 16:09 No. I've been meaning to go ask about summer term at UCF. I want to go ask his opinion on it; see which classes I should do.
- S1 16:20 Yeah, get on his calendar for sure. So you're thinking about summer. What about-- I know there's other resources that are in Honors building, and that are offered. Have you taken advantage of any of those at all? Or just kind of-- a lot of people like the print lab, since you're able to print everything for free.
- S2 16:48 Yeah, free printing - it's worth the walk.
- S1 16:55 And since you do-- you are pretty far across the way, geographically speaking, on campus; how often are you in that area? Are you able to interact with folks over there often?
- S2 17:09 Yeah, my math class is in classroom building one, and it's right by there.
- S1 17:15 So have you maintained relationships with folks you may have met during symposium, or Honors orientation, or anything like that?
- S2 17:25 Yeah, from orientation and symposium. I'm in the Honors community, so I interact with them sometimes through that.
- S1 17:36 What does the Honors community do? What is the purpose of--?
- S2 17:38 Well, I'm on the social committee of Honors Congress. We just pretty much plan the social events that-- the Honors Congress is-- I guess you can say, the club of Honors College, for honors kids to hang out and do stuff, and we just plan what to do.
- S1 17:55 You get to plan what fun things you're going to get students to participate in.
- S2 18:02 They get people to meet each other.
- S1 18:05 That's good. Has that been successful thus far, as far as what's--?
- S2 18:09 Yeah, the events have been fun, I think. Friday-- yesterday they did a - I couldn't go, but they did - what is the place called? Lake Clare hang out. People just go up and play soccer, kick the ball around a little bit, or kayak.
- S1 18:29 Nice. So you're still staying involved, even though you're not in

honors courses right now, you're still maintaining that link.

S2 18:38 Yeah.

S1 18:39 That's good. What about as far as-- you're in Nike, you chose that for financial reasons, for geographic, that sort of thing. Do you have roommates currently?

S2 18:51 Yeah, I have a roommate and two suite mates.

S1 18:55 Are those people that you knew before, are they people new--?

S2 18:58 No, I met them all here. I met one of them at Honors orientation, actually.

S1 19:04 Do you have an honors student in with you there?

S2 19:09 Yeah, there's a couple on my floor. There's a lot.

S1 19:14 That's good. From a perspective-- when you're there, are the dynamics there good? Your relationships are good with those folks?

S2 19:23 Yeah, it's good having them, because they're all good at different things. One kid will be really good at math, another kid will be really good at chemistry, and you can just knock on their door and ask them a question if you need help.

S1 19:39 Great, that's good. If you're looking back at when-- where you are right now, it sounds like you're feeling good about your calculus class, how are you feeling about your other classes? Are you feeling more confident with those?

S2 19:54 Yeah, I know how to study for the test now. High school tests are so different from college tests, because it's like little concepts repeated over and over. But college tests will be nine questions, and each question is a different concept that you've learned. You can-- if you know it, you know it. If you don't, you get that whole question wrong. You get some points. That's what I've learned, especially with math.

S1 20:24 They don't give you the partial credit.

S2 20:27 Some do, but it's not-- you learn a concept, and the whole test is just that one concept, [like multiply?] with different numbers. Every question is something different that you've learned throughout the time that you've been studying for that test, the learning material.

S1 20:45 When you've--

S2 20:46 That--

S1 20:47 I'm sorry, go ahead.

S2 20:48 What were you going to say?

S1 20:49 I'm just-- no, go ahead, finish what your thought was.

S2 20:54 That was just-- when I realized how much more I have to study to know every concept that we've learned, so I can do well on the test.

S1 21:04 I know you mentioned last semester you made some adjustments along the way. When you got your grades, and you kind of said, "Oh man," and figured out where you were; how did you feel at that moment, basically?

S2 21:19 The first thing I did-- I felt pretty bad. But the first thing I did, was just calculate where my grades would have to be this semester, to be able to stay in Honors College, and maintain a good GPA. I just set that goal for the semester, basically.

S1 21:46 So then as you were looking ahead, and making your strategy, and that sort of thing; I know you mentioned that you changed your study habits during the first semester, as you started to see things going in a direction you didn't want them to go. Have you made additional adjustments since then, or are you following those same patterns? What are your techniques, or how are you able to keep up with material, prepare for tests, and feel confident when you're going into them, that you have the information and knowledge that you need to be successful?

S2 22:21 I just review a little bit every day, especially on test weeks, and constantly-- instead of going to play soccer, or going to do something with my friends, I'll study with them instead. It's just the more freedom I have, the more I should be studying.

S1 22:46 Do you actually set aside time in your calendar? Do you plan that, or do you just look at your--?

S2 22:52 Yeah, sometimes I do. I just plan on my day. I'll try to study after this class until my next class, for example.

S1 23:03 I know you mentioned you participate in the Honors Congress, in terms of being on a social committee there. You mentioned something about soccer-- are you playing club soccer, or just pick-up soccer?

S2 23:19 We play pick-up soccer. I was on an IM team for the series three

and the Saturday seven, but it's mostly just pick-up.

S1 23:29 There are teams that you play on?

S2 23:35 Yeah, the intramural games.

S1 23:37 Oh, cool. What position do you play? I'm just curious.

S2 23:45 Defense.

S1 23:47 That's what I played. I loved playing defense. That was the most fun for me, anyway.

S2 23:53 Soccer is the best.

S1 23:56 How about other-- have you gotten involved in any-- you mentioned that you're taking these introduction to engineering courses; have you decided upon a major specifically, within engineering?

S2 24:08 Yeah. I'm doing aerospace right now. I joined the SEDS club, which is-- I think it stands for Students for Exploration and Development of Space. I joined AIAA, which is another aeronautical club. And I joined the Society of [?] Engineers, and it pretty much seemed like what I would be doing with the major I chose.

S1 24:36 What was that first one again, The Students for...?

S2 24:40 Students for the Exploration and Development of Space.

S1 24:45 ...and Development of Space, okay. Wow. So you have-- endgame is that you want to be working in a job that's aerospace; is that kind of like you're looking at NASA, or--?

S2 25:01 Yeah, like Lockheed Martin. Stateside, any of those.

S1 25:07 Have you ever done any shadowing? Have you worked with anybody in those areas to see what the jobs are like over there?

S2 25:21 No, but we went on a tour of one with SEDS, we went on a tour of a company. That's pretty much one of those things where I had to see it in person.

S1 25:37 Where did the passion for this area come from?

S2 25:43 When I was little, I wanted to join the Air Force at first. That was my plan, just fly planes and be a pilot. But in middle school, when I started taking advanced math classes, I realized I enjoyed doing math. I started looking into engineering, and then I found that I could be designing these airplanes, and actually-- then I got

involved with the spaceships, and that drew my attention.

S1 26:29 That's a long list of things that you're involved in. But is there anything else, any other clubs or organizations that are UCF related?

S2 26:37 Oh no, that's it.

S1 26:39 That's it, okay. But it sounds like you are involved. I know that's a big step for a lot of folks to jump in, and--

S2 26:48 Yeah, because I have to-- it's good to be.

S1 26:53 Are you feeling like-- or do you feel, looking back on last semester, that being involved in clubs had any impact on your grades, or do you think that was just...?

S2 27:07 It does. If you choose it over studying basically, if you don't plan ahead to study before, let's say, your meeting or your activity with the clubs.

S1 27:22 So you have to plan that out. What do you anticipate per week, that you spend in terms of time on some of these organizations, or with the social committee, and that sort of thing?

S2 27:36 Excuse me?

S1 27:37 On average, how much time do you think that you spend on this kind of-- the UCF clubs, and Congress, social committee, that sort of thing? How much time does that take?

S2 27:52 The social committee wasn't that bad, because we would get together once a month to plan, and it was optional to go to the events. Like if you can't make it, you can't make it, no one's going to yell at you or anything. And then SEDS and AIAA, SEDS has weekly meetings, but if you don't go to them because you have something to do, like a prior engagement, it's not that big of a deal. But right now we're building a rocket that can reach 2,000 feet for a competition, and this Monday we have to meet from 3:30 until 8:00 to actually start the process of putting it together.

S1 28:31 Wow, that sounds fun. But that's an exception to the rule, that's not something that happens often.

S2 28:39 Yeah, it's like a project. What takes up the most time would be the projects of the engineering clubs I'm in.

S1 28:51 How do you feel in terms of-- obviously right now you're not taking any course within the Honors College; have you started looking at future semesters to plan out?

- S2 29:06 Yeah, I did. I've already registered for my fall and spring with pretty much almost all Honors classes. If I stay and do summer here, and get calc 2 done, then I think in fall I would be taking three Honors classes, and then in spring another three, so I can catch up on what I missed.
- S1 29:29 Well, I mean you want to have-- there's a certain number of credit hours I know you have to have in Honors.
- S2 29:35 Yeah, they recommend two a semester.
- S1 29:39 Sounds like your plan will catch you up there. Did you come in with credits? Did you do any IB stuff, or AP?
- S2 29:48 Yeah, I did. With the AP credits and dual enrollment, I came in with 45, I think, 45 credit hours.
- S1 29:55 And dual enrollment. Who was the dual enrollment with? What was the institution?
- S2 30:02 Edison State College, but I think they call it Florida Southwestern now.
- S1 30:09 Florida Southwest. What was that experience? Do you feel like that prepared you at all for what you came into?
- S2 30:16 No, not at all [laughter].
- S1 30:25 How many credits did you come in with? Are you academically sophomore, or did you not--?
- S2 30:32 I think I must, because at the end of this year I'm going to have 60 credit hours.
- S1 30:37 A pretty good chunk.
- S2 30:43 Yeah, because I need 128 to graduate, or 124 I think. I'm halfway there, which is good.
- S1 30:51 Based on your experiences last semester in particular, but kind of as you're navigating this semester; how prepared do you feel at this point to move forward, to keep going with your education, and pursue your plans?
- S2 31:07 I feel very confident right now, only because I've seen what I did wrong, changed it, and now it's working how I thought it would.
- S1 31:16 You feel like you made the right adjustments. You've kind of gotten your rhythm down as far as college life; being on your own, and not having somebody knock on your door in the

morning, "Get up, let's go" [chuckle]. Because that's an adjustment in and of itself, certainly. Are you working outside of-- or just working at all this semester, this year? Are you just--?

S2 31:43 No, I haven't worked-- the last time I worked was winter break.

S1 31:54 I just wondered if you were working while you were managing all of these things, in addition, so I just wanted to ask.

S2 32:03 Yeah.

S1 32:04 I think I've talked to you mostly about everything that I wanted to, about-- how about for you, is there anything as far as resources, or ideas, or things that the Honors College could do? More of, better of, differently, less of-- are you having thoughts around that for improvements?

[silence]

S2 32:49 They do things pretty well. I can't think of anything that could have-- maybe-- do they have tutors? I don't even know if they have tutors.

S1 33:02 Not to my knowledge. Okay, so maybe have something like--

S2 33:06 Tutors would be nice, only because it would-- I understand that UCF has them, but with special cases like that intro to engineering class, when I know there's honors students who have taken it and done really well on it, that maybe they could help...

S1 33:27 Yeah, kind of like a mentor. A peer mentor of some sort, that could help--

S2 33:32 Yeah, because those tests were really -- they need to study previous test questions, you needed to know how we give you the test questions, because it wouldn't be related to the book material that we would learn. Having that older peer that's already been in your shoes would help a lot.

S1 33:56 Is there anything else, based on what we have talked about, that would want to add, or any other thoughts about that?

S2 34:05 Not really, they're pretty good how they are.

S1 34:09 Okay, I'll go ahead and end the recording here, at about 7:49.

**APPENDIX H: PARTICIPANT TRANSCRIPTIONS: TBHC STUDENTS IN
ACADEMIC GOOD STANDING**

Alexis

S1 00:02 Good morning, today is February the 20th. It's about a little after 9:30, and I'm meeting with a student from the Burnett Honors College at UCF, who is here to talk about her experiences in her first semester, first year in Honors College. Before I begin, do you have any questions about the forms, or anything that we've talked about as far as what this interview's about?

S2 00:33 No, ma'am.

S1 00:33 Then let's get rolling. First question that I would like to ask is; before you came to UCF, what did you expect or what did you think your college experience would be like, and then once you learned you're going to be in Honors College, what that experience was like. If you look back to then, what were you most-- what were your perceptions?

S2 00:57 Just about college in general, I thought it would be a lot different than it is right now. I never thought-- I actually have lived in the area all my life. I still live at home with my parents, and I always thought that I was going leave home. I always thought that I would-- I was planning on actually going out of the state because I was really involved in singing and vocal performance, and that's what I wanted to major in, and I was looking into some schools out of state. I thought that I was going to be completely Miss Independent and away from my family. But then I had a change of heart and I decided to major in speech therapy, and I just looked into UCF, and I was like, Well it's really convenient, I can live at home, I can have a job. I can do my own things, without having to worry about paying for rent or anything like that.

S2 01:57 Coming to UCF has been-- it's been a big change definitely, because I'm always busy. I'm either at work, or at school, or doing something else. I've always been super independent, so I'm barely at home anyways, I barely see my family, but it's been good. It's just a lot different than what I expected, because I don't have to worry about-- like I don't have the experience of living out of home, but honestly that's fine with me because I love my family. I get to hang out with them whenever I want to, but I also have a sense of independence and everything - and so it's a perfect balance between the two.

S2 02:43 And then when I decided to come to UCF and I got accepted, and then in the mail I got something from the Honors College and was like, "You should apply." and I was like, "Okay, sure why not." It

wasn't anything that I was planning for, and I've always taken like Honors classes and AP classes, so I was like, "It's probably not much different from that, so I just went ahead and applied. And then I got accepted into it and I was like, "Okay." I didn't think of it as a big deal, I thought it was going to be-- I was used to rigorous courses already, just because I've always taken AP classes and all these classes. I was just kind of like, "Okay, it will probably something like that. I'll be around people that have the same kind of work ethic as I do," and then I didn't have much of like... You know what I mean [chuckles]?"

- S1 03:45 Yeah. Did you find that when you came into the honors college there were a lot differences? You mentioned that you've been in AP courses and you'd taken some higher level options in high school, and then you kind thought, "These are going to be people like me". Have you found that to be true, or have you found it to be more diverse than you expected, or more challenging?
- S2 04:04 I think... let me think, I'm trying to think of the honors classes that I took last semester.
- S1 04:09 Please take your time.
- S2 04:18 Yeah, I feel like everyone that I met was really passionate about everything and they knew what they wanted to do, and they had some sort of passion and dedication, and a really high level of work ethic. But at the same time, they were just like-- you know there is this like stereotypes of what honors kids are [chuckles]. I don't think that I fit the stereotype at all, and there are some kids that I know that do, but at the same time there's a lot of kids that don't and they're just like normal kids [chuckles] like, "We do what everyone else does" and I've met people like that. And it's great to be around people that are super passionate about learning and stuff because I just love learning, so it's nice to be in that environment, but at the same time it's like we're like people too, we do things that other people would do. So it's not that much of a difference, it's just that environment of being super passionate.
- S1 05:26 That kind of leads us to the next question that I wanted to talk about. What about your experiences, can you describe a few of your experiences during your first semester? How many honors courses did you take in your first semester, do you remember?
- S2 05:41 I took-- I don't know why I'm blanking out all my classes I took last semester [chuckles].
- S1 05:49 No it's okay, think it through.

- S2 05:51 I took a humanities honors class and a speech class that was honors.
- S1 06:00 And the symposium probably?
- S2 06:01 Symposium, yeah. I think it was-- yeah, it was those two classes. Yeah, that was it.
- S1 06:03 So three with symposium, and then so how many did you take outside of Honors?
- S2 06:08 Two extra, so five in total.
- S1 06:09 Five total, okay. So what did you expect? You're going kind of back and forth between these two worlds almost, when you're in an Honors college classroom versus when you're not. Did you kind of feel that those were different experiences, did you feel that was similar, or what was your experience like?
- S2 06:31 The biggest difference was that the honors classes were so much smaller, and I loved that. Honestly, I never wanted to come to UCF because it's such a huge campus, and I knew all my classes were going to be huge, and I like small classes, and being able to get to know my classmates and my professor, and being able to develop a relationship with them. That was the biggest difference, and it really did make a difference, because in my honors classes I was able to talk to my classmates, and we would study together. In my speech class we bonded, even with my professor we got along all really well. And we see each other now and we're like, "Hey, how's it going?" and then in my non-honors classes it's just a huge classroom, I set there. I'm kind of-- I'm not very talkative, I don't really talk to people that I don't know. There, I just sit alone, and if someone starts talking to me I'll talk back, but it's not the same.
- S2 07:44 It's definitely just like you're kind of there, and the professor-- you're in a big lecture hall so you're far away from the professor. Those professors are super accessible and they'll make themselves accessible to us as students, and they have office hours all that kind of stuff before and after class you can talk to them but it's just not the same, because in those smaller honors classes you really do get a lot more attention from the professors, and they get to know you a little bit better. That was one of the biggest differences for me, and that was-- that really did make a difference. Especially the semester, I am not taking any honors classes because I started taking classes for my major, and they don't offer any honors classes for my major and I just didn't have any room in my schedule for like-- I finished all my - what are

they called - general education [crosstalk] courses, those are usually the ones that are honors, and then they also have interdisciplinary seminars that they offer, but those are just random classes. I'm pretty sure there is one about like zombie movies, another one about baseball, now I have to take like six of those, that's kind of frustrating me. This semester I'm not taking any honors classes, and it kind of stinks because I'm in those big lecture hall classes all the time. It's not as - what's the word?

S1 09:27

Intimate maybe--

S2 09:28

Yeah, intimate.

S1 09:29

I don't want to put words in your mouth [laughter]. When you learned about your grades last semester, did you-- were you feeling like you knew how they were going all along, was anything a surprise? What was your reaction to getting your grades?

S2 09:48

I think I was-- I got what I think I deserved for, and what I worked for. I've never felt like I've been-- like I've always known if I work this much I'm going to get this. I know how to gauge that, so I've never really felt like, Oh, my professor cheated me out of this, or something like that, I've never felt like that. I think if I put the work ethic in, I think I'll get what I deserve, and I wasn't surprised by anything, I think I've got what I deserved, definitely

S1 10:32

Were your professors - honors and then regular UCF courses - were they pretty transparent about the grading schedules, was there anything kind of vague about it or, "Hey, write this and we'll see how it goes" did you feel like you had the right expectations for you as you were making your assignments?

S2 10:57

Definitely in my honors classes, I knew exactly what the professors wanted and I would have to tailor my work to that, because obviously that's what you got to do. In my non-honors classes, those were more just like you take a couple of tests and that's your grade, it's not as much work and you don't have to put that much-- you have to put a lot of effort into it, but it's not as time consuming and stuff like that. Like for my world religions classes I just had, I think four tests and that was my grade. There was definitely a different in how the professors graded, for my honors classes I had to put a lot more work into it and I knew exactly what the professors wanted, and I knew what the professors for my core classes wanted as well, it just wasn't as demanding or time consuming.

- S1 12:03 To what do you attribute your success, in terms of how were you able to-- first semester, first time in college, things not quite as not maybe you expected them to be, you didn't initially expect to be at UCF based on what you've said. What were the keys for you, in terms of being able to perform at the level you were able to perform?
- S2 12:30 I think I said that I've always been pretty independent. Since I can remember, I've always just worked on my own. My mom's always - like with my brother - she's always had to be like, "Do your homework, do your homework." with me and my sister she never had to say anything like that, I've always just worked hard. I don't know why, I'm just like-- I like challenging myself, and I like learning. But being able to be in the honors classes, those small sized classes that really helps. Being able to be around other students that do care as much as I care really fosters the sense of the dedication that I have, especially when I compare it to my classmates in my core classes. Some of my classmates that I've met, they're just not passionate about learning, they're like, "Okay, this is just a core class. It's not really that important, I'm not going to try that hard." and I view it as like, "It's learning. I really like learning, so yeah, I'm going to try hard. I'm going to learn as much as I can." being able to meet people that have that same sort of passion for just learning anything is really invigorating, and it's sets some sort of like - I don't want to say competitiveness - but it does like it makes you want to perform better, and it makes you want to be better, so that you can just learn as well as your classmates are. That environment really fosters my success.
- S2 14:23 The professors, they would teach what they needed to teach, but they would really just go into depth with it, and they would talk about things that are just fascinating. Like in my humanities class, I learned so much about just random things, just because my professor would talk about it for a little bit, even though it wasn't exactly what was in the textbook, or something like that, and so that was really interesting, and I really loved it. I remember coming home almost every night after humanities and telling my dad, "Oh, did you know this, and this, and this about Christianity? Oh did you know this, and this, and this about the Bible?" things like that, and so it was really interesting. And in my world religions class that I was taking at the same time as my humanity's class, I didn't really learn that much, because my professor was just saying what was in the textbook. That kind of thing also was really stimulating, and it definitely made me want to learn even

more.

- S1 15:28 What about-- you were talking about you have work and you have classes, how has time management come into play? How do you make sure you get the time in, do you participate study groups? What's your way of making sure you're staying motivated, and you're very independent, how do you set your own schedule for that?
- S2 15:50 I don't know, my family always makes fun of me because if I'm not at school I'll be doing homework, and if I'm not doing homework I'm at work. And mom's sometimes like, "Can we go to the mall?" and I'm like, "No, I have homework." and my sister's like, "What do you have homework for? You're in college, you don't have homework." I'm like, "But I got to read. I got to study, I got to write an essay." I've always made fun of my sister too because she's insanely smart, but she just doesn't work as hard as me and I've always been so jealous, I'm like, "How do you do it? How do you get straight As without having to spend your whole weekend studying and writing essays and stuff?" I don't-- time management, it's just been easy for me because I know how to prioritize things. I know college is top of my list, work is next, so I'm going to go to school, I'm going to do my homework, I'm going to come home and I'm going to go to work.
- S2 16:54 Last semester I worked at an elementary school, and that was-- I loved working over there. I worked at the extended day program and was a counselor for the first grade class, and I loved it there. Then if I needed to study for a test the next day, my boss was fine with us just bringing our note cards with us, and if we were in the computer lab with the kids, just study there, little things like that. And then I would come home, either I'm going to hang out with my family, go out with friends whatever or I'm going to do homework whatever. I know what my priorities are so I'm going to do what I have to do to meet those standards that I set for myself. I don't think I've ever had a problem with time management, I don't really procrastinate, I kind of just think, "I'm just going to get it over with." I'm really bad at like actually being able to focus on one thing for a really long time so I like to jump from one thing to another, and that's not always efficient, but I get really bored if I'm doing one thing for four hours.
- S1 18:10 It sounds like it keeps your brain moving--
- S2 18:12 Yeah.

- S1 18:13 --from one thing to the other.
- S2 18:14 Yeah, exactly [laughter].
- S1 18:17 Let's see. What resources, I know you've mentioned professors, are there any other resources within the Honors College that you've utilized that have been helpful? Like if you go to advising sessions? I know that there are team leaders synced up with the symposiums. So are there any resources within the Honors College that you have sought or received help from?
- S2 18:48 Definitely the printing lab [laughter]. That's a huge part of being in the Honors College, I go there and print everything that I need. But let's see, when I-- you know how I told that this semester I'm not taking honors classes, when I first realized that that would be sort of a dilemma, I went over and talk to Rex Roberts and he was really helpful. I understand that there's really nothing that he can do, he can't just like create an honors class for me. He just told me that I need to take random honors classes whenever I can fit them into my schedule, but it was nice that he was so accessible because I was able to just go to the Front Desk and be like, "Okay, I need to make an appointment with Rex," "Come this day." and it was nice that he was so accessible, considering he's so-- like I feel like he's pretty important in the Honors College. I'm not sure what his title is.
- S1 19:50 He's the Director of Advising, but he's an adviser-of-one when it comes down to it, so he's got a lot of responsibilities; I'm glad to hear that. I've met with him a couple times as I've done some research, and he definitely prioritizes and wants to help however he can.
- S2 20:07 Yeah, definitely. I don't-- I can't think-- symposium, I don't know if you know what it consists of, but the part where we would break off and talk to our-- what are they called? Group leaders, or team leaders.
- S1 20:26 Yes, team leaders I think.
- S2 20:28 Yeah, something like that. Our group leader was really friendly and he was like, "If you ever need to talk to-- about anything come and--" I never personally used that, but I'm sure maybe some of my classmates did, and it was nice because he was just only a year older, so he's like more like a friend not an authority figure. If I'm completely honest, I didn't really enjoy symposium as much as I could have, but I feel like the way they structured it was pretty good.

- S1 21:08 When you say you didn't as much as you could have, is that more because of what was going on with you, or is things you weren't interested in, or what was the...?
- S2 21:17 I just felt like the whole-- I don't know, the whole process of the symposium and it being a thing that we were required to do, was kind of silly to me. The fact that we had to break off into these groups and talk about our feelings with someone, I'm just not into that kind of stuff. Some kids were, sure, but I didn't like that as much. I really liked the idea that they were trying to communicate with us, and that we are responsible, and it is our duty to help our community because I'm a huge believer in that. I-- like a huge believer, and so I loved that. I just feel like maybe they could've given us-- instead of making us talk about our feelings and stuff like that, maybe they could've given opportunities to get out into the community and do that.
- S2 22:27 We did do the-- what's it called, the thing where we would go to the elementary school, and stuff like that? And that was really nice, I liked that. But even just coming up with places where we could actually go out into the community and do something to help our community, I feel like that maybe would've been more effective, and persuaded our students into actually helping their community. I just feel like telling us over and over-- and it was really cool, them bringing in the guest speakers, that was really cool. A lot of the guest speakers were super interesting and I really enjoyed that part, but maybe instead of meeting with our group leader and stuff, we could have instead just gotten out into the community more and done that. Because I feel like that's really important, and I feel like the best way to persuade us into doing that is to actually have us do it and see what it can actually accomplish.
- S1 23:40 For you, obviously you've been an independent-- you've gotten through high school doing well, what does it mean to you to be where you are, in good standing in the honors college after your first semester?
- S2 23:56 What do you mean by that?
- S1 23:59 What does it mean for you, how do you feel about it? Is it something that you never doubted or you were like, "I made it." at the end of that, how did you feel when you got your grades and said, "Oh I'm here." versus anywhere else?
- S2 24:19 I wasn't surprised by my grades. I worked really hard, so I think I

expected to just continue in the Honors College. If I didn't and if something was wrong, I would have been upset with it and I would have like beat myself over it, because I would know that it's my fault. I think it's definitely-- I feel like I got what I deserved, and I didn't expect much else. I think it's a great resource to have in UCF-- to be able to be part of the Honors College, I've liked it so far.

- S1 25:10 Again, going back to what you expected and then what you've experienced. How does experiences affected what you think about college, and what you think about your academic related future? Has it made you more motivated and, Wow this is good different, or this is a strange different, how are you feeling about that at this point?
- S2 25:36 I think it's definitely a good different. I was thinking about something that I was going to say while you were asking the question [chuckles] and then I--
- S1 25:45 Sorry.
- S2 25:46 No, don't worry.
- S1 25:47 You can totally interrupt me.
- S2 25:49 No, don't worry.
- S1 25:54 Take your time please, not a race.
- S2 26:00 Definitely... can you ask the question again, and then maybe I'll--
- S1 26:08 Sure, I'll read the official question.
- S2 26:10 [chuckles] Okay.
- S1 26:11 How have your experiences affected your view of post-secondary education - college education - in your academic-related future? Based on what you expected before you came in, you realized, "This is different from what I thought it was going to be" and going forward, how do you feel about how you think it's going to go from now on? How has that kind of affected your future thinking?
- S2 26:37 Like I said, it's a good different. And like I said before, I always didn't want to come to UCF because it was such a big school. Well now I realize that yes, this Honors College does give you access to things that maybe the rest of the students here at UCF might not have access to. I know it varies with each class that you take, but the Honors College definitely assures that you will be able to be in

a smaller size class. That's definitely a huge thing for me that I really enjoyed and I didn't expect that at all, because my sister comes to UCF too and she always told me that her classes were huge, so that's really been nice. Also, all the professors that I've had so far - the honors professors I've had so far - and my classmates, like I've said, they've motivated me even more. It makes me excited to learn, especially when they're excited to learn; and my professors, when they're excited to teach.

S2 28:00 A lot of the professors I'm running into now, taking classes for my major, just aren't passionate about what they're teaching, that kind of just-- it kind of does affect the students at-- like definitely, but being able to have that kind of relationship between professor and student has been amazing, because I've definitely been more motivated and I've been able to adjust to college more, because like I-- yeah I've taken AP classes and college level classes before, but it's still completely so much more different.

S1 28:43 When you say college classes, were you doing any dual enrollment or were you just--

S2 28:46 No, just the AP classes.

S1 28:46 Okay

S2 28:52 I've never-- before coming to college, I was never on a college campus before taking classes with other college-level students, and so it has been different. But I think being able to part of the Burnett Honors College has made the transition a lot easier, because I have been able to-- I have been given so many resources like the small class size, the professors, the classmates, all the mentoring during symposium and stuff like that, has helped, and I've really enjoyed that. I believe that with the rest of my years here at UCF, I'll definitely be taking more advantage of that stuff.

S1 29:43 Great. When you mentioned that you hadn't been on a college campus taking classes before, and you didn't expect to be at UCF, did you go to visit other schools in the area? What were your other choices or your other possibilities that you thought about?

S2 29:58 Like I said, I was really active in singing opera and stuff, and so I went to-- one summer I went to DePauw, over in Indiana.

S1 30:11 Yes.

S2 30:11 And I did an Opera camp there for - I think it was just a week - it was really amazing, and I met the professor that gave me lessons while I was. She was amazing, and she was like, "Oh, I want you

to come here blah blah blah". That was really exciting, but when I decided that I wanted-- because like I said, I am a huge Proponent of helping our community, and I believe that it is our duty. I kind of was like, I'm so passionate about that and I have always volunteered in the community myself and I am so passionate about that, and I love singing but I feel like that's not what I'm most passionate about. That's why I decided to come into speech therapy, hopefully work with kids. When I decided that, I started looking into colleges here in Florida, and my top choice was UF. I did go visit over there, and I loved it, it was beautiful. And then FSU was another choice of mine, it was kind of like [inaudible] about FSU. And then here, I had come on campus before for singing stuff, so I was familiar with the campus. But when it came down to choosing between UF, FSU, and UCF, it was honestly just more of the most logic and reasonable choice. Because UF didn't offer me any sort of scholarship, because all of their money goes to academic-- to athletes, and I'm not an athlete...

S1 31:52

Singing is very taxing for sure.

S2 31:54

Yes definitely, but FSU-- I was between FSU and UCF, and like I said, FSU [inaudible], UCF gave me a huge scholarship. With Bright Futures I'm just not paying for college, so I was like, "Well yeah, I could do that you know I just going to college for free. And obviously my parents were happy about that and they were like, "That'd be great because then when you go to get your Master's" and with speech therapy you have to get your masters right away, she's like, "When you go to get your Master's, we can pay for that ourselves." and so since they don't have to pay for my undergrad they'll be ready for my masters, which is exactly what my sister did as well.

S1 32:39

Is she in the same area or does she--

S2 32:41

No, she's a social work. Yeah, she's graduating in May.

S1 32:46

Wow.

S2 32:47

From her Master's program, so that's really exciting for her.

S1 32:53

I'm going to just make sure I've covered everything. I feel like we've covered everything, let me see if there's anything else I wanted to get, more information about. What about resources in and outside of the Honors College, how aware of you about them? Obviously everyone knows the writing center, everyone knows the library, but what kinds of-- have you utilized any of them? Is

there anything that you see out there resource-wise that would be helpful, or any that aren't there that you would appreciate having?

S2 33:43 I think the biggest resource that I took advantage of was advisers. Like I said, I met with Rex Roberts that one time and then I wanted to meet with somebody at my college, to speak to them and see what I needed to do for my [crosstalk]--

S1 34:01 To make a plan?

S2 34:01 Right, and that was really hard. It wasn't what I needed, because like when I-- I think I called them, and they were like, "You're still a freshman student, you can't come and meet with the advisers here." and I said, "But I'm taking classes for my major, I need to meet with an adviser." and finally I got to meet with somebody. It wasn't that helpful because she was thinking, "You're still a freshman, why are you here?" and then, I met with a second year adviser that I had met with during one of the symposiums, and he actually helped me a lot, and was able to help me figure out what classes I need to take, and he helped me familiarize myself with the - what's that called - the paper that tells you all the classes that you need to take for a specific major, it tells you...

S1 35:04 Plan of study?

S2 35:05 Yeah, something like that. He showed me how to use that in that kind of sense, so that was really helpful.

S1 35:10 So this was someone who was one of the team leaders, or someone you just met?

S2 35:14 No, he was a second year adviser. But during one of the symposiums, they had them come over and--

S1 35:22 He was a guest speaker kind of thing?

S2 35:24 Yeah. Because during one of the symposiums, I think it was towards the end of the semester, they brought advisers over to help us plan our second semester.

S1 35:32 Got you, great. So he was a good source of information?

S2 35:36 He was really helpful. I was really frustrated with my College, I was like, "That's not okay." because even though I am technically a freshman student, I'm in junior standing right now. Like I have...

S1 35:49 Because you have all the credits, like you exempted out of probably English 101, 102, all that stuff.

- S2 35:55 That was really frustrating, but hopefully they'll be a little more helpful this semester when I try to start planning out my next semester and stuff like that.
- S1 36:17 Hmmmm...I'm not sure what the rationale is for that. Let's see, do you feel prepared, given all of that that's going on, do you feel prepared to move forward and get what you need, particularly related to the Honors College?
- S2 36:35 Yes and no. I'm prepared to take-- I'm really excited to keep on taking classes for my major and stuff like that, but like I said - since they don't offer classes for my major, I'm really worried that I won't be able to complete the requirements for the Burnett Honors College, because I have to take those interdisciplinary seminars and I don't know if I'll be able to fit them in my schedule. And I'm minoring in linguistics too, so I have to take those classes. I don't want to go over that credit hour limit either.
- S1 37:11 Right.
- S2 37:12 So that's kind of worrying me a little bit, but when I had talked to Rex Roberts last semester, he was really helpful, and he said-- we kind of planned it out, and he said that I wouldn't have to worry about that. So hopefully it won't be that big of a deal, but honestly I'm just worrying about fitting it in to my schedule, because with a job, and classes that I just need to take whenever I can take them, because they're just all over the place, I don't know-- I have to make some time to fit it in my schedule. And I want to get involved with the chorus here, but I don't have time.
- S1 37:49 Everything really, it's all-- yeah. Have you joined any other groups or memberships on campus?
- S2 37:57 I've really been like-- last semester, I was like, "I'm going to do it this semester." and now this semester, I'm just like, "I'm going to do it next semester." [chuckles] because I started my job here at FYE, and I wanted to join the-- it's the National Speech Language Group, and I also wanted to join the choir, but I couldn't do that obviously. And then I'm taking ASL, so I want to join the ASL club, but sometimes I just don't have any time and I can't make to their meetings because class is during the meeting times, or I'm in the choir at my church so sometimes rehearsals is in the way. I'm kind of just trying to figure out how to put that into my schedule and find a balance, and like I said, my priority is school, and I don't want to mess with that, but I definitely do want to get involved.

- S1 38:59 Last semester I looked into joining one of like the HERO organization – are you familiar with those? - that the Honors College offers, and I think those are great, because that gives you a lot of opportunities to go out with the community, and I figured it would be a great way to meet other honor students. But I didn't do that because I was just kind of-- I didn't find exactly what I was looking for, because I love volunteering with-- like I volunteer over at the homeless coalition in downtown, and I was looking or something along those lines. I work with the kids when I go over there, and I actually go there with my high school because they have a club over there that visits them. The president of the club and I are pretty good friends, so she just lets me come with them. That's amazing, and that's kind of what I was looking for over here but I couldn't find anything like that. I've actually been thinking that maybe, and I don't know how I would start, but maybe starting an organization that would do that here for college students, maybe even working in partnership with the high school, because the president of that club she's amazing, and she does so much. I've kind of been thinking about that, but I don't know how I would start with that or if I have time for it. But I think that is really like if-- if I could do that we could offer students the chance to give back to their community, which like I said is extremely important. I don't know, I kind of been thinking about that, and I don't know who I could talk to, maybe there's someone in the Honors college that I could meet with, I just don't know who.
- S1 40:57 Anything else you could think of about how your first semester went, how things at Honors College went, things you wish were different, things you loved - and we talked about a lot of those - I don't know there were anything else that maybe came to the front of your mind as we were discussing and...?
- S2 41:15 The only thing, like I said, with the honors classes that they offer, I wish that they could offer classes like specific to your major, but I know it's really hard to do that because the professor has to be willing to do that and things like that. I feel like that's something that maybe they could work on, maybe they could look into something because it's just-- it's really frustrating to me to have to take six random classes about zombies and baseball [laughter].
- S2 41:49 Now that is [inaudible].
- S2 41:51 Yeah.
- S1 41:53 I know they try to make it fun, but yeah.

S2 41:55 Yeah, I don't know if I really want to spend-- I don't know, maybe one or two of those classes would be fun, but not six.-

S1 42:07 Right, I understand. Okay, anything else before...?

S2 42:13 Not that I can think of. Definitely a good opportunity to take advantage of, if you have the opportunity, definitely. Like one of my best friends, he's applying for colleges right now, and he is considering UCF and I told him, "Look into the Honors College, it's really great. You get a lot of perks." Oh, I love the fact that we can register every classes before anyone else, that's great.

S1 42:42 Yeah, that's a bonus.

S2 42:42 That's a huge perk, and I told him that and that's like [the?] biggest perk.

S1 42:54 What about, have you felt any negative or positive impact with-- a lot of students in the Honors live together, a lot of them that are in like tower three or something, one, I don't know, and several of them live in different apartments and so forth. Do you feel like by not being on campus, that you miss out on some of those, or is it the better fit for you because of the way that you like to be more independent, and you guys have siblings?

S2 43:22 Definitely sometimes I wish that I could be around other college students more often than not, because like I said, I'm not very talkative, I'm not very outgoing, and so I haven't really made really good friends that come to UCF just yet. I have a couple of friends from high school that come here, and so I'll see them. But my best, best friend, she goes to FSU, and so that's a really-- it's just hard trying to make friends with people and stuff like that when you live at home, and when you're working, and you're in class but you're exhausted because you worked all day [chuckles]. So that's kind of been difficult, but honestly I don't-- like if I moved out, I think I'd be calling my mom and be like, "Can I move back in?" [laughter]--

S1 44:21 Yes, yes [chuckles]. "I miss that you cook for me." [chuckles].

S2 44:24 Absolutely, I'm super close with my family and like I said, I'm really independent so I don't know if I'd be able to live with two or three other people - random, strange people - I don't know if I'd be able to handle that. And sometimes I think to myself, "Oh, I wish." but at the same time, I'm kind of like "[inaudible] Maybe not." [chuckles].

S1 44:48 How far away geographically are you from UCF?

S2 44:50 I live behind Waterford, it's like 15 minutes away.

S1 44:53 Okay, that's not bad. The only reason I was thinking is sometimes - this is just not related to this - but I know if you talked about getting involved, sometimes it's easier if you're on campus or close to campus--

S2 45:03 Yeah, exactly.

S1 45:03 --because you can get there and not have to worry about traffic or whatever.

S2 45:06 Yeah, and even 15 minutes away, that sometimes gets--

S1 45:12 Especially in that area, gosh.

S2 45:15 Yeah, that does get in the way. Sometimes things are like at 8:00 at night, and I'm just like, "Yeah, and then I'll get home at 10:00." and blah, blah, blah and do all this.

S1 45:27 But you don't want to go back out? That's when you get home and like, "I'm not going." [chuckles].

S2 45:30 Exactly, yeah [laughter]. That definitely does make it harder, but I just learned to deal with it and it's just like whatever.

S1 45:43 Do you do things that-- you go to basketball games or football games or get involved in any of that stuff?

S2 45:47 Yeah, I've gone to some things but I'm not super into it, I'll go with friends and stuff like co-workers and stuff but--

S1 46:00 And they have musical performances, you know a lot of that stuff.

S2 46:03 [crosstalk] yeah, I definitely want to try those things out, I just haven't taken advantage of it yet, I know--

S1 46:10 You know, it's still early I mean--

S2 46:12 Yeah, definitely.

S1 46:12 You'll be on your way. There's no need to rush. Okay, do you have anything else that you wanted to add or...?

S2 46:24 I don't think so.

S1 46:27 If you think of something later that you wish you'd said, shoot me an email.

S1 46:29 Okay.

S1 46:30 It's fine. I'm going ahead and end this interview officially, if I can figure out how to turn it off [laugh].

Michael

S1 00:02 Okay. We are here on February the 20th just before 11:00 AM to talk about a student's experience in the Burnett Honors College during the first semester fall and to talk about some of the expectations and outcomes and experiences. Any questions that you have for me at all before we get started?

S2 00:26 No.

S1 00:26 Okay. Feel free to ask any as we go along.

S2 00:30 Right.

S1 00:30 Okay. So let's think about, before you came to UCF... What were your expectations coming into, first all into UCF? And secondly, into an honors college environment?

S2 00:53 Going-- just talking about UCF first, I think I was looking for very-- I wasn't looking for it to be so difficult. UCF is right-- I live around here anyways. And so I was looking for very gradual process, like an easy process. I knew that wouldn't be too hard, I knew I'd be able to manage it. I was honestly just looking for an extension of high school basically, everything I was going through then. Just because UCF seemed like such a home town college to me but it didn't really seem like a big deal to me. So extension of high school, going into Honors College I was just looking for something, I was expecting-- I wasn't really expecting anything. I just signed up for it because it's more prestigious, so I'll sign up for anything that's better. So I knew that I would be able to handle it, and so I didn't care what it would actually entail. I just knew it would be more prestigious and I know that it meant different class set up. You have the-- you can take the Honors classes and stuff. But I didn't really put a lot of focus into exactly what I was expecting. I think a lot of other people would-- if I knew I was going to be able to handle it, I'm just going to focus on other things.

S1 02:17 Okay. Great. Did you come in with a major in mind, or did you come in just kind of thinking, "We'll see how it goes"?

S2 02:26 I came in knowing what I'd want to do. I'm actually a music major.

- S1 02:29 Okay.
- S2 02:31 So, I had that planned out. I did all my auditions early, around January of last year. For music majors, you got to kind of plan in advance because auditions take-- can take like six months earlier before you actually starts. And so, I was looking-- so yeah, I came with a major in mind. I knew exactly what I wanted to do and so, there was no indecisiveness, I knew exactly what I need to do.
- S1 03:04 What do you do in music, when playing?
- S2 03:06 I play double-bass. And there's lots of different little sub-degrees in music. You can major in music, but you can major in music performance, education, and specifically, I'm going for the composition track, so music composition. And so my primary instrument is double-bass. But the idea is that I'll be a composition student by the time I graduate.
- S1 03:31 All right. During your first semester, when you were in Honors College classes, how did you-- I know you were mentioning UCF, hometown school, but it's big. It's a huge institution. In the Honors College classes, did you feel things were much more different from the UCF courses? Or what was your perception of that?
- S2 03:58 My perception was that, I feel like they were closer to-- I feel like even though they are technically harder they still all feel like the same to me. They still all feel like they are with the same type of people. But that's only from my perspective. I know that those kids in those classes are smarter, and I can tell, but I feel like I'm still above. I still feel like I'm above it all, so I still can get the same type of feeling I get from the same classes. Some of the classes-- some of those people in those class and the people I meet in Honors classes, I know they're pretty smart. The teachers are of course the same, they just teach other classes but I know that they think that the classes matter. I see them direct their way, direct the teaching and staff. They ask more questions as they kind of assume everyone has a little bit more intelligence, and so mainly I don't know if there's a difference is in course material or anything like that. It's mainly just everyone kind of respect each other a little bit more between the teachers and the students. You know, I respect my classmates a little bit more, I know I'm in an honors class, but you can say it's still not enough. I still feel like I'm a little bit above.
- S1 05:17 Okay. Have you taken any music composition courses so far or have you just been taking the core classes required?

- S2 05:28 No, I've been taking a specific music composition courses, that will start next semester, but I've taken a bunch of music theory or music history. A bunch of those types of classes.
- S1 05:39 Are the music classes significantly larger or how do you feel about the class size differential between honors classes and does it matter to you or impact to you in any way?
- S2 05:59 Well, honors classes are always small, they are always exactly like they were in high school. Super small and then the classes I were in last year-- I'm sorry last semester, those music classes they were small too. The only class I have now, I have taken a music theory class now and it's in a pretty big room, it is not a huge, huge auditorium lecture hall but it's fills up a room when you have 60 or more students.
- S1 06:24 Okay but it is not an auditorium, right?
- S2 06:27 But for me personally the whole thing people talk about, one on one interaction, it doesn't affect me at all. I don't care if it's a smaller classroom or if it's bigger enough, because it's just how I learn, I don't really focus on the teacher kind of guiding me through anyways. I kind just take -- I'd rather just the teacher just lecture and even if it's a bigger auditorium, the teacher lecture all the information away. And then I take it, go through all the textbooks, go through all my notes on my own time. So basically I am learning around the same, whether it's more personal or whether it's-- you just lecture. It matters less to me. That's the point.
- S1 07:03 Okay. Now I'm going to skip ahead. Because you just started talking a little about some of these things. Let's see. So how have your experiences affect your view of post-secondary education? And by that, I'm kind of getting at what you were talking about, like time management, those kinds of things. Have your experiences changed any of those things? Have they made you have to think about new ways to structure your day? What kinds of impacts has that had?
- S2 07:50 I'm someone who enjoys challenge. So for college it's a lot more free time and a lot more responsibility given to you. And so I know naturally how to be able to be more organized but college-- It's not like this college specifically did something amazing and gave me stability to be organized but I am more organized and that's just because it's college. I structure things differently, not that I-- I don't know, I feel like I'm just the same, I'm just adapting

to this situation so I-- like I said I'm actually kind of a responsible student, I'm very organized. I do things well in advance. So I structure my day efficiently. If I have to get up at a class I have a 40 minute commute and if I have to-- I wake up at 6:00. I'm supposed to wake up at 6:00 on Tuesdays and Thursdays to get to an 8:00 AM class and get ready. Just because I don't want to ruin my efficiency I just get up at 6:00 every single day because that's just how I naturally am. I don't want to get up on different hours every single day even on the weekends, because that would ruin efficiency for me. I like to stay organized. College didn't-- it's not that it did anything, but it's just how I am, and it's probably different than how I was in high school, but I didn't need to be-- high school was easier, college is different. It's fine. I can adapt to it. I can manage my time well, and if it feels harder I would manage again.

S1 09:24

Related to what you were saying where you watch your environment, then you through the text, look at it and have you changed any study habits since you started college, or has that been your practice in the past?

S2 09:40

Actually, I think college is a lot better in that way. I think in high school they even guide you more. It's more personal. There's assignments-- there's tons of assignments that are based around, "I taught you something. Now I'm going to give you an assignment on it just to make sure you know it, and then we'll do lots of assignments, maybe some quizzes, and then we'll take the big test." But in college, it's more about, "I'm going to lecture for a lot of time and then eventually we're going to take a test and everything I lectures, and that's perfect for me because I don't want to be guided, I just know how to do well. I know how to do well, and so it's better in that way. I had to go through all the assignments and all these little projects and everything just to jump through the hoops in high school. Now it's a lot more free, and it's definitely better. But I just adapted.

S1 10:29

What experiences or resources have helped you during your first year in the Honors College, have you reach out to any advisers? I know in the symposium they have the team leaders, that sort of thing. Anything there that you can think of that has been helpful as a resource to you?

S2 11:02

In terms of people, not at all. I don't really like to talk to advisers. I just like to do stuff independently. I don't really like to talk to people. So even though if advisers, they're just the final confirmation because I have to go to them. Basically, even for

scheduling spring and all that stuff, I had everything ready. I already went through all the four years, I had to go and see what classes I had to take and I already organize it, so I organize what I need for spring. So I went to my music adviser and he just confirmed it. I don't really like to go to help. I like to figure stuff out my own because I think it's just better. But in terms of non-people, non-human resources, I love that. Honors computer lab, I think is amazing. Mostly because it's actually very close to the music building where I spend all my time. It's just across the parking lot. That computer lab is so useful. There's always a computer free. It can get busy but never gets full. So, even I don't really like to be around so many people, but that doesn't happen often. So, I love that computer lab because it's just free internet and also free printing. And there are so many resources there. Free scanning, I have so many times - especially this semester - I have gone and like scanned music, and it's just all free. Scan music and then copy it. I don't have a scanner at home, not one that works like that, where you can scan books. My scanner at home can only do pages. So, having a resource like that is really helpful. Because I can't do it at home. So, I won't be able to do it otherwise without it getting a little bit complicated. And so, I use that computer lab all the time. It is really useful to me.

S1 12:45

Right. Okay. Don't you-- in this semester, I know that everybody kind of gets to link out to that. I think it's myhonors that has information about where you stand, where you're seeing all that good stuff, and then obviously, of course, you get your myUCF grades. Did you find any surprises in that? What was your reaction when you received your first grades in college?

S2 13:09

So at the end of fall semester I received my grades, but I was kind of keeping track of my grades as I was going along. But it seems like a lot of the teachers don't exactly keep it up to date like very efficiently, the grades work a little bit differently but basically, I guess-- I am frustrated, I got straight As last semester and so I was kind of keeping along. If you're someone who's going for straight As, you're going to kind of keep track of everything to make sure nothing is going wrong and so but at the end, the only thing that's left to determine is what you get on that final grade at the finals. And of course you don't really know until the grades come out because the teachers aren't going to-- it just doesn't work like that. And so I was looking at it, and I went into it and of course, I did, I felt super confident on all the exams for the finals like I always do, I'm like I feel so confident. This is the same as always. I'm going to do really well on this test just like I always do. And so,

probably unless, like it's unlikely that I feel so confident, so comfortable, concentrated, when I studied so well and for me to walk out. So it's unlikely that I did bad enough to get me a B or an A minus even. So yeah, there's a 90% chance that I got an A. There is a small 10% chance but that's too unlikely. But of course, you never know for sure until the grades come out because you can be confident. You maybe you studied everything wrong but that's unlikely. So surprises, it's more like a relief. I'm like, "Okay. There you go. Everything worked out just the way I planned it before. Straight As."

- S1 14:44 Okay. Did you feel like the syllabi laid out for all of the different classes, what you needed to do to get it done or did you feel like there were some, "Okay. I got to interpret how to get this done"?
- S2 14:56 I feel like the syllabus is more like a formality for students and maybe a lot for teachers. It's more like a formality. Just, you know, it's required I'm pretty sure.
- S1 15:07 It is required.
- S2 15:08 So it's required. I feel like students don't really pay a lot of attention to it. I mean I like-- I'm the kind of person who likes to stay organized so to have it all there, very comprehensive sometimes. But I don't look at things like objectives or stuff, that's more like for-- that feels like a formality like, "In this class we're going to learn," I don't need held hand, like I can just learn stuff as it goes and I'll be perfect. I feel like it's more a formality. I'd like to go to it for organizational details.
- S1 15:41 As far as the assignments are laid out, this is worth 20%. Did you feel that they gave enough definition of what they're looking for you to do in those assignment or did you have to kind of figure out what they wanted?
- S2 15:57 In terms, I mean I do like the fact that they do say exactly how your grades are calculated, with the assignments and all that. And that's useful. And so I guess that's a good resource to have. What was your question?
- S1 16:12 I know sometimes - I hear this now and then - people get a syllabus, they do what they think they're supposed to do, and then they get a grade different from what they think they should have earned based on the information in the syllabus. Did you feel that your assignment expectations were clear and that if you followed the rubrics in the syllabus or on WebCourses, you would get the grade you would expect?

- S2 16:28 My experience is that everything always works. People like to always blame teachers, I never blame teachers. I find that they always seem to be totally on point, everything on the syllabus matches up. But mostly I just go off based on what they say in class, or maybe there's a specific assignment file that they have up, and I'll listen to that, and I just follow everything. I mean really I don't even see.
- S1 16:49 Files in WebCourses?
- S2 16:50 Yes, so the WebCourses has all these different documents, so the assignment tab will have everything you need to do, and then they'll probably reiterate it in class, and everything confirms each other and everything works out nice again because there's no gaps most likely. The teachers and assignment tab together tell me exactly what to do. So I know exactly what I need to do most of the time. And in terms of like if there's-- I feel like it's just a human flaw. Maybe like some of these teachers naturally they're not as organized or they just don't perceive things the same way, they don't perceive stuff as structured. So like a rubric-- there might be a rubric but the rubric might be a little loose and dynamic and kind of fluid more than I'd like it to be. From their perspective they're just not as structured, but that's just all part of the game, we're jumping hoop together. Even though the rubric's not exactly fluid, even though they will never ever-- it's not possible for them to just say, "To get an A on this assignment, you all have to do this." So even if I turn an assignment [fall?] everything as well as I can and follow the rubric, it's still hard. It's still hard, even though I feel like I did everything exactly as the rubric says, just based on interpretation. Probably the teacher is not even just looking at the rubric and looking for nitpicking every little word. The difference between Excellent and Good, what is that difference? And maybe that's not their fault. Maybe that's not anyone's fault but...
- S1 18:27 I think it is an instructor-specific type of thing. And in your experience the first semester, you didn't feel like that there were any unclear expectations that you wouldn't be able to decipher?
- S2 18:56 No, I can probably intuitively get everything anyways. It's not a big deal, like I said. If a teacher wants something to be done, and the teacher wants it done in a specific way, I'll always be on the top percentile of people who get it right and do it well. I always get stuff even if the teacher leaves stuff out, I can always intuitively fill in the gaps and just go research what the

assignment says or just-- I'll always find a way to get it.

S1 19:28 Okay. For you and your future of wherever you're heading with your music degrees, what does it mean to be where you are? Like you know you said you have straight A's. Does that make you feel more confident going forward? Do you feel the need that you have to sustain that? Is that a pressure? You know what are your perceptions or feelings about that?

S2 19:48 Perceptions. It's all internal pressure though. I pressure myself, and I know all the music students-- I feel like when people go into music, they don't look at it like-- they look at it more like "Here is the music." Music is so like-- there's so many Music theory and Music history classes, that's basically just Math and History. It's just taking more classes. You got to-- it's the same structure, to do well in them would be the same as doing well in any other class. You got to be organized or-- feel like just less of it. It's not really about being musically inclined, you learn it just like everybody else.

So I-- someone who do well in classes that aren't Music with Math. I got straight A's in high school too. Who do extremely well and organized. I go to these Music classes and it's all Music related, but it's just like learning any other subject. I do well in them, but the reason I want to aim first-- I get straight A's. Why do I? It's because it's the best option. It's the reason I applied for Honors. It's the best option. I know I can handle it if I get straight A's. The better grades I have, higher GPA, it's only going to be better for me. And I kind of have that need to be as perfect as I can.

S1 21:14 Now do you plan to get another degree after you get an undergraduate degree? Do you have that far ahead in terms of what you're thinking about doing?

S2 21:24 Yes. At this point I plan on getting a doctorate degree eventually.

S1 21:37 Do you feel that you have the information that you need, the resources that you need and so forth to just keep moving forward in the honors program? Do you have-- I know one of the things that happens sometimes is that there's not enough courses in your major. Do you feel-- you mentioned that you kind of had a four-year-plan already laid out when you met with your now music adviser. But how do you feel about that on the honors end?

S2 22:10 I think that it may be more a problem for other people. For me, I don't see a problem with being able to [?] to get it. For me honors

is just requirements. At the end you get the honors, diploma or something. You get something. You get your honors distinction, and to get that it's just a list of requirements. I've looked at the requirements and I see no problems with it. I think I [?] manage. I know what honors classes I'm going to be taking and I know I can get them in, and I won't have a problem scheduling them. It's not a problem, it works out for me the way I did it. It was easy.

- S1 22:56 Let's just see if I miss anything else. So you mentioned you live off campus right now. Do you-- is that something that you feel the most comfortable with, would you feel like your experience would be different if you lived on campus, kind of closer to the resources and other folks in the Honors College?
- S2 23:17 Talking about efficiency is probably-- it only makes sense for it to be better closer to campus because I spend so much time here anyways. I basically just go home to sleep and I just go right back in the morning, because that's where I like to spend the whole day here. So in terms of efficiency it would technically be better if I was closer, you know. If I was closer what would that mean, I guess that's pretty far. But if I were closer, is just generally everything would be slight better get the class easier, take less time.
- S2 24:04 That 80 minutes of my day I've to spent driving I could spend it doing something else, I guess that can be useful. I can also just go to school, even at night if I wanted to. There's lots to do at the music building, they have little practice rooms and little recording studios. Generally, there's lots to do around here, in terms of getting stuff done; the library and the Honors computer lab. I'll be closer to resources, but everything would just get an efficiency boost basically. I can manage with the [?].
- S1 24:41 What about campus involvement? Obviously you're in music, are you involved in any clubs with music, or any other external activities?
- S2 24:49 I'm not really involved in anything, in terms of clubs or anything. I'm into orchestra, but that's a requirement too.
- S1 24:55 Okay, so part of that is the--?
- S2 24:57 In the orchestra and that's a requirement. If I could choose-- I've eventually going to join clubs and whatever but I don't naturally want to. I don't really like to be involved in school stuff. Especially all that stuff that's like scores baring stuff, I think it's very cheesy and it's really not for me. I prefer just to get my work

done. So if I were to join clubs it would literally just because it would make me look better for graduate school or something like that. But I wish I didn't have to because I'd rather not waste time doing that. So I don't go to any athletic events or anything like that.

- S1 25:40 Are you familiar with what kinds of clubs there are? Because there are some academic clubs, there are some volunteer, UCF does community work, that sort of thing that don't necessarily involve shaking pom-poms. So are there are other things that you've looked at or considered?
- S2 25:56 Yeah, I've looked at-- I'm pretty sure I looked at some clubs on the resource online, I looked at everyone because I wanted to see, because I want to. The more reason I'm not in one right now is mainly because of schedule conflicts. Because they always meet after most of the classes end, but that's when I have orchestra.
- S1 26:13 Right.
- S2 26:14 I have a lot of conflicts with orchestra with a lot of clubs. I'd actually love to actually go to SSA or Philosophy Club or there's also some music appreciation clubs, but they all tend to just conflict mainly with orchestra. Those are the clubs I'd be going to, if I could. You know, but I've looked at them all. I know there could be some good ones, but like you said, maybe its-- maybe I should really be kind of looking at them and getting into them. That's just really something I have to initiate.
- S1 26:50 Yeah. Well, again, it's early. It's your first year.
- S2 26:52 Yes.
- S1 26:52 You're trying to get acclimated. You're trying to get your things. I was just curious about what you thought about around that.
- S2 26:58 Right.
- S1 27:03 Did you look at other institutions before deciding on UCF? What was your process there?
- S2 27:09 My process was mainly for music. It was basically the most prestigious music school I could get into.
- S1 27:21 Juilliard?
- S2 27:23 Actually, I stay completely in-state because naturally, I don't have a lot of money especially with my family and my background, I didn't have a lot of money, so I wasn't going to go out of state and

I wasn't going to go to private schools. Specifically for music kind of influenced a lot because I've been playing clarinet since sixth grade and I played that all through high school and marching band and all of that. But in the meantime, somewhere in high school, sophomore year of high school, something I picked the instrument, the electric bass guitar and then I played that and that became my primary instrument even though in school, I was doing clarinet, and so then when it came to college I kind of decided I wanted to music. Because suddenly I can drop out of college and try and chase for popular music.

S1 28:16

Tour band.

S2 28:16

Something like that and it might get that way. But in the end I decided that classical music was my passion, as a lot of people like to say. I just like classical music group, yes, because I love learning, I love education. I want to get the most education possible because that's just the type of person I am. It only makes sense. Classical music, there's a huge institution of learning [?] classical music and go all the way up, get a doctorate degree, can learn a lot and be very respected.

S2 28:52

It felt very natural for me. In terms of-- for UCF what I did was I just applied to two other schools because I knew I'd get into UCF and there would just be no point to applying to other schools. So UCF I knew would get in, I knew. I also applied to FSU and UF and I applied to them all and I got into them all, but so I mean for me actually I'd feel like FSU and UF are more prestigious than UCF in terms of just academics. And FSU is the top, is the most prestigious music school of those three, probably followed by UF and then followed last by UCF. And so, I got into all of their academic schools, and then I didn't apply for them. I didn't do a music audition for UF because, I don't know maybe it will be a bit more work. But basically, I just-- so I got into those three and then I scheduled an audition for FSU and UCF. The problem was that I chose to go into classical music composition but you can't do classical musical composition with an electric bass guitar because it's not a classical instrument. It's a little informal for their test. It's not well-respected enough which is fine.

S2 30:07

I picked up the classical substitute of electrical bass guitar which is actually a double bass. It's the same instrument. It's just way bigger. It doesn't have the frets, but a lot of things transfer is the point. Between the notch-- I picked the double bass. I picked that up maybe five months before my first audition.

S1 30:27 Wow.

S2 30:28 I kind of had no choice. There was nothing I could do. I could have auditioned on clarinet, but I didn't want to do clarinet anymore.

S1 30:38 You were finished with that.

S2 30:40 I wanted to do bass - which if it was electric bass-or double bass - if I could spend eight years studying double bass I wouldn't feel like it was wasted. If I spent eight years studying clarinet I'd be like, "Oh, God. I don't want to do this." It'd feel like it's a big waste. I decided to do double bass and I practiced as much as I could. FSU being the prestigious to music school in Florida, that is, I didn't get into it, which was for the music. Because for music you had to apply to both the music and the academics - the academic school - and so I didn't get it in which was expected. It would make a lot of sense if I didn't get into anything, you know, and even then there are still options because you can always go to SSC or Valencia and they have music programs there and of course those community colleges they're always accepting. There's always options like that and so I didn't get into FSU which was expected because it wasn't very good because they had just started.

S1 31:38 Right.

S2 31:42 I ended up going to UCF. It's kind of - from my perspective - the bottom line, the most back-up school, mediocre, because it's the only option. I'm very thankful for this option.

S1 31:58 Do you think that it helps then that you are in the Honors College as opposed to just being in UCF or--?

S2 32:05 I think it makes it a little bit better. It's a lot more respectable. But I'm going to the Honors College at FSU too.

S1 32:13 It's just the music aspect.

S2 32:17 Which I didn't really mind because I feel like college is more geared towards normal people who need to be guided along. And I know one thing, I know a lot about how life works and how college works and how to be successful. I know that in the end no matter what college you go to, if you work hard it will show. If you work hard it will show. In specifics for music, if you practice and study enough you'll be great. No matter what college you go to. I'm here in the music college now I actually really like. I feel like my professors-- I feel like they're a little better than I thought

they were going to be. Just seeing numbers and saying, "This is the top music school in Florida. This is the second, you know, this is the last, and just seeing those numbers makes it seem that there's a huge difference. But these professors are people I can actually respect and stuff. So it's really-- I know I can do really well here if I want to.

S1 33:20 Do you feel like-- so based on where you are, with advising, you kind of have it nailed down. But as far as mentoring or that sort of thing, is that where-- those professors are the ones you would go to for that sort of thing? Or are there other folks within the university or honors college or anywhere else that you would go?

S2 33:40 Like I said in terms of mentors, I don't really like to do any of that stuff. I like to do everything just independently. And so, I don't know. Sometimes I have trouble talking to adults really... I'm almost shy to talk to him, but even if I wasn't, I just like to-- I could figure everything out on my own. I've had no trouble with that. I feel like I'm just-- It's also just part of my arrogance. I don't really want to talk to anyone for-- to be guided. And then I'll feel-- and then I'm like...

S1 34:24 What about earlier when you were playing clarinet in a band? Did the band director have a significant influence on you or anybody in that?

S2 34:33 There's always a big thing with high school and marching band. Because most schools have marching band. And the band director, you see them all four years in that class or your marching band director, classical music director. You see them all the time, and it's this whole thing with music students probably all over who just love their band director. And naturally it was like that for me. But not some-- it's was more like very logical. This guy, I see him around so much, he does a lot of good-- give me lot of opportunities, it's like family, you're born with them, you have no choice.

S1 35:10 Got to work with them, no other way.

S2 35:12 So yeah, and that way, if I was a normal person I would be saying that he inspired me so much, he did a lot of-- I think he is amazing, he's polite, it seems I'm not. I'll probably just say, he's just another person. If I had another band director it would be the same. So just because of the position that that band director is in I would say that he inspired me but I try not to think about that because of [crosstalk?]

- S1 35:49 He influenced you.
- S2 35:53 Just because of the position he's in.
- S1 35:51 Is there anything else you can think of about your first semester and how that went, particular related to the Honors College or really UCF in general?
- S2 36:09 I think the honors college if-- the big thing about the Honors College especially at first semester is the honor symposium class and I think it's-- I kind of go back and forth on whether it's a good thing or a bad thing. For me it was mostly useless, but if we're talking about the efficiency of getting all these other people who need to be guided. Even I would feel that if that honors symposium class wasn't there, I would feel like the honors program is more like a set of requirements as opposed to the community and they really killed it with the community thing. That word was repeated so many times in that class. The whole thing was based on just establishing community whether it's UCF community or honors community, it's very cheesy for me. I don't really like that kind of stuff.
- S1 37:00 If there were ways-- assuming the symposium would always be your required course, are there things that you would change about it or make recommendations about it? Adding something, you know that sort of thing?
- S2 37:15 Let's see, symposium is basically the lecture by all the guest speakers, going to speak about different subjects and that-- technically the stuff is interesting but I'm kind of bored but it's just an hour and a half of just lecture or something. Even though it's not bad-- that's just natural, not to say that it's bad. So if I were to say logically, that part is actually kind of cool, having all these people come in and just speak, then there's the lab portion which is going out and volunteering, basically teaching elementary school students and I didn't liked that part. I can do it, of course I can excelled in anything and I already had a job in high school tutoring classes of kids. Elementary school kids in math. And so that-- the whole point was that you had to learn something. Like don't you see these people look up to you or these kids are the next generation that you're really inspiring them. All this cheesy emotional stuff, that's really not for me and so it's very useless. And so that for me personally I don't like that kind of stuff. I feel like maybe there was some kind-- I don't know if there's a sentiment that people don't-- I think people don't like because it's a requirement, but in the end a lot of people will say that kind of

thing was good for me, in the end it wasn't good for me, but it's more like another hoop and I've done enough of that to know that I have to do it. And so I personally don't to volunteering but it might be good. I feel like [?].

S1 38:59 Would it make a difference if you were able to select kind of what you would want to do in that particular requirement or maybe work with children in music, environment or something like that?

S2 39:09 I don't really like-- I don't really want to-- if they tried-- I feel like I would have other forms, like it would turn into stuff like, you know, "This is your chance to be creative and do what you want to do and do something influential." But I don't want to do that. I want to focus on my studies. I didn't choose now to like have an influence on the community or something like that. I don't want to do that at all. So either just tell me exactly what to do and set it up so I can just do it and get it over with. So at least... I know how to do a lot of stuff, all you have to do is set it up and at that conjecture I hook very easily as opposed to just trying to make it as emotional and a big passion and endeavor for me. I'd rather not have that.

S1 39:54 Anything else you want to add about your experience in the first semester, good, bad, ugly?

S2 40:04 No.

S1 40:05 Okay. If you think of anything, feel free to email me.

S2 40:08 Sure.

S1 40:27 Okay then. I'm going to go ahead and officially end the interview. Thank you again for your willingness to participate.

Brian

- S1 00:01 I'm here speaking with a student from the UCF Burnett Honors College who just completed his first semester this past semester and is here to talk with me about his experiences. So prior to coming to UCF, in the grand scheme of things-- first of all, are you from the state of Florida? Where are you from originally?
- S2 00:24 I'm from Saint Augustine, Florida.
- S1 00:25 Saint Augustine. So you're relatively familiar with Florida in general. What kinds of things were you interested in when you were in high school as far as-- what did you want to get from the university experience? What were you looking for? Did you know where you wanted to go all the time?
- S2 00:55 I knew that I wanted to do something engineering related because Physics and Math were my strongest subjects, and I've been kind of a builder/problem solver since when I was a kid. I knew I wanted to do something engineering related. At first, I went the mechanical route and then ended up changing majors once I got here when I figured out what I really wanted to do.
- S1 01:25 So you were a mechanical at first, and you changed to which--?
- S2 01:29 Environmental--
- S1 01:30 Environmental.
- S2 01:30 Engineering.
- S1 01:31 What made you decide to change your mind there?
- S2 01:35 I went to a major fair and explored all my options. I actually took AP computer science in high school, and I was interested in that. So I looked into computer engineering as well. But I couldn't really see myself sitting behind a desk my entire life.
- S1 01:52 Did you have a focus on UCF because you were looking at engineering and felt that that was the place to go?
- S2 02:00 I applied to a lot of different schools.
- S1 02:02 Where did you apply?
- S2 02:04 My top three were University of Florida, Georgia Tech, and Rose-Hulman Institute of Technology.
- S1 02:14 Okay. UF, GT, and then Rose-Hulman. Where else did you apply? Those were your top three where you applied. Did you just--

[crosstalk]?

S2 02:27 I applied to FSU. I applied to UCF. I think that was it.

S1 02:38 What happened with your application process as you were going through it? How did you narrow it down? How did you end up at UCF?

S2 02:46 When it came down to it, it ended up being a money issue. UCF gave me scholarship money, so I jumped on that. Also, Jacksonville University was another one I applied because I had an athletic scholarship there.

S1 03:03 What were you playing?

S2 03:03 Rugby.

S1 03:04 Oh, cool. Do they have a rugby team here?

S2 03:11 It's a club team.

S1 03:12 Okay. Did you do it?

S2 03:14 I decided against it. It wasn't for me. 6:00 am practices are pretty tough, especially for a club team that's not really too competitive.

S1 03:23 Right. You know like, "Okay guys, we're not going to win the AAC championship here."

S2 03:27 Exactly. What was that question again?

S1 03:32 So financial was a big part of it that lead you to UCF. What about the honors college? Did you apply to it, or were you solicited by them? How did that process happen?

S2 03:44 I actually applied to UCF really late because my parents encouraged me to do it. I wasn't really planning on doing it, and they were like, "Hey, it's a newer school. You might get scholarship money. It's close to home but not too far."

S1 04:00 It's not too close, but not too far.

S2 04:01 Yeah, exactly--

S1 04:02 You have the barrier.

S2 04:02 That's what made me decide against going to Jacksonville University because--

S1 04:07 That would have been right [crosstalk]--

S2 04:07 It's like less than an hour from home. I applied to UCF late, got a thing in the mail after I got my acceptance letter saying, "Hey,

- apply to the honors college. You have the credentials to do it." I still hadn't even decided where I wanted to go yet, but I figured it doesn't hurt to apply to go to the honors college. So I did that.
- S1 04:36 And when you came down and you made your final decision, what were you expecting? Had you been to the campus? Had you toured around it? Had you been in the Burnett Honors College itself?
- S2 04:44 That was really what did it for me, was taking a tour of the campus, because I toured UF. I toured FSU. I really didn't like FSU. Georgia Tech was really expensive so I crossed that one off my list, and then Rose-Hulman is in Indiana. I wasn't really going to fly out there to take a tour that I wasn't necessarily going to get anything out of. So it came down to UF, UCF, and FSU, especially because of bright futures and stuff. UCF campus is the nicest, and the engineering buildings and facilities are fantastic. That's really what did it for me. But going into that, I really had no idea what to expect from college in general. What did it for me was really the campus and the facilities, and just the overall vibe I got from UCF.
- S1 05:42 What about the honors college? What made you say yes to that?
- S2 05:46 Once I decided to attend UCF, I figured the honors program is something I'm definitely interested in. It looks good on transcription resumes. I wasn't too excited about the service earning program. I was apprehensive about that because I've never been that outgoing of a person.
- S1 06:11 So that's going to [crosstalk]--
- S2 06:13 It was a scary thought to-- but I figured it's college, try new things, so I just took a leap and went for it.
- S1 06:25 So that's part of the symposium. Because I think it's what, second grade to fifth grades? Who did you have--?
- S2 06:35 I think it was kindergarten to fifth grade, actually. I had second grade.
- S1 06:37 You had second grade, okay. How did it go?
- S2 06:41 Surprisingly well.
- S1 06:42 Good.
- S2 06:48 My teacher was very organized, very in charge of her class. She could get them to do anything anytime. Her students were really

well behaved, so it went pretty well. Honestly, most of the time it was just them asking questions about, "What is college like? Is there a swimming pool at college?" Questions like that [laughter].

S1 07:13 Which is fun. They want to know about you.

S2 07:16 I never had an experience like that as a kid. I never even knew what college was. I knew it was something important that you needed to do but I never...

S1 07:31 You didn't have any influences like that in terms of what you thought college was going to be?

S2 07:41 No, not really.

S1 07:42 So when in Saint Augustine, did you go to a small school or a large school? What was your high school like?

S2 07:46 It was a fairly large school. We had, I think, like 440 in my graduating class. It was pretty sizable.

S1 07:53 That's pretty sizable. So it wasn't completely shocking to come to a school that's this big. What about friends? Did you end up having friends coming with you, or did they kind of do their own thing?

S2 08:04 It was weird because the graduating class before mine, everyone went to UCF. So I know a bunch of the older kids. But then my graduating class, it was predominantly everyone going to FSU. So it switched. It was weird. All my good friends went to FSU and I ended up at UCF with just a couple, like my best friend Davis is here.

S1 08:28 Oh, that's good. So then you had somebody that you felt really comfortable with. Are you living on campus in tower three? Is that--?

S2 08:40 I live in tower four.

S1 08:41 Tower four. So you're not living in--?

S2 08:42 I decided against living with the honors.

S1 08:45 What made you decide that? What was your rationale?

S2 08:50 I don't know. I don't really consider myself like I'm a total nerd and everything. I love science, engineering, whatever, but I didn't feel like I fit in that well with all the honors kids. So I just wanted a normal dorm experience.

S1 09:05 Are you roommates with your friend from--?

S2 09:09 No, he actually lives in tower three.

S1 09:10 Oh, he does? So he's an honors college student too then?

S2 09:13 Mm-mm.

S1 09:13 Okay. Do you have a roommate you knew ahead of time or how is it set up?

S2 09:17 Strangely enough, I ended up getting two roommates from Ponte Vedra, which is like 20-ish minutes from where I live. I have two roommates from there, and my other roommate is from Orlando. But we're really close.

S1 09:34 So you're all Florida guys?

S2 09:34 Yeah.

S1 09:36 They were not people known to you before you came in?

S2 09:38 No.

S1 09:38 But those have been positive interactions, relationships?

S2 09:41 What we did was when you get your assignments and stuff, they gave you everybody's numbers on the list. So we all contacted each other prior, and I was like, "Hey, I have some dishes to bring, et cetera." So we set up who was bringing what. It started out pretty well from there, and it continues to be a good relationship between us.

S1 10:02 Good. That worked out well. The take away I'm getting from that is that you'd had some pretty healthy friendship relationships since you've been here, both with your living situation and with... you came and had a friend already here and that sort of thing. What about within the honors college and from your classes? Which class did you take with an honors? Obviously symposium, but what other classes did you take in your first semester?

S2 11:15 Last semester, I took calculus 2 honors. I think it was just that, and symposium.

S1 11:22 Then outside of the TBHC you took what?

S2 11:26 Chem 1, intro to engineering. I took another honors class actually, intro to technical presentations.

S1 11:53 And then calculus 2. I'm assuming that you'd done AP and moved up to that level?

- S2 11:56 Yeah. I had the credit for calc 2 already because I took calculus BC in high school, but they pressured me into taking calc 2 anyways, which I really regret.
- S1 12:11 Because it was stuff you already knew, and you didn't feel like you learned much?
- S2 12:14 My teacher actually left about a month into the school year, so then they had to find a replacement for him - because he got a better job. He felt really bad for us, but he was like, "Hey, I'm leaving to pursue better things. Good luck." And he left. So we were about a month without a teacher, and then we had substitutes for a while, and then we finally got a permanent teacher and it was too late by then. I still did well in the exam because I taught myself basically everything I could. And then calc 2 here was an entirely different experience. I didn't really like my professor, and he wasn't a very good teacher. So I ended up having to teach myself all over again, and it was a really, really, really tough class. I ended finishing with a B.
- S1 13:09 That's pretty good for what I am hearing.
- S2 13:11 It was very tough. The only saving grace was that originally, our homework wasn't worth anything. It was just for practice. But we were all doing so bad on the tests that he said, "If you do all the homework for the whole semester," which end up being like a few 100 problems, he would give us an extra 100 points towards our final grades. That was really what saved me because our test averages were in the 50s.
- S1 13:40 And he wasn't curving or anything?
- S2 13:41 No, no curving, no nothing.
- S1 13:43 Interesting. Did you get the sense that he had taught this class in honors before, or was he new to the--?
- S2 13:50 I think he had taught honors classes before. He was almost 80 years old, and he had a really old school style of teaching. He would write up proofs on the board the entire class and expect us to write them down and learn it. He wasn't really involved.
- S1 14:07 Got you. He wasn't as interactive. He was more like, "Here's what I put on the blackboard."
- S2 14:13 Yeah, pretty much.
- S1 14:14 The real blackboard! So you ended up having a ton of really get yourself up to speed, and you took the initiative to do all the

- homework. So you ended up in a better place in the end too because of that. So that probably was part of teaching yourself, was doing the homework, get yourself up to speed. Did you use any other materials other than what was provided from him like a textbook or other--?
- S2 14:41 Kahn Academy for sure. That was what got me through that course.
- S1 14:44 Okay. And then isn't there a math lab requirement or something?
- S2 14:50 Not for calculus, no.
- S1 14:54 I wasn't sure because I've heard a lot about this math lab... What about your other class, tech presentations [with introduction?] to that one? How did that go?
- S2 15:04 That went really well. My professor was awesome. I had Dr. Scott. She was super enthusiastic, very knowledgeable about her subject. It was a well-structured class. It was a small class size. Everyone got along really well. She didn't have it as a formal classroom setting. Basically, there were no classrooms open during the time of the class. So we were in a conference room at a conference table. It opened things up for discussions really well. It was a really good learning environment. I liked it a lot. That was a good class. Honestly, I got really good at public speaking through that class, and it helped me a lot.
- S1 15:50 When you are up against second graders [laughter]?
- S2 15:52 Yeah, exactly.
- S2 15:57 I did really well in all the speeches but I didn't-- I knew all the material. What it was is, the speeches were most of the grade, but there was also a portion of the mid-term and final which was just material out of the book, and we didn't really go over that too much. I didn't do well in the mid-term and final, but I got really good grades on all my speeches. I finished with an A minus which was still--
- S1 16:21 In this class, it sounds like technical presentations-- so there was probably a lot of using apps and that sort of thing, like Prezis?
- S2 16:30 Yeah, we did a lot of stuff like that.
- S1 16:31 Because I'm trying to figure out what this class actually-- so it was half public speaking almost, and half how to put a presentation together. Is that--?

S2 16:39 She assumed that since we were honor students that we could put the presentations together by ourselves. So she left that up to us, but she said we had to incorporate that type of stuff, like visual aids and those kind of things.

S1 16:53 So she gave you some pointers and some information about what you needed but felt like you should be at a place where you would know. It wasn't easy. Interesting. And I think that you probably have experienced that even in high school and even before that, you know, Hey, you're one of the gifted kids, or Hey, you should already know this, or I'm going to be harder on you because of that. Has that happened to you before, or have you gotten that kind of-- those teachers that really are a little pushier because they feel you should know?

S2 17:21 A little bit. High school wasn't really challenging. There were--

S1 17:28 Did you have to study a lot in high school or [crosstalk] pretty much?

S2 17:30 I don't think I studied once in high school.

S1 17:32 So it's been a change for you to have to study now that you're in college?

S2 17:35 Yeah.

S1 17:35 When did you realize that, "Oh gosh, I'm really going to have to take some time here"?

S2 17:40 Definitely the last semester in chemistry, but I didn't do a very good job of it last semester.

S1 17:48 It sounds like you taught yourself calculus too, in that sense. In order to have made it there, you had to do have studying or keeping up with things at some point early on from what I can tell. So it seems like you realized it before it was too late. Do you know what I mean?

S2 18:10 Chem, I actually didn't do so well, and I ended up finishing with a C which was pretty bad because... What happened was I sat through class for a while and I was like, Wow, this stuff is really easy. Because the whole first few chapters were....

S1 18:30 And it was probably in a big setting.

S2 18:32 Yeah, it was like 200, 300 kids. It was really easy. It was dimensional analysis type stuff, really easy stuff in the beginning. I got a 98 on the first test. I was like, this is going to be an easy

class. I put my focus into calc and the engineering because that is going to be my focus.

S1 18:56

Okay.

S2 18:58

My tech pres class was really demanding as far as writing papers or giving our teacher rough drafts or speeches and outlines and stuff. So I was just really keeping up with all that stuff and wasn't focusing on chem because I was like, Oh, I so remember this from high school. So I didn't really pay attention to class, like started skipping class sometimes because this is an early class and I could use the sleep so I put it off, and then ended up getting to the second test, and I got a 68 on it and I was like, Okay, I should probably start paying attention in this class more. Calc got a lot harder so it was just like--

S1 19:38

So how did you manage that? What was your strategy to make sure that--? You previously didn't have to put much effort if any into your grades and how you were doing in high school. And then suddenly, you've got all these demands and-- how did you can pull that together for yourself?

S2 19:53

It was really tough. When I got to the point where I realized that I wasn't going to get a good grade in chem, I figured okay, if I'm already going to get a C and there's no hope saving that, then I'll just do what I can to maintain my C and then put all my focus into calc and my other classes. Honestly, that was not a good approach. I'm doing better about that this semester. My first semester was really a tough transition from high school because it was a whole new world.

S1 20:30

So for you, what was the toughest part of the transition? What did you feel was the hardest part of getting used to the autonomy, not having somebody like your friends knocking on the door like and going, 'It's time to go. You've got to get up,' and that kind of stuff?

S2 21:27

That was probably a big part of it as well, is learning to study. Because in high school, especially with all my AP classes, it was the teachers' job to prepare you because your AP scores reflect their teaching abilities. So they were always putting out review guides, helping us study for the test, having in class study sessions and stuff, and all that kind of stuff. So I really didn't have to have to-- I was basically forced to study in high school or forced to learn the material.

S1 22:00

Like you were doing it in that environment?

S2 22:02 Yeah.

S1 22:03 Like you weren't necessarily doing it at home after rowing practice or whatever. You were really in that--

S2 22:08 Exactly. So here it's, here is the lecture, take notes....

S1 22:12 Here's the information, now you go study about it and you come back with that knowledge.

S2 22:14 Yeah, exactly.

S1 22:19 You mentioned you've had a change of philosophy about your strategy a little bit. What have you done this semester to do that for yourself?

S2 22:25 Setting aside specific hours to study because that's so hard for me to do because-- in high school, I was able to look at side of notes and remember them and associate them with something, or even-- we had assigned reading and stuff and I have really special memory. So I can remember what information is what on what page and what pages of the book and stuff. So I could remember that and think, Okay, this is on page 162. I remember where this is in the passage, and it would help me remember it. So I could associate that with the book. But here, it's more like taking notes from slides and stuff, and I am not a very good note-taker. That's another thing that I've been working on, really forcing myself to study. For my engineering classes, it's more like doing practice problems and getting used to certain methods and stuff. I think that's about it. Because I have mainly engineering related courses-

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S1 23:32 This semester?

S2 23:32 This semester.

S1 23:33 Let me ask you that. Where are you taking this semester, in the honors and outside? Let's do in first.

S2 23:39 I'm taking Windows to the World with Dean Wang, which is a really cool class.

S1 23:44 That's great to have.

S2 23:50 And then I'm taking statics honors.

S1 23:54 And then for outside you're doing engineering mostly?

S2 23:59 Yeah, intro to engineering part 2, and then intro to environmental engineering, and then calc 3.

S1 24:12 You went back for more?

S2 24:14 I have to. Calc 3 is a lot easier than calc 2 though.

S1 24:20 And so now it's outside of the honors college, right?

S2 24:23 Yeah, I decided not to take an honors. Because I would have had the same professor as last semester, and then that wouldn't have ended well.

S1 24:29 As I understand from speaking with Dean Wang, there is an opportunity for students to give feedback on the professors who teach in TBHC. So did you get feedback information? Did you actually complete it, or did you do all--?

S2 25:09 Yeah, I completed it *thoroughly* for his class especially.

S1 25:12 Is it something that you get electronically? How do you receive the--?

S2 25:16 Actually, it was on one of the last sections of the class. They would just give us a piece of paper, and then we'd all fill it out.

S1 25:23 Did somebody put it in an envelope and stuff?

S2 25:25 Yes, step outside the room while we filled it up, and then we put it in an envelope and delivered to the honors college.

S1 25:30 That's old school. So you are given an opportunity, a clear opportunity to give very specific feedback and suggestions and so forth. That's good. Let's see. So how are your classes going so far this semester? Are you feeling like you've got a better handle on things? Are you using a new technique?

S2 26:00 In my intro to environmental class which is what I consider one of my most important classes because it's the introduction to my entire major...

S1 26:06 That's one of the basis of your-- right.

S2 26:10 The first has headed very poorly on because he doesn't give-- my professor doesn't give partial credit. So what ended up happening was half the test was just these two formulas for these two different constants. I switched them up so I got a 55 on the test because I literally used-- one of the formulas was you had to divide it by the initial concentration, and the other one was the same thing without dividing it by the initial concentration. He doesn't give partial credit. He's very adamant about that. So I went to his office hours and talked to him and I said, "Is there any way

that I retake this? I know the material really well." So he said, "We'll see about your next test. If I think that you're performing well, then I might offer you some type of way to recover your grade." So I got a 98 on the last test.

S1 27:00 Great, okay.

S2 27:01 Yeah, I got the highest grade in the class.

S1 27:03 Really nice.

S2 27:05 I'm probably going to go into his office hours tomorrow and talk to him about that. And then statics I have an A, and that class is easy because physics is my subject. Calc 3 is going pretty well. It's a really tough class but our professor said he doesn't do-- it was the same as last semester. He doesn't offer any extra credit or curves or anything. So our class average right now is still in the fifties and sixties, and I don't really know what he is going to do about that.

S1 27:41 That you're keeping up with everything that he's giving. Kind of similar to last-- you're not getting points for [crosstalk] for doing it so that you can-- okay.

S2 27:46 So hopefully he's going to give us something, yeah. He said he'll let us replace our lowest test grade with the final exam grade, so hopefully that means that the final is not going to be as hard as the test or something. I'm not really sure.

S1 28:02 We are just a little half way through this so hopefully he'll get more clear about what is going to be in the final.

S2 29:09 Yeah, I hope so.

S1 29:10 Because that's going to be pretty key if everybody, like you said, is in that same zone. You're all probably counting on that [crosstalk]--

S2 29:20 We still do have two more tests also, but it's just so hard because our quizzes and homework are only worth 10% of the grade. So everything else is tests and finals. Calc is probably my hardest class this semester.

S1 29:38 So what are doing? Are you going back to Kahn Academy are you using similar coaches with that-- [crosstalk]?

S2 29:43 Yeah. Like for calc 2, I knew some of it previously so that was easy to learn, but calc 3 is all new stuff. Don't get me wrong, he's a very good professor but his tests are so hard. He throws really

obscure things at us.

- S1 30:01 Well it's calc 3 and that's-- does it go any higher than that?
- S2 30:06 After that, it goes to differential equations.
- S1 30:08 Okay.
- S2 30:10 Yeah, 3 is the highest one. He specifically told us the homework is nothing like the test. Then why assign the homework if it's not going to be anything like the test? So we [?] do all the homework, and then he said some of the practice problems at the end of the chapter might be on the test, but then none of them ever are. So it's like you really don't know what to expect going into this test.
- S1 30:37 You are not sure.
- S2 30:38 Because I have a study group with five guys in my same class, and we all study really hard and all of us got-- all five of us on the last test got, let's see, I got a 60, Danny got a 64, Drew got a 58. We all studied really hard, and none of us did well.
- S1 31:02 Because you've done things like you've gotten together a study group. These are the type of things that you're doing this semester to help yourself.
- S2 31:09 Yeah, that's definitely helped a lot.
- S1 31:10 That's good and that's pretty proactive because-- how are you going to get through it? That's a great way to do that especially since you consider yourself to be introverted, to get together as a study group. That's pretty--
- S2 31:26 That's one thing the university has helped with. Being around so many new people has forced me branch out.
- S1 31:31 That's good. I know you said you decided not to do the rugby club. But have you gotten involved in any other--?
- S2 31:41 I was doing competitive weight lifting at a local gym. I've put that on hold until summer. This is prime competition season right now, and I'm supposed to be competing. But I decided to put that on hold because of mid-terms and stuff, and everything else I have going on.
- S1 32:01 What about professional organizations at UCF? I'm sure there's some kind of environmental engineering group or something.
- S2 32:09 I honestly need to look into that stuff, but I have just been so...

S1 32:13 And you're still in the transition process, you're trying to get your bearings and then--?

S2 32:15 Mm-hmm.

S1 32:16 Okay. Definitely check it out because those will help you as well.

S2 32:25 Yeah, absolutely.

S1 32:28 That's also where you'll find some people you can study groups with or you have people who've already gone to those classes who can push back some stuff to you that would be helpful with, hey, I took that class, and this how this went down for me and learn from what happened to me. That's really helpful. In the last semester, you got your grades. Obviously you were not happy about your C I'm sure, but otherwise you had a pretty successful first semester in transition. How did you feel about it when you got your grades? Did you have anything that you were like, I was surprised by that, or did you expect all of that you had [out there]?

S2 33:10 My final for chem was basically the determining factor between-- if I did really did well on it, I could barely make a B. I studied really hard for it. I went to all the SI sessions, but I didn't make the cut. I almost made a B, but I didn't.

S1 33:29 That's always tough.

S2 33:32 My professor wasn't really the kind of person to do plus minus grades. We had like a 300 person class. I went to her office hours a few times, but it didn't really-- the reason I did poorly in that class is because I, overall, didn't put in as much effort into it as I should have because the quizzes were weighted pretty fair amounts. I didn't consistently do well on the quizzes. She even drops the lowest two quizzes I think, but we had 12 of them. But I wasn't consistently studying for those, so-- I don't know.

S1 34:09 You had taken it in high school, right?

S2 34:11 Yeah.

S1 34:11 So you were relying on your knowledge from that?

S2 34:15 Yeah. But I took it sophomore year of high school, so it's a long time ago. But I was--

S1 34:17 So it's been a little while? Okay. But you didn't take an AP so you had to--?

S2 34:21 No. I didn't do AP.

S1 34:22 You didn't have the credit for that one, so you had to take the--?

S2 34:24 Yeah.

S1 34:25 With engineering, is that part of the requirement, chemistry?

S2 34:30 For environmental, I have to take chem 1 and chem 2.

S1 34:33 Then I'm assuming some of the math is in there, like the calculus that you're taking is a part of what your program would be for your environmental engineering-- [crosstalk]?

S2 34:44 Yeah. There's a set of universal things you use....

S1 34:47 Right, your core classes?

S2 34:48 Yeah, for engineering, it's basically you go calc 1, 2, and 3, and then differential equations, statics, dynamics, prob and stat for engineers. Then for all the other engineering majors, aside from chemical and environmental, it's just chem for engineers which is like one class. But for chemical engineering and environmental engineering, you have to take chem 1 and chem 2 instead because it's more in-depth knowledge.

S1 35:13 There you go. Interesting. So all the classes that you're taking right now are really for your major?

S2 35:20 Yeah.

S1 35:20 Except for, I think, within the honors? I think you're taking the [crosstalk]--

S2 35:23 Yeah, Windows to the World.

S1 35:23 Which is great, to have those opportunities that are a little bit more broad and so specific to your major. You had the opportunity to mix with a bunch of different people from different majors, and that's really great. How many people are in that one? Is that pretty small?

S2 35:40 I think we have 9 or 10.

S1 35:43 That's great access too. The Dean of the college, not a lot of people get that level of access.

S2 35:50 It's the only class he teaches so it's cool.

S1 35:56 That's a great experience. So when you got your grades and you were like, gosh chemistry but otherwise, did you feel like, Okay, I got through the first semester-- what was your feeling about it? Like, The semester is over. It's my first semester. I can't believe--

S2 36:25 I was disappointed about my C. My parents weren't happy about it to say the least. But overall, I was like, Okay, the semester is over. I'll take a break. I'll do things better next semester because this is my first one. I was trying to accept that it was okay that I got a C because it was my first semester and I'm still learning how to fit into this environment. So I wasn't too upset about it, but still I don't know.

S1 37:00 It's there on your mind.

S2 37:00 Yeah.

S1 37:03 I think we've talked about you've had study groups, you tried to organize your calendar and put some blocks of time where you can study. Anything else that you are doing differently? Note taking, you mentioned that.

S2 37:15 Yeah, I've been, more recently...

S1 37:17 Have you used any specific methods with that?

S2 37:21 Not really. I'm not really the type of person to learn by just writing something down a bunch of times. Especially if it's math-related stuff, I have to understand the concept behind it. Statics is really-- my professor is awesome, probably the best one I've had so far because he actually has a workbook and it's a fill in the blank type thing where he has all of his PowerPoint slides in the workbook. He goes through examples and stuff and it will have blanks and you write it in instead of having to write the whole slide down and stuff. That's a really helpful process, I think.

S1 37:57 Have all of your professors been consistent with using WebCourses, like posting grades, posting PowerPoint assignments?

S2 38:03 No, not really. My environmental professor this semester doesn't use it. Then my calc professor last semester didn't use it. So there's a professor here and there that are still doing things old school but-- like my environmental professor uses web courses like posts things sometimes, but he doesn't do grades through web courses. He keeps track of them all himself.

S1 38:30 So then how do you know where you stand? Does he-?-

S2 38:32 You have to go into his office hours.

S1 38:33 Okay, interesting.

S2 38:36 Because the only main-- all it is is tests and homework. So that's

- his only grades. So he just does it by excel spreadsheet.
- S2 39:03 I'm not crazy about it, but....
- S1 39:04 So knowing where you stand certainly makes a difference and what kind of effort you need to put in and maintain. Let's see. So based on all your experiences, how do you feel about where you are now, where you're headed? What goes from here essentially, and how are you feeling about that?
- S2 39:48 I consider calc 2 and 3 to still be prerequisite classes because really, all the courses I'm still taking now are building up to the higher level engineering courses. I really like application type stuff. Honestly, I hate learning things and not being able to apply them. That's what has been killing me. Yeah, I understand everything in calc 2, but show me how to use it with something relevant to my major, or something like that. So I really want to get into--
- S1 40:26 Yeah. The theoretical pieces are more challenging because you're not actually put them in play.
- S2 40:30 That's why intro to environmental is my favorite class because I'm taking the chem I learned last semester, and then some of differential equations and stuff and just putting them together and doing actual-- all of our homework problems are scenarios. Like, there's a CSTR reactor with this flow rate. Calculate the generation rate of this. It's really interesting stuff. I want to focus on hydrology and waste water treatment type stuff. I think that's where I want to go with my major so this is a really cool class for me because that's like getting into all that stuff already. Our next chapter is actually on waste water treatment, so I'm excited about that.
- S1 41:13 I know that feeling. As far as how you feel prepared to move forward, are you feeling like you got things better under your control, are you feeling--?
- S2 41:25 I honestly feel like yeah, my grades aren't the best, but I feel confident that I know the material well enough to move on and do well in my major.
- S1 41:36 And within the honors college, do you have that confidence that you're doing well there and you can-- is it something that's been good for you to have in addition to-- [crosstalk]?
- S2 41:46 Yeah, it's a really good resource, especially the print lab and stuff like that.

- S1 41:49 Everybody loves the print lab. Free copies. Have you met with Rex for example? What resources have you [crosstalk] him?
- S2 41:57 Yeah, I met with him last semester when I was planning out this class. He helped me transition, like change my major to environmental and walk me through everything, be different and stuff. So he helped me with a lot of that, and I still use him as a reference if I'm like, oh, hey what should I-- if I'm taking this class or if I need to change something within my major, I go, who should I talk to about this question and stuff, and he will refer me to somebody so he's been really helpful. I'll actually try to meet him soon about potentially taking summer classes and stuff.
- S1 42:41 So as far as resources within the honors college, the print lab has been great, Rex has been helpful, anything else that you've-- are you following anything?
- S2 42:49 Last semester, I went through the Hero Program and did a lot of volunteer work through that. I wasn't able to keep up with that semester unfortunately, so that was good resource. Met some new people, made friends, and gave back a little bit.
- S1 43:10 Are there any other things within the honors college as far resources are concerned that you've used or that you would want to have available, like if you think about, last semester, I really could have used this. Or did you feel like you have the right level of support?
- S2 43:24 I feel the level of support was definitely there especially with symposium and having your team leader to talk to everything about. I'm still close with my team leader, and so I could pretty much go to her about anything. So I feel like that really did its job, and I feel like I definitely have the support and the resources that are there at the honors college is meant to give.
- S1 43:48 So it's living up to what it said it would do for you?
- S2 43:50 Yeah.
- S1 43:51 Right. Kind of the “sales pitch” - you are in a research one type huge opportunity and resources available to you because of the size of the institution itself where you have this smaller class size and you have that smaller school feel by participating in an honors college environment. Is that what you're getting when you're in those classes and what you're feeling?
- S2 44:27 Definitely.

- S1 44:28 Okay.
- S2 44:29 I've never had more-- I think my tech presentation class was no more than 20 people, and that's the largest honors class I've had. So that's really helpful. And static is like 14 of us I think, and that's awesome because I have a really good professor first off and then also, he stays after class. We can ask him questions. There's not many people in the class, so he's really open to talking about stuff that we wouldn't normally get into in a big lecture class.
- S1 44:57 Okay. Great. I want make sure I covered-- [inaudible]. At this point, you changed your major which is, well, you're still in engineering, so it's not like you went over to something completely different like music. But you feel like that's your niche. That's where you're headed. You feel comfortable with that. Your future as far as you're concerned is going to be in that direction, and then your study program is going to follow that plan. So you feel confident in that, that you have--
- S2 45:31 Definitely.
- S1 45:31 Okay. Is there any feedback that you have? One of the things that Dean Wang really does want, he really does want to know, are there things they could do better? Are there things they could do differently? Are there things that maybe are there that aren't as helpful as they think they are? I don't have an example of these in my mind. He really is very interested in the feedback, and he wants to know what helps in that first semester for the people walking through the door? What is the most helpful thing? What could be more helpful? What else could be out there? What shouldn't be there? That sort of thing.
- S2 46:09 I think a big element of it is where you're coming from in your high school experience because everyone has their own way of transitioning. Like I know a couple of friends that just jump right in, automatically put their study habits from high school into this and a really smooth transition. Mine wasn't that smooth, but I have a good idea of what I'm doing now. I don't think there's too much you can do about that. There's a certain personal aspect of just figuring it out for yourself and acclimating to it, like not living with your parents anymore and all that kind of stuff. There's not a lot that the honors college can do about that but, I think symposium did a good job of almost forcing you to make friends and just.... Giving you connections and putting everything out there for you. I really liked through symposium they're like, "Okay, class, sign-up deadlines for spring are now. Sign up now."

They just walk you through everything, and then you learn to do it for yourself. So I like that.

S1 47:11 I know they have deadlines out here, but it was helpful to be in that course because they really walk you through it [crosstalk]--

S2 47:16 Yeah, and then they remind you, you have to do this by then. I thought it was really helpful.

S1 47:22 Do you follow any of the social media? I know they have Twitter and Facebook and that kind of stuff?

S2 47:27 For the honors college?

S1 47:27 Yes.

S2 47:28 I know I've subscribe to their emails. I didn't know-- I think I actually have them on Instagram. I don't do Twitter or anything but--

S1 47:36 I think they are on all of them, trying to get it all out there. And I know that you have the myhonors which is a different platform for myUCF. Information-wise do you feel like you're getting what you need any time in there and that's sort of thing?

S2 48:12 I think so, yeah. I think their social media, at least their Instagram, what I follow, it's more geared toward showing what the honors college is doing rather than putting out events and things like that which is interesting, but the email newsletter helps a lot.

S1 48:31 Yeah. That one should help. I do know that the weekly email, the person who compiles that information is getting it from everybody around. So you are getting a summary almost of all those things from that thing.

S1 49:50 Anything else that you would want to share about your experience in your first year or the honors college or anything else that comes to mind?

S2 49:59 Not really.

S1 50:00 Okay. Well, I just wanted to thank you again for your willingness to meet with me especially so quickly, and I'm going to turn this one off, officially end it.

Emily

- S1 00:02 I am meeting with a student who has successfully completed her first semester, first year, in the Burnett Honors College within University of Central Florida, and we're going to talk about her experiences in that first semester. When you were in high school-- first of all, where are you from in terms of your high school?
- S2 00:21 I'm from Longwood, Florida, which is pretty close from here.
- S1 00:24 Yeah, just down the road. So, you're from the local area. How big is Longwood High? I don't know how big that is.
- S2 00:31 I actually went to Seminole High School, which is pretty huge.
- S1 00:33 Yeah. That's pretty huge [crosstalk].
- S2 00:36 They have over 3,000 kids. I was in an IB program, so it's much smaller. My class was about a hundred people.
- S1 00:39 Okay, so you were used to a big campus, but then also a smaller kind of setting. How many places did you apply? What were your thoughts about when you were looking at institutions that you might want to attend?
- S2 00:57 I applied to, I think, four or five schools. I applied to this school. I applied to UF, and I applied to Brown and Columbia. I ended up coming here over UF, because I got much more money to come here.
- S1 01:09 So, financial. A good driver of decision making, often. Did you apply to the honors program or did they solicit that? What happened there?
- S2 01:22 I think it's automatic if you're a National Merits finalist.
- S1 01:25 So, you're a National Merit-- okay. There you go. Were you aware of that? What did you think about the honors college? When you made the decision to come to UCF and you're in the honors college, were you like, "Okay, this is a good plan for me. This is the right environment"? What was your thoughts around that?
- S2 01:48 I actually didn't know much about it until after I came here, but I liked the idea of having smaller classes. I liked the interdisciplinary seminars a lot too, because I liked to be able to take classes that weren't part of my major. And the fact that they're so small, and also that they kind of combine different areas of study to create more interesting subjects. I like [crosstalk].

S1 02:07 What is your area of focus? Do you have a major picked out? Are you still thinking about it?

S2 02:15 I'm actually double majoring in political science and math.

S1 02:18 Wow. You're going for it.

S2 02:19 Yeah [chuckles]. Also minoring in chemistry. I was majoring chem, but I decided not to. But I have most of the minor classes done already, so I might as well just go with it.

S1 02:30 Okay, so you came over with a certain number of credits previously, with your IB program experience. Last semester, when you came on campus, you were pretty familiar, not with how to get around necessarily - it's giant - but you were pretty familiar with UCF as a culture, kind of the large campus, and that sort of thing since you went to high school relatively close by. Did you go on any of the official tours or any of that kind of thing?

S2 02:59 I went on the one that was during orientation, but I never came on a tour by myself.

S1 03:03 So, you attended the orientation prior to that.

S2 03:05 Yes.

S1 03:07 And then what about with the honors college?

S2 03:10 It was the honors orientation.

S1 03:11 So, you did that part? Okay, so that's where you got your kind of bearings, I guess, on where most things were. When you came on campus, when you started classes, if you can kind of put yourself back in those shoes, what were you expecting? Before you walked in to that first class on that first day, based on your previous experiences, what you know pop culturally even about going to college, or what friends or relatives might have told you, because everyone has advice, what were you thinking it would be like? What was your kind of, "This is what I think it's going to be like to go to school here"?

S2 03:52 I don't know, actually. I feel like it was pretty close to my expectations in this way.

S1 03:56 Okay, so you felt like you had a good understanding of what was coming.

S2 04:06 Yeah.

S1 04:06 Okay. What classes - obviously, you took the symposium - what

other honors classes did you take last semester?

S2 04:15 I think the only other honors class I took was Calc 1.

S1 04:19 Then outside of the honors--?

S2 04:21 Then I took Chem 2, Drawing 1, and then 19th Century Art History.

S1 04:29 I didn't hear-- Drawing 1, is that what you said?

S2 04:31 Yeah, and 19th Century Art History.

S1 04:37 So, academically, when you came in, how many credits did you end up coming in with?

S2 04:52 65.

S1 04:52 Okay, so you came in not really academically a freshman. You came in at a different level. What were your experiences with the symposium and with Calc 1 within the honors college? So, you can talk about them separately or however you want.

S2 05:07 I liked symposium a lot. I thought most of the subjects talked about were really important. I liked the people I met through symposium, as well, because it's like a small, little community. Calc 1 was-- it was just a math class.

S1 05:27 How did that go for you?

S2 05:47 I thought it was pretty similar to the IB curriculum. I think one of the problems was, because I was familiar with the material, I didn't study for it as much as I probably should have, which is definitely a big thing. Also, because the first half of the semester I flew through, and the second half of the semester, I got busy with other classes, because those pick up as well. I had a hard time motivating myself to study outside class.

S1 06:12 And was it because you were just finding social activities, or you were joining clubs, what kind of things?

S2 06:19 Yeah, I was making friends. Also, my other classes turned out to be a lot more time-consuming. Actually, surprisingly, my most time-consuming class by far was the drawing class, because what actually happens is there's a very small number of people that are allowed to go through the portfolio selection for the higher level classes. So, the lower level art classes are very highly grade deflated. I think what happened was they asked for hours and hours of work outside class, like eight to ten hours of studio time outside class, so I'd be there all the time. And I think my

professor, that he gave out three A's out of like 200 kids.

S1 06:56 Wow, that's really intense.

S2 06:57 Yeah, that's not what I was expecting, but I learned a lot.

S1 07:00 How did you do in that class?

S2 07:04 I got an A.

S1 07:05 You got an A, okay. So, you were one of those lucky few. And then you took the, let's see, Chem 2? How did that go for you?

S2 07:12 Chem 2 was fun. I've done a lot of chem in high school, so that was okay.

S1 07:15 And you'd obviously done Chem 1-- but it went as you thought it would go? It wasn't like, "Wow, this is so not what--"?

S2 07:21 Yeah, actually I had credit for Chem 2 too, but I figured it might be good to take it again. And also, I'm planning to go to med school, so B's in Chem would have not been so good. At least first semester.

S1 07:32 Right, well that's very true. Okay, so you're a double major and you're kind of pre-med in that sense. All right. And then the other class that you took was--

S2 07:47 Also I was in Orchestra, so that was one credit, I think.

S1 07:52 Is that within the honors college or is that--?

S2 07:54 No.

S1 07:54 Okay, outside. What did you play in Orchestra?

S2 07:57 Violin.

S1 08:03 And then you had the art history class. So, did you get some good things out of that? How did that go?

S2 08:10 I liked my professor a lot. I was actually-- the format of the class was kind of surprising to me, because of my history classes in high school, they were very much writing based, so lots of essay tests, and that's kind of where our class is. That's what I was expecting from this, but it was all multiple choice. So, that could have been-- I feel like it was easier, but it was also worse for me, because I'm a pretty good writer and multiple choice are kind of like, if you mess up, you mess up. And also, the questions were kind of weird sometimes. For example, we had one question about, I think it was a building in Europe, and it was known for

being the first major use of glass in architecture, but the base was made out of cast iron. So, the two answers we had were what was the building made out of, it was glass and steel or just cast iron. So, it was made of cast iron, but the importance of the building was glass, so everyone got that wrong. His questions were very, really, really--

- S1 09:02 Oddly worded?
- S2 09:02 Yeah.
- S1 09:03 Like almost tricky, kind of?
- S2 09:04 Yeah.
- S1 09:05 Okay. So, interesting. So, as you're going through your semester, did you have to adjust your-- I mean, you talked about the first, kind of sped through there, and then it got really kind of crazy. How did you manage that? Or how did you make sure you got in the time you needed to get assignments completed, prepare yourself for tests, and that sort of thing?
- S2 09:29 I had a lot of free time outside of class, but I feel like I just wasn't using it properly. So, I just-- I don't know, I feel like I didn't change my work habits that much, which I probably should have [chuckles]. So, maybe, but--
- S1 09:42 Well, what did you like to do in your free time? What were the things that you were interested in? It could be social media, binge watching on Netflix [laughter].
- S2 09:51 That, too [laughter].
- S1 09:55 Okay. Did you adjust? Was there some kind of adjustment that you made if you got to a point where you felt like, "Oh gosh, you know, I really do need to put more effort into this class"? Was there a point in the semester where that happened in any of your classes you were like, "Okay, wait a second. I maybe faltered here on this last quiz, so I probably need to focus a little bit more"? How did you handle that kind of situation?
- S2 10:15 So, instead of studying before tests, I made more of an effort to study while we were going through the material. Or study a little bit ahead, so I would know what was happening during the lectures.
- S1 10:29 And were you, attendance-wise, you were pretty good about that?
- S2 10:31 Yeah.

- S1 10:35 Okay... So when you got your grades, everything was posted out there, you're probably already home and in holiday mode, was it what you expected to receive in all of your classes? Was anything a surprise?
- S2 10:57 Actually, yeah, the two classes I was expecting maybe not to get an A were the drawing class and then the chem class, because my grade was kind of borderline for chem. My two B's were in two classes that I kind of didn't pay so much attention to, because I figured it'd be okay. So, it was art history and calc, which I wasn't expecting that, but I guess I deserved it [chuckles].
- S1 11:14 Okay. But you thought you were-- were you able to track your grades along? Were your professors using WebCourses [crosstalk]?
- S2 11:24 Yeah. They didn't put their grades in, so I had no idea what my grades were.
- S1 11:26 So, you didn't know where you were standing. Okay. That's hard, if you don't know [chuckles].
- S2 11:36 Yeah [chuckles].
- S1 11:37 Especially because assignments are often weighted. Okay, so what was your reaction in general? Say, you get your grades and your first thought is what?
- S2 11:59 I was a little disappointed, because I knew I could have gotten A's in those classes if I'd maybe spent a little bit more time in them, but I figured I got the grade I deserved for the time I put into the class, so I was okay.
- S1 12:08 Okay. And did you have any influence-- like, "My parents are on me about this one," or whatever.
- S2 12:13 No.
- S1 12:15 Okay. So, you had a good break. You took your time, you enjoyed it. Very good. So, when you came back this semester, what classes are you taking within the honors college this time around?
- S2 12:27 I'm taking two interdisciplinary seminars, so Story of English and Writing for Publication.
- S1 12:37 Interesting. And then outside of the honors college, what are you taking?
- S2 12:52 And then I'm taking Physics, and then I'm taking International and

Political Economy.

- S1 13:04 Okay, and so having-- as you looked at your grades, and as you said, "I kind of I thought I could have tried a little harder," what have you done this semester to-- have you done anything to adjust that based on what happened last semester?
- S2 13:16 Yeah, I've been trying to work as things come, like I said. The problem is--
- S1 13:20 So, not procrastinating and that kind of-- okay.
- S2 13:23 The problem is Physics is the main class that I should be studying for, but the thing is, there's a couple of exams and not much between that, whereas for my other classes, I have things to do every week, so I have to be doing those.
- S1 13:35 Okay, so Physics is the one that you feel least confident about right now?
- S2 13:36 Yeah.
- S1 13:37 Okay, because there's fewer assignments, you don't have-- but do you know where you stand in this? Is that on web courses? Do you know where you are?
- S2 13:46 I did okay on the first test. I got a B. But then we have these iClicker questions, so you go and you answer questions in the class. I've been missing those, so I don't know how much that'll [crosstalk].
- S1 13:59 Okay. Because I'm sure it's a big class, too.
- S2 14:01 Yeah, it's like 500 people.
- S1 14:04 Yeah, that's huge. It's hard to have a relationship with your instructor that they would know what kind of student you are. So, that's challenging. But do you feel like you know where you stand in all of your classes right now? Like if you were to, say, rattle off - you don't have to do this, by the way - but if you were to say, "I think I have an A in this, B in this," do you know where you stand?
- S2 14:30 I actually have no idea. Because for my writing class, he hasn't graded my writing yet. So, I don't know how I'm doing there. I just actually turned in a big assignment and that's worth a good chunk. So, I don't know how I did on that. For International Political Economy, I feel like I'm doing pretty well, but the thing is, he doesn't tell you how to calculate your grade. Because he's

like, "Don't worry about it until the end." So, I don't like that.

S1 14:51 Yeah, that's a little--

S2 14:52 Yeah.

S1 14:52 He doesn't have the outline in the syllabus as far as how it's weighted and--

S2 14:57 Yeah, he does, but he doesn't release the grades until later.

S1 15:00 Okay, but he doesn't keep track along? Do you have any classes that are like that right now where you're like, "Okay, I can look in here and I can tell everything's in there. Yes. I got a B. I have an A"?

S2 15:24 Yeah, most of them are like that, but none of the assignments are up to date, so I don't know if [crosstalk].

S1 15:27 Okay. Got you. Because some of them have just a few assignments, right?

S2 15:33 Yeah.

S1 15:33 And some of them are not up to date, so it's hard to tell exactly. Okay. So, when you look at your experiences so far that you had last semester, in particular, and as you're going forward, have your experiences impacted your view of college and where you're headed and how you're going to get there? Kind of your plan and that sort of thing?

S2 15:59 I don't know. Not too much, actually. I feel like I've stayed pretty constant.

S1 16:03 Okay. So, you're feeling pretty good?

S2 16:05 Yeah.

S1 16:07 So, you feel like, both in the curriculum in terms of your many majors, as well as within particularly within the honors college program, you feel pretty confident that you're moving in the right direction, that you have the right resources, that you have what you need? Have you ever met with Rex, as an advisor, to get any feedback from him?

S2 16:38 Yeah.

S1 16:40 I'm just running down the list of people, things that I know that are resources. Did that help plot things out?

S2 16:48 He was helping me plot out my majors, and I ended up changing

- all my majors.
- S1 16:52 Okay. But in the process, he was helpful. What other resources-- are there other things that you found within the honors college that have been helpful for you?
- S2 17:00 Actually, in my first semester, I ended up doing research through Dr. Wang. I asked him for like a professor connection, and so I went and talked to him. We ended up getting along really well. We're getting along really well, so that was a good thing.
- S1 17:13 That's great. And everybody loves the computer lab, because apparently there's free printing.
- S2 17:17 Yeah. It's great.
- S1 17:19 I've heard that a few times [chuckles]. All right. Are you following them on - I know that there's lots of different Twitter and Facebook, and whatever - are you following any of the honors college pages or sites?
- S2 17:33 I probably am, but I can't remember seeing anything.
- S1 17:36 Okay. And I know there's a weekly email that goes out to everybody. So, everybody kind of gets those updates there. What about for you in terms of your campus involvement? Have you joined any clubs or organizations or professional-- like anything within UCF?
- S2 18:21 I actually haven't really, and I've been trying to do more.
- S1 18:24 Okay. Yeah, especially if you're pre-med, you want to get in on that. I mean, you have so many varied interests that it kind of-- I'm looking at all the things that-- even the classes that you're taking, you're pretty Renaissance in that sense. There's probably quite a few things that might really, for you, be appealing.... Okay. How did you feel about with the symposium class? So, I know that they break it - it's large, because it has everybody in it - but then you break it into the team leader groups. Did you feel like you had a good experience there to become a team leader?
- S2 19:10 Yeah.
- S1 19:11 Okay. The service learning component?
- S2 19:14 Yeah, I enjoyed that.
- S1 19:16 Which grade did you end up with?
- S2 19:17 I got first grade.

S1 19:18 You had first grade. Woo hoo. Okay. So, you got a bunch of six-year-olds going crazy [laughter]. And so, was that an opportunity? Did they ask you lots of questions or were you trying to give them any content? What was your experience like with them?

S2 19:36 They were just really excited about everything [laughter].

S1 19:38 Yeah. Your typical little kid kind of questions, I'm sure. And your team leader was effective, like you felt like that was a good dynamic?

S2 19:54 Yeah.

S1 19:54 Are you living on campus, off campus, what's your--?

S2 19:57 Yeah, I'm on campus.

S1 19:58 Are you on tower 3 or are you--?

S2 19:59 Yeah.

S1 19:59 Okay. So, you are living in tower 3. And what do you think about that? So, you're, you know, it's in the honors college and you're living within-- your roommates are probably honors, obviously. So, how has that experience been?

S2 20:11 I liked the towers, because the rooms are big, the kitchen's nice. The only thing I'd have more is there's not much interaction with people who aren't your roommates, because you walk down the hall and you can't really see anyone. You don't know who lives around you.

S1 20:22 So, maybe some social events, like in the lobby or something.

S2 20:25 Yeah. I mean, I guess they have those, but no one really goes to those. I think it's the way the buildings are set up. Maybe if there were more common areas in each room or on each floor, maybe. But those are pretty minor complaints. Overall, I like it a lot.

S1 20:42 Are you planning to live there next year or what's your plan for that?

S2 20:46 No.

S1 20:47 What are you-- moving off campus, staying on campus?

S2 20:48 Yeah.

S1 20:49 Moving off?

S2 20:50 Mm-hmm.

S1 20:52 But not moving back home in Longwood?

S2 20:58 No.

S1 21:00 It's a little too much of a hike, in the morning, especially. Okay. As far as the resources available through the honors college, in particular, but UCF as well, is there anything you wish they had more of or offered that they don't offer, or any ideas that you have about that?

S2 21:19 Not too much, actually.

S1 21:21 You feel like you got the right level of support?

S2 21:23 Yeah.

S1 21:23 It's as advertised?

S2 21:25 Yeah, basically.

S1 21:26 As laid out in the brochure is what's happening here. So, is that kind of one of the things that drew you to it? I know you said financially, obviously, this was the best decision, but when you look back on that decision, do you have any regrets about it or wonder what if or any of those kinds of things?

S2 22:37 Not too much, I guess. Sometimes I regret not going to UF, just because I feel like it's really close to home. But, overall, I'm still here. I like it a lot.

S1 22:47 What about - you went to a really large high school - but did you have people that you knew came to UCF, so you already had some people around that you knew before you came on campus?

S2 22:59 There were some familiar faces, but they weren't people I knew very well.

S1 23:02 But it wasn't like your best friends or any of that kind of thing. So, when you came on campus, you were kind of like you could have almost have been an out of state student, really, because you didn't have as many folks that you knew. So, you've made friendships and relationships, obviously through honors, because you've been in the dorms. I call them dorms. They're really more apartments. And how about the courses?

S2 23:25 Actually, yeah, one of my closest friends was in symposium. Some other ones were through Dr. Wang's class, and so, those have been strangely helpful.

S1 23:33 Yeah, I think that's a great setting, because there's a lot in

common. Usually, you have some of those similar interests, and that kind of drive and that sort of thing, which is maybe unique in some places throughout UCF. Let me try to think if there's anything else. I guess, so you're pre-med, so your end game, for you, what you see is that you're going to be a doctor, you're going to study medicine? How do you view the end of your education?

S2 24:08 Like professionally, what am I going to be doing?

S1 24:10 Yes. The “what are you going to be when you grow up?” college edition.

S2 24:12 I'd like to work in humanitarian aid. Maybe Doctors without Borders, or just abroad for long periods of time.

S1 24:19 With general practitioner kind of knowledge?

S2 24:22 Yes.

S1 24:22 Okay, I didn't know if you were really laser focused on a specific specialization.

S2 24:27 No.

S1 24:28 No, okay. Have you had volunteer opportunities to do things like that?

S2 24:35 I actually haven't. I volunteered at a hospital in high school, but that wasn't really...

S1 24:40 That's a good idea. Obviously, having onsite practical knowledge of what that profession's really like, doing some shadowing, all of that sort of thing. Of course, we have the med school now down there. I don't know if they have opportunities for students who are interested to shadow or do any of those kinds of things, but I would ask, because--

S2 25:08 Yeah, I'll go look into it for sure.

S1 25:09 Yeah, I think that would be great. And then you have Nemours is there and the Veteran's Hospital. It's really boomed in that industry! So, you're in a pretty good spot as far as maybe opportunities to get some hands-on and some insights and stuff. And with the professional organizations, it's always nice... There are always people that are taking the classes that you're going to have to take, and they can give you some hints and set you up. Anything else you can think of about, specifically, from your first semester? Any feedback? Dr. Wang's very interested in knowing if there is other things that can be done within TBHC or

good ideas out there that they could consider.

S2 26:09

Actually, off the top of my head, I really can't think of anything.

S1 26:11

Okay. Fair enough. I'll go ahead and turn off and officially end our interview. Thank you again for your willingness to participate.

Audrey

- S1 00:02 I'm speaking with a second semester freshman from Burnett Honors College, and she's going to share some of her experiences during her first semester in the Burnett Honors College at UCF. And it is March 19th at about 1:57 PM. Where did you go in high school? What area are you from?
- S2 00:24 I'm from here in Florida, about an hour and a half, South Sebastian, a little town.
- S1 00:30 So you're an in-state student, so you probably knew about UCF a little bit. What kind of things were you looking for before you even started the university search? What did you think about that you really wanted to have?
- S2 00:45 Actually, initially I didn't think small classes were important, I just thought it would be a benefit. But after coming here I realized small class size is huge. I looked into programs to see-- it's kind of sad when you're a senior in high school how much you care about the reputation of a college because it doesn't matter nearly as much as you think it does. It's more of a pride thing for fellow seniors. And I knew financially I needed to be able to afford it.
- S1 01:16 That's important.
- S2 01:17 Major.
- S1 01:17 Where else were you looking? Where else did you end up applying?
- S2 01:23 I applied to University of Miami, University of Florida, Georgia Tech. I think those were my four. I intended to apply to more out-of-state and then I got discouraged with the money and then I just kind of stuck with...
- S1 01:39 With out-of-state, yes, that can be tough. So about four. What's your area of focus? What is it that you were looking for program-wise?
- S2 01:51 I am pre-med. I'm bio-medical science major as well as a math major, like double majoring. Actually when I was applying though, I was applying as an engineer. I thought I was going to do engineering and then do the pre-med tract. So that was why I leaned towards UCF because there was a strong engineering school. But I ended up deciding I would rather just do math and bio-med.

S1 02:20 Did you decide that before you came in or once you got here?

S2 02:25 It was when I went to orientation and they finally showed me classes. I really didn't want to not get to take science classes, and I thought engineering was going to be a good marriage of science and math, but it was not really [chuckles]. So now I'm like, "You know what? I'm going to do it myself. I'm going to marry science and math and just double major."

S1 02:44 So what was the process when you applied through UCF? Were you solicited by the Honors College? How did that come up?

S2 02:51 Yes, the Honors College sent out packets, I think it was. I think it was in the mail.

S1 02:59 So after you applied as a, hey, you should think about this, or is that something you - from the start - were interested in?

S2 03:05 Because I didn't really know what an Honors College entailed. I just thought it was a way of separating yourself again. Initially, I probably wasn't going to apply to the Honors College until I got the packet and read about the benefits of being in the Honors College.

S1 03:28 You did orientation. Did you do a UCF-wide and a Burnett or--? I don't know how that works [crosstalk].

S2 03:34 There was an Honors College orientation but I actually wasn't able to go to it. I just did the regular orientation. Which I wish I had gotten to the Honors one.

S1 03:44 It's a little more specific than--

S2 03:46 Yes. I felt a little like I didn't really know what was going on.

S1 03:54 In your hometown, what was your high school population? How many people were in your high school? Was it a big high school, medium, small?

S2 04:10 The town itself was tiny. We were literally just a bunch of houses surrounding the high school. My graduating class was like 400 kids, so our school was between 1000 and 2000 kids.

S1 04:22 That's kind of medium size.

S2 04:23 Yes, it was medium size.

S1 04:24 I just like to know because when you come to UCF, in total you're looking at about 62,000 people.

S2 04:28 It's overwhelming.

S1 04:30 If you come from a huge high school, you may go, "Okay, I want to go to a huge university."

S2 04:34 No, this is crazy.

S1 04:38 So before you walked onto campus though, what did you think that your first class would be like? What was it going to be like to be a college student in your mind? What did that mean?

S2 04:48 I feel like it was such a surreal thing because all throughout high school that's all anybody would talk about. Going to college-- I feel like our entire lives led up to going to college. Like it was such a big deal. So you don't really know what to expect. And I did the IV program, so I anticipated my classes being somewhat similar to that. But I really didn't know. It felt surreal the entire time. Even your first day, it just feels like it's not really happening. I still don't feel like I could say, "I'm a college kid."

S1 05:28 So you've gotten here. Are you living in the Honors Tower?

S2 05:36 Actually, I'm living off-campus. I'm living at Plaza, right across the street.

S1 05:40 So what made you decide to live off-campus? What was your--

S2 05:44 The first thing was it's actually cheaper than living on-campus. I wanted to be able to cook for myself. I wanted my own personal space. I'm good at sharing but I wanted to be able to have a place to study and have my own quiet time.

S1 06:05 And be able to just focus there. So you don't have a roommate right now?

S2 06:08 Not a roommate. I have other apart-- like they have their own rooms but nobody's in my room with me, which I would have had at Towers but it's substantially more. So I figured it just made sense to--

S1 06:21 There's a lot of housing around.

S2 06:23 Yes. It's literally across the street, so I just walk to class.

S1 06:36 Okay. Now you're moved in. You're ready for your first day. You're taking symposium. What other Honors classes were you taking last fall?

S2 06:53 I took Honors human physiology, and I think those two might have been my only Honors courses. I think chem 2 was not

- Honors. I wish I did take it Honors because the class was so large I never got to talk to my-- That's one of the biggest things with the Honors College. I love having small class sizes to the point that I wish I could just take everything Honors. I wish they offered more classes.
- S1 07:21 You're in that chemistry room with 300 of your closest friends, right? So chem 2, what else did you take in the--
- S2 07:30 Human physiology.
- S1 07:32 That was in Honors College though.
- S2 07:33 Yeah, that was in the Honors College. I took anthropology. What else did I take last semester? It feels like so long ago....
- S1 07:51 Kind of a "How did it go that fast?"
- S2 07:52 I know. I don't understand. I took human physiology. What did I go to after that class? I took world religions.
- S1 08:05 The symposium, human phys, chem, anthro, world religions, that's a pretty full schedule.
- S2 08:11 That might have been it.
- S1 08:13 If anything else comes to you later.... With the symposium, what was your experience? You're on campus, you're attending your first honors symposium with the rest of the class who are going to be your peers throughout the program. What was your experience with the symposium, and how it was formatted, and your team leader, and the activities, and all of those types of things?
- S2 08:37 Some of it was kind of silly but I feel it was still good because I feel a lot of us in the Honors College are all very similar where we're all friendly but we're not really one to be extroverted and make friends. So it kind of forces you to make friends, which was good, especially your very first semester. It's good just to be forced to do it.
- S1 09:04 Forced to interact with those folks.
- S2 09:06 Yes, be forced to interact with people because it's kind of easy to isolate yourself, especially on a campuses this large and everybody's on their own schedule and everything. But I enjoyed Symposium. I liked break-out groups; that was good. I feel like it was always interesting, that's for sure [laughter]. We had a couple of kids in my break-out group that were humorous.
- S1 09:35 What about the service learning? What grade did you end up

working with?

- S2 09:37 I had fifth grade, which I actually work at a preschool, so I knew that I would be able to handle the young'uns but then I got older kids and I didn't know how to deal-- it's very different handling a three-year-old than handling a twelve-year-old. So I had to adjust with that. I wish we had more time there, because my school was far away. I felt like I was only in the classroom for maybe 20 minutes and I really just wanted to say longer but we really couldn't because of the distance. And I know they can only take so much time out of our schedules, so it's hard to try to make up for that. But even still, even in the small amount of time that we had there, it was nice to go because-- I mean for some people they found it jarring. They'd never been to a Title I school. I went to a Title I school for elementary school. I've been there. These kids were me. It just felt good. I felt like I was actually doing something that makes-- because I know if I were in their shoes - I mean, I was in their shoes - I feel like it would have made a difference seeing a college kid because I definitely-- like I'm the first kid in my family to go to college. I think that would have made a big difference in my life.
- S1 10:56 So you're the first one in your family?
- S2 10:58 Yes. My dad is going to college right now but up until he started going to college just now, I'm the only one to go to university.
- S1 11:14 You mentioned you're working also while you're working at the daycare and other thing? How many hours a week are you working?
- S2 11:21 10 or 15.
- S1 11:38 Okay. When you got here, when you started taking your other classes, what was your experience with the other honors course? I think you said it was human physiology?
- S2 11:57 That was my favorite class. I mean, I'm biased because I like science, so obviously I liked to more than some of the others. But even with chemistry - I knew chemistry had always been my strong suit and I was excelling more-- I thought I was going to do really well in chemistry and struggle with human physiology, but it ended up being the opposite. I was struggling in chemistry, and I did really well in the honors class even though I was the only freshman in it. Ever since I took that-- this semester I upped my number of honors courses because I realized it's less of a-- I feel like people think that if you take it honors, it's going to be just

- more challenging. And it is more challenging, but the supplement you get is worth the extra material to have that contact with your teacher.
- S1 12:46 When you're one of 300 it's difficult to establish relationships.
- S2 12:49 I never got to talk to my chem teacher.
- S1 12:53 So when you say you struggled with chemistry, what was struggling for you? What does that mean, like your definition?
- S2 13:05 I was going to say I ended with a B+, which I wanted an A so that was why I felt like I was struggling. But it was really just my first test I did not do well on, because in high school I always had the-- I knew my teachers well - because of the IB program you have the same teachers all the way through - so I knew how she tested and I just was very confident. I got a seven on my IV exams. I was like, "I got this. No problem." And then the test I didn't do well and I didn't really understand why I didn't well. And I was able to bounce back and get As on the rest of my tests, but it couldn't bring my grade all the way back up. I just felt like I was kind of teaching myself. I didn't like that feeling of not really knowing what he was looking for because I really couldn't ask him and the tests were our only grades in that class and even though I'm opposed to busy work, I like having homework and doing the online activities and stuff.
- S1 14:06 Practicing for--
- S2 14:07 Feeling like I'm getting feedback and understanding what direction we're coming from, because-- I don't know. I just felt like I was kind of in an open sea, swimming [laughter], not really knowing which direction to go with that class.
- S1 14:19 After the first test, and you're like, "Oh, this is not good." You adjusted. You said you'd kind of started teaching yourself. How did you adjust specifically? How did you do that for yourself?
- S2 14:31 Because at first I was just taking notes in class, and I thought, "Oh, I'll just use my notes in class, and I'll go in and do fine on the test," and I realized that wasn't enough. So I got a supplement book and I started just doing all of the problems by myself at home, and going through everything, and going through the textbook, and just kind of over-practicing everything so I felt prepared for the test. Because they were only 25 questions, so you really could only miss a couple. I knew that I needed to practice more on the math side.

- S1 15:08 Now the supplemental book. Was that something that was a recommended text from the class or something you just [crosstalk]?
- S2 15:13 He just said it was optional. At first he was like, "It's just only if you think you need extra practice," so I was like, "Don't need it. I don't need to spend \$60 [laughter] on extra practice," so I wasn't going to. But then I was like, "Well, going to have to buy it," so I bought it and I was glad I did, because it did it in more step-by-step spelled things out. Now I've learned my lesson. Now I know whenever there's supplement I'll probably get it [chuckles].
- S1 15:41 It can't hurt.
- S2 15:42 No.
- S1 15:44 What about in your other--I think you said anthropology, world religions. How did those go for you?
- S2 15:49 World religions was obnoxiously easy. It kind of made me angry how simple some of my gen eds were. Anthropology was very similar and I just thought, "If I'm paying to come here I would want depth to my class." I don't want to be-- both of them had addressed the fact like, "We know it's a gen ed. We know you guys are just here because you have to be here." And we were kind of spoon-fed. That is true. It is just a gen ed, but I am here to learn. So I was honestly just disappointed with the content and I felt like if I had taken an honors class, I wouldn't be treated like just get in and get out. I felt it would have been teaching.
- S1 16:37 For your other classes that you felt more challenged in, what was your strategy to prepare for them? Did you have a study technique? How do you do that for yourself?
- S2 16:45 I always start studying-- every class is different based on what the topics are. Like Bio this semester, I take notes in class and I go home and I outline my notes after I've taken them so I refresh my memory that night. And then I use those outlines to study. And I always study at least four days in advance just so that final night, you've already gone through it so many times that it kind of feels like you don't even need to look at it. Because I learned in high school that cramming just isn't-- not a bright idea.
- S1 17:24 So in high school, did you have to study a lot? Are you studying more now than you did in high school?
- S2 17:28 Yes. I feel like I didn't really study much in high school. I never really had to. Except for, I studied for my AP exams and I

crammed for them and I had learned that way. I was like, "No, I need to start really." I knew that I wanted to get off on the right foot in college. I was like, "I'm not going to be a procrastinator like I was in high school." Because in high school, I knew that I was smart and I knew that I knew-- I didn't bother studying and I would put things off to the last minute, and I didn't want to do that in college. I was like, "No. I'm going to start getting things done early." I think my first semester was kind of a learning-- I did it, but I didn't do it as well. Now this semester, I've adapted even more and refined my techniques, and I think I'm off to a much better start this semester than I was last semester. But I still finished pretty well last semester.

- S1 18:24 What are your techniques? Do you set times aside? Do you schedule it? I know you said you wanted to have your own space for studying. Are you able to do that in your room or do you go someplace? What's your method?
- S2 18:37 I usually study in my room. Really my study techniques-- when I write things out I benefit from that. So I'm one of those people where I start with a lot of notes and I condense it and condense it and condense it and just re-writing it. I'm very visual too so if I can make a chart, if I can make a table, anything like that, it's going to help me remember. With my econ class, we have online homework that we have to do. And I just do the online homework, but then I go back and I do it a couple times over before the test just to try to really drill the math into my head. Redundancy is kind of my-- I've tried flash cards. I'm not really huge on flash cards. I do like studying with others after I've learned the material and then to talk with somebody once you've vocalized it. I feel like it finally cements it.
- S1 19:36 Do you have study groups that you participate in, or are you talking more offline?
- S2 19:43 Not for all of my classes, but most of my classes that need intensive studying I've found at least one person that the day before we'll bounce ideas of each other just to-- when you vocalize it and you explain things to other people, it really helps.
- S1 19:59 If you can teach it, you definitely know it. What about last semester? Did you do something similar as far finding people to study with or were you more independent?
- S2 20:13 I think because that's something I've learned from last semester was that I think I would have benefitted more if I had reached out. Human physiology, I was the only freshman in that class so I

didn't really feel comfortable asking other people to study, and I managed on my own, but I know it would have made the whole thing a lot easier if I had somebody else. For chemistry I found somebody towards the end. When it's a class that large it's just uncomfortable. When you're in a small class you kind of already work together in class. Whenever there's a lab component that helps because you work with them in the lab, and then you're already making conversation and it branches into studying together. Because I'm not really the type to just ask somebody, "Hey, do you want to study together?"

S1 21:03 Especially when you are new and [crosstalk] everything else to taking in, so, yes, that makes sense. You said you felt like the end of the semester when you got your grades, you got through it. You felt good about it. You got the B+ in the one class. Was that the worst grade?

S2 21:20 Yes, that was my worst grade. I was bitter about that B+, okay [laughter].

S1 21:25 Okay [chuckles]. I wanted to know your reaction. Did you know that was coming? What was your--

S2 21:31 I kind of knew it was coming. Since I did so poorly on the first test I knew that I had to get As on every single test to bring it back up. And I got As on every test, but then I got a B on the final. I was kind of upset about it. I'm not going to lie. Because I felt like I had really-- it just is an unfair feeling. It feels like it's not a true representation of actually how you did considering you got As on almost every test. It's just you had one that's weighing you down. It is what it is. That's what happens when only your test grade are-- this semester I made sure my first tests-- I studied my butt off. I'd rather over study for the first tests now and learn that I can study less, than feel under-prepared for my first tests. So all of my first tests this semester, I was like, "Nope. Studying five days in advance. I'm getting As. I'm not doing what I did last semester. I learned my lesson." I'd rather be over-prepared and adjust down than be under prepared and have to play catch up for the rest of this semester.

S1 22:39 That's what I was getting at. So your changes are the result of how you felt in this semester. Yours was: learn it ahead of time, make sure you're prepared, that kind of thing so that you don't end up having to as you said, play catchup, which is hard [laughter]. It's a lot of pressure. At the end of the semester, you have the B+, you weren't too happy about that, but overall, how did you feel about

your first semester, away from home, in college, in the Honors College, at a large university, living off campus on your own, all of that kind of thing? How did you feel at the end of that?

- S2 23:15 It felt surprisingly manageable. After I had finished my semester, I looked back and I was like, "I really could take on more." My first semester I wanted to make sure that I didn't take on too much - because I have a very large tendency to take on more than I can actually handle - and so I kept holding myself back. I was like, "No, you need to make sure that you--" And I think everybody tries to scare you for college and that kind of deal, and you feel overwhelmed, but once I finished a semester, I just felt really confident. I was like, "I can handle this. This isn't really anything different." And I've always been pretty independent, so living on my own is not a challenge. I keep up with my stuff. Some of the people I live with don't [laughter]. They're struggling.
- S1 24:06 Okay. You said you feel like it's manageable. You feel pretty confident and [assuming?] you're looking ahead. How many credit hours did you come in with, just approximately?
- S2 24:21 I really don't know. I do know that if I didn't have a double major, I'd be graduating in three years. So I had at least a year's worth.
- S1 24:27 So you're like an academic sophomore. So you came in with a lot of credits in that sense. Have you met with Rex from an advising perspective with, "Here's my plan," kind of thing?
- S2 24:39 Yes, I've gone into advising and every time I go to see Rex I actually end up with a student. They're still helpful, but I haven't actually gotten the chance to meet with Rex. I feel like it would benefit UCF-- because UCF's so large and there's just so many kids they couldn't possibly give everybody attention. Sometimes I think we all kind of feel like we don't really know what we're doing. There's things that I have questions about that I don't really know sometimes. It's not all written out very clear, and a lot of the things we feel like we're doing on our own on the schedule-setting side and trying to make sure you're fulfilling everything in your major and all of those things. I mean, the help is there; you just have to go and get it. And I think if they forced us all to sit down and really explained things to us, it might be of benefit because there's still things that I feel like I'm not sure about.
- S1 25:54 This semester, what are you taking within the Honors College?
- S2 25:57 I am taking an honors interdisciplinary seminar, so I'm taking death analysis and wait, what is it called? It's called Forensic

Anatomy and Death Analysis. That's the interdisciplinary seminar. I'm taking honors macroeconomics. I'm taking the windows to the world class. Is anything else honors? No, my biology class is huge. That's not honors.

S1 26:26 Which bio is it?

S2 26:28 Bio 2. And then psychology, which is not honors either.

S1 26:34 Is it 101 or is it...?

S2 26:37 It's just general psych.

S1 26:38 General psych.

S2 26:41 And the teacher's unpleasant [laughter].

S1 26:51 Interdisciplinary, the seminar, and then you have macroeconomics, windows of the world, bio 2, and psych. That's what's on your plate right now?

S2 26:58 And chem lab.

S1 26:59 And chem lab, but not a chem class?

S2 27:02 No, it's just the lab component, because for some reason the lab component isn't built into chem 2.

S1 27:10 So you took chem 2, and now you're taking--

S2 27:11 Now I'm taking the lab component, which is only one credit hour but it's still--

S1 27:16 Pretty time consuming.

S2 27:17 I was going to say, they do it based on credit hour numbers, but I get more work from that class than I do some of my three credit hour courses.

S1 27:27 That's pretty common. The labs are a lot more than--

S2 27:30 I mean all the lab reports and everything. That's a lot more work.

S1 27:34 That's very true. It sounds like you're a little unsure still about planning everything out and making sure you're hitting everything you need to hit. Other than that, do you use other resources or have you found what you needed otherwise? Like if you said, "I really need someone to help me learn more study skills, or I need something," that kind of thing. Have you been able to reach out to people and get what you need or find it?

S2 28:05 There's a lot of resources and I think kids just don't-- this was first

time. Actually just this week, I found out that there's a chem writing lab and you can take your lab report in and they'll go over it with you. You can do that with essays in every single department. There's lots of resources that I think we're not really aware are present, and that would benefit us greatly. I feel like there's nothing that I really feel like I'm being inadequately supplied. I know it's there; I just need to take advantage of it.

- S1 28:46 So that's kind of a good example of what could be more is maybe having a resources list and explanations of where they are.
- S2 28:55 Yes, I think it's the options are out there. I think it's just people don't really know.
- S1 29:01 Right. So maybe it would be helpful being directed to look at these things. "Hey everybody! Check out this link for resources you might need for your--"
- S2 29:10 Because a lot of us in the Honors College are too proud to reach out for resources like that.
- S1 29:15 There is the pride.
- S2 29:15 We think we've got it but anybody can use the help. Just having an extra set of eyes to look something over because we don't want to ask our peers.
- S1 29:30 As you look at the rest of your education and even when you get to the point where you start looking at your career path, are you feeling confident that you're where you want to be, that you have what you need to get there at this point?
- S2 29:49 I think so. Definitely last semester I was hesitant about it. I was feeling unsure, especially because of how I was feeling in the chem class. I was like, "What if I went to too big of a school? What if I'm never going to get somebody investing their time in me?" And I was getting a little nervous about handling med school and everything, and I just was kind of feeling like maybe I made the wrong decision. But I've got it more on my feet and now, especially with Dean Wang investing time in us. Just taking more advantage of the Honors College has definitely made me feel more confident, because I've been to things, like they offered a-- what do they call them? They have luncheon things with different people, and I went to one with like the pre-health advising woman, and they always are holding things like that. I went to that and Dean Wang introduced me to the office of prestigious awards, so I have a meeting with him, and now I'm feeling like I'm being able to utilize my resources and really set myself up on a good

track.

- S1 31:12 What about in terms of clubs and organizations? I know you said when you came in you didn't want to take on too much because that's a temptation for you. But have you looked into the UCF professional groups in your area?
- S2 31:27 I've looked at them some, and I got involved with MEDLIFE which is one of the many-- there's so many of the premed kind of things going on. And I want to get involved in research which you only can do so much. And I know that to me I feel like investing my time in research would be slightly more valuable than doing clubs and things. But I want to find a good fit club-wise, but I still don't really know what a lot of them do, because it just requires going to their meetings and things like that.
- S1 32:10 Kind of see what--
- S2 32:13 Especially now at this point in time in the semester, it's just like, "Well, it's too late."
- S1 32:18 We're over the midterm hump really at this point. I know everybody's looking ahead so that's true. What is your endgame? What do you see yourself doing in the long run after you've completed your education?
- S2 32:36 I want to be a doctor.
- S1 32:38 Do you know specifically in what? What area or...?
- S2 32:40 I don't. I've shadowed in a couple different departments just to try to see if I could figure it out, and everybody swears up and down that you'll change your mind ten times anyway, so it doesn't matter. I shadowed an anesthesiologist and I actually really liked that. I've always taken an interest. I think human heart is awesome, so being a cardiologist also sounds pretty cool to me. I have had my fair share of injuries. I have had my fair share of injuries. I've been to quite a few [laughter]
- S1 33:08 Had firsthand experience.
- S2 33:09 Yes. I've been to quite a few orthopedic surgeons so that's also kind of interesting, because I have been there [chuckles].
- S1 33:16 You've seen behind the scenes.
- S2 33:16 And you can do a lot kind of different things with that. You're not just doing the same thing every day. But just overall it's important to me to feel like I'm giving back and giving people second

- chances, which is what I really want to do. I want to get to go abroad some, maybe do Doctors Without Borders, things of that sort.
- S1 33:48 Doctors Without Borders. Wow. If you're thinking about last semester, or thinking about even this semester, are there other suggestions you might have for what Honors College could do better, differently, less of, more of...?
- S2 34:08 I guess just offer more honors courses because we love them. I don't know. Let me think.
- S1 34:24 Take your time. Think it over, sure.
- S2 34:32 Because I would like to have one-on-one time with Rex. And when I did go in for Rex, I ended up with a student - which I know he can't see everybody - but I was a little disappointed when I didn't get to see Rex.
- S1 34:50 How do you feel you're doing so far this semester? Do you feel like you know where you stand? That you--
- S2 35:11 Yes, I feel like I'm doing really well this semester. I feel much more confident.
- S1 35:15 Are your professors and instructors using WebCourses where you can see it, or are you keeping track for yourself?
- S2 35:20 No, they use WebCourses, which is nice. I don't like feeling in the dark about my grades. I'm one of these people where I want to know what I got right when I turn it in. Like, "Can you grade this now? Can I just sit and wait and watch?"
- S1 35:35 You kind of put it on top of the pile when no one's looking?
- S2 35:38 Yes.
- S1 35:41 I know that the Honors uses lots of social media for different things, like the Honors Congress and Twitter, Instagram, Facebook. Are you following them on any of those?
- S2 35:53 No. I'm not really a big social media person. It might benefit me.
- S1 35:58 Rex told me was there's a weekly email that goes out that pretty well summarizes what's been going out on those venues so that no matter what your preference is, you don't miss out on something important.
- S2 36:34 Yes, it's very nice having that.

S1 36:38 Because I've had people say, "I don't use social media at all because I would be too distracted. I think I actually purposely shut myself down." And then there's some people like, "I never use email. I hardly ever check it"

S2 36:51 Everybody's different.

S1 36:51 So you have a lot of diversity in terms of their preference for getting information, but it seems like the Honors College is trying to cover all of those bases.

S2 37:01 Cover all the bases.

S1 37:01 Anything else you can think of that you'd want to - along these lines with the Honors College - that you'd want to be noted or you can think of that would be helpful?

S2 37:18 Not off the top of my head [chuckles].

S1 37:21 Like I said, feel free to shoot me an email. If you come up with something and say, "Oh, it'd be nice if this or that or this was really helpful" kind of thing. That'd be great. I'm going to go ahead and turn off in the interview at about 2:35 PM.

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