

# Enhancing University Honors Students' Experience with Technical Communication and User Experience Projects

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**Abstract** Honors programs at colleges and universities often aim to provide undergraduate students with supplemental experiences that enhance their education across various majors. In 2023, our university introduced an "honors enhanced" (HE+) initiative, allowing honors students to earn course hour-equivalent honors credits toward graduation by completing additional components within designated courses. To explore the potential impact of this initiative on program design, we conducted a pedagogical case study of our Introduction to Technical Communication service course that was adapted for HE+ students by incorporating user experience (UX) projects as the learning enrichment component. Working closely with the instructor, we developed an HE+ plan, which was implemented and delivered to participating students. As part of this process, we documented the instructor's experience and captured insights into student learning. This article presents our findings, shares pedagogical strategies derived from the instructional experience and student responses, and discusses the implications of aligning high-level university initiatives with localized disciplinary priorities.

**Keywords** honors programs, honors students, user experience, design, collaboration, technical communication pedagogy, project-based learning, enriched curriculum

## **Introduction: Honors Programming and TPC Pedagogy**

Technical and professional communication (TPC) programs have long served as vital partners in undergraduate education, offering students practical skills and interdisciplinary experiences that extend beyond traditional classroom boundaries. Given their multifaceted and experiential nature, TPC programs are uniquely positioned to address contemporary challenges facing undergraduate honors education. TPC instructional content, learning outcomes, and programmatic efforts naturally align with honors education values through their inter- or cross-disciplinary and experiential nature. This alignment has made TPC programs desirable partners for developing and testing honors program initiatives, offering students enriched academic opportunities that foster intellectual growth, critical thinking, and real-world application.

However, universities increasingly contend with evolving student expectations, socio-political tensions, rapid technological shifts, and intensified competition—issues requiring broader strategies than experiential learning alone. These pressures intersect with the looming “enrollment cliff,” compelling institutions to differentiate their curricular offerings while demonstrating the added value of honors education. For some institutions, enhanced honors programs serve as strategic responses to these challenges, offering flexible, competency-based pathways to academic distinction that appeal to students seeking meaningful and personalized educational experiences.

This study explores how TPC's integration with honors programming can address these challenges through a pedagogical case study. We examine the implementation of an “honors enhanced” (HE+) initiative at our university, where honors students earn course hour-equivalent honors credits by completing additional UX-focused components within our Introduction to Technical Communication service course. By documenting the instructor's experience and capturing insights into student learning, we contribute to the growing scholarship that bridges disciplinary and institutional priorities while demonstrating TPC's capacity for rigorous, honors-level inquiry and innovation.

## **Honors Programs in Contemporary Higher Education**

Honors programs have evolved considerably from their traditional roots in liberal education to become incubators for innovative pedagogical practices that blend disciplinary depth with interdisciplinary breadth (Chaszar, 2017). Contemporary

honors programs--from university-wide honors colleges to major-specific learning enrichment initiatives--operate across disciplines, offering curricular and co-curricular experiences that extend beyond standard undergraduate requirements (Scott, Smith, & Cognard-Black, 2017). The purpose of honors programs today extends beyond academic rigor to cultivate leadership, civic engagement, and lifelong learning commitment through supplemental learning experiences that encourage students to explore topics in greater depth, engage in original research, and contribute to their communities.

Experiential learning serves as a prominent cornerstone of effective honors pedagogy, as institutions recognize the need to equip students with skills extending beyond theoretical knowledge. These approaches emphasize real-world application, problem-solving, and collaboration through service-learning, study abroad programs, internships, and project-based coursework. Such experiential learning resonates strongly with honors education goals, providing opportunities for students to engage deeply with complex problems in interdisciplinary settings while preparing them for dynamic global challenges.

Strategic responses to contemporary higher education challenges have led many institutions to develop enhanced honors programs (Cox, 2018; Reynolds, Case, & Spritz, 2018). These initiatives address mounting pressure to attract and retain high-achieving students while accommodating diverse student needs and aspirations amid demographic shifts and fierce competition for top-performing students (Weisman, 2022; Blake, 2024; Gonçalves et al., 2024; Mallach, 2024). Enhanced honors programs often incorporate competency-based learning and alternative credentialing approaches, such as micro-credentials and badges (Ashcroft et al., 2021; Booth, Ponce, & Hodges, 2024), which recognize specific competencies and achievements within and beyond traditional curricula.

## **TPC and Experiential Learning in Honors Education**

From the relatively scarce literature on honors teaching and learning in TPC-related topics, scholars have reported that students benefit from complementary assignments or educational activities that augment course content. These activities, including blogging, collaborative writing, and scientific journaling, encourage students to develop rhetorical awareness, build confidence in content creation, practice team processes, and instill reflective mindsets (Guzy, 2003, 2015; Ryan, Gould, & Tucker, 2012; Harlan-Haughey et al., 2016).

TPC's integration with honors programs builds naturally on the field's longstanding commitment to service and community engagement. From teaching students to create audience-centric technical genres to current focus on broad social justice challenges, TPC has consistently prioritized meeting users' and constituents' needs across various contexts. TPC scholar-instructors advocate community-based action research and engaged learning pedagogies, where students serve as active agents of change through course projects in their respective communities (Huckin, 1997; Matthews & Zimmerman, 1999; Sapp & Crabtree, 2002; Scott, 2004; Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 2023; Jiang & Tham, 2025).

Service-learning in TPC courses particularly connects academic theory with practical outreach, as students produce technical documents, community resources, and content for nonprofits and local organizations. This pedagogy aligns with universities' broader missions to foster civic responsibility and social impact among students (Weerts & Sandmann, 2010; Watson et al., 2011). By contributing to real projects addressing community issues, service-learning highlights how TPC students can use communication expertise to enact social good, reinforcing the discipline's commitment to ethical and inclusive communication (Cleary & Flammia, 2012; Agboka & Matveeva, 2018).

## **UX Integration in TPC Curricula**

TPC programs have increasingly adapted to changing workplace demands, including developments in digital technology and globalization of workplace activities (Johnson-Eilola, 1996; Hart-Davidson, 2001). Consequently, TPC curricula often combine theoretical instruction with practice-oriented experiences, offering dual emphasis on theory and practice. Over the past decade, growing TPC scholarship has underscored the importance of integrating design thinking, user experience (UX) methodologies, and applied project-based learning into TPC curricula (Rice-Bailey & Shalamova, 2016; De Hertogh & DeVasto, 2021; Rose & Turner, 2025).

Design thinking, popularized in engineering and business management, focuses on empathetic engagement with users, iterative prototyping, and collaborative problem-solving (Tham, 2021a). Its philosophy and methods align with TPC's concern for user-centered communication, as both fields prioritize clarity, accessibility, and contextual relevance. TPC instructors have adopted design thinking strategies through UX applications to enhance students' abilities to address complex communication challenges through iterative cycles of discovery, ideation, testing, and refinement (as shown in Tham, 2021b).

UX practices emphasize understanding users' goals, behaviors, and contexts, applying this knowledge to create effective interfaces, documents, and overall user

experiences (Redish & Barnum, 2011; Hassenzahl, 2013). UX research methods, such as contextual inquiry, interviews, and usability testing, help students develop competencies needed to tailor communication artifacts to specific audiences. By incorporating these practices, TPC programs build on user-centered design traditions, ensuring students can conduct meaningful research into user needs and preferences (Zappen & Geisler, 2009).

Recent studies illustrate benefits of integrating UX projects into TPC classes. Jerrica Renita Donelson (2025) described how students working on design-centric UX research developed racial storytelling competency and anti-racist communication practices. Similarly, Kylie Jacobsen and Danielle DeVasto (2023) reported that students engaged in UX-based projects showcased improved critical thinking, team collaboration, and reflective practice skills. UX projects also offer students opportunities to practice functional design requirements, including accessibility (Lee & Oswal, 2024; Strantz, 2025), security (Banville, 2024), and usability (Breuch, Zachry, & Spinuzzi, 2001; Chong, 2017; Hocutt et al., 2024).

Empirical evidence suggests that TPC curricula incorporating UX projects often lead to heightened student engagement, deeper understanding of user advocacy, and improved learning outcomes (Tham, 2021b; Martin, 2022; Rea & Balghare, 2025). Honors programs, often seeking interdisciplinary and high-impact educational experiences, provide ideal settings for TPC courses to explore complex communication challenges with meaningful real-world outcomes.

## **Research Opportunity and Study Rationale**

While experiential learning, service-learning, and project-based pedagogy are widely studied in TPC, the integration of honors-specific components--particularly those aligned with university priorities--presents a significant research opportunity. This emerging area offers rich potential to expand our understanding of how TPC/UX integration can enhance honors education experiences. The opportunity to investigate how honors-level projects can enrich TPC pedagogy, particularly through UX design and supplemental learning experiences, opens new pathways for disciplinary growth. By positioning TPC projects within honors curricula, both programs benefit: honors students gain marketable skills and exposure to user-focused research methodologies, while TPC programs demonstrate their value in tackling high-level interdisciplinary concerns.

This study offers implications for multiple stakeholder groups within higher education. For TPC instructors, our research reveals practical strategies for integrating honors-level enhancements without substantially increasing workload, while providing models for meaningful student engagement through real-world

projects. TPC program administrators can leverage these insights to strengthen their programs' institutional positioning, demonstrating TPC's capacity for high-impact pedagogical innovation and its alignment with university-wide strategic initiatives. The study also provides evidence for how TPC programs can serve as effective partners in honors education, potentially expanding enrollment and enhancing program visibility.

More broadly, this research contributes to institutional understanding of how discipline-specific expertise can be strategically aligned with university-wide honors initiatives. Rather than implementing one-size-fits-all approaches, institutions can learn from this case study how to adapt honors programming to leverage the unique strengths of individual disciplines. The integration of UX methodologies within TPC honors coursework also demonstrates pathways for incorporating contemporary professional skills into traditional academic frameworks, addressing employer demands while maintaining academic rigor.

## **Our Context: HE+ Programming at Texas Tech University**

Although TPC programs remain a strong ally and viable partner for honors initiatives, universities are increasingly contending with evolving student expectations, socio-political tensions, rapid technological shifts, and intensified competition—issues that require broader strategies to address than experiential learning alone. Per popular and scholarly sources alike, higher education institutions are facing mounting pressure to attract and retain high-achieving students while addressing diverse student needs and aspirations (Weisman, 2022; Blake, 2024; Gonçalves et al., 2024; Mallach, 2024).

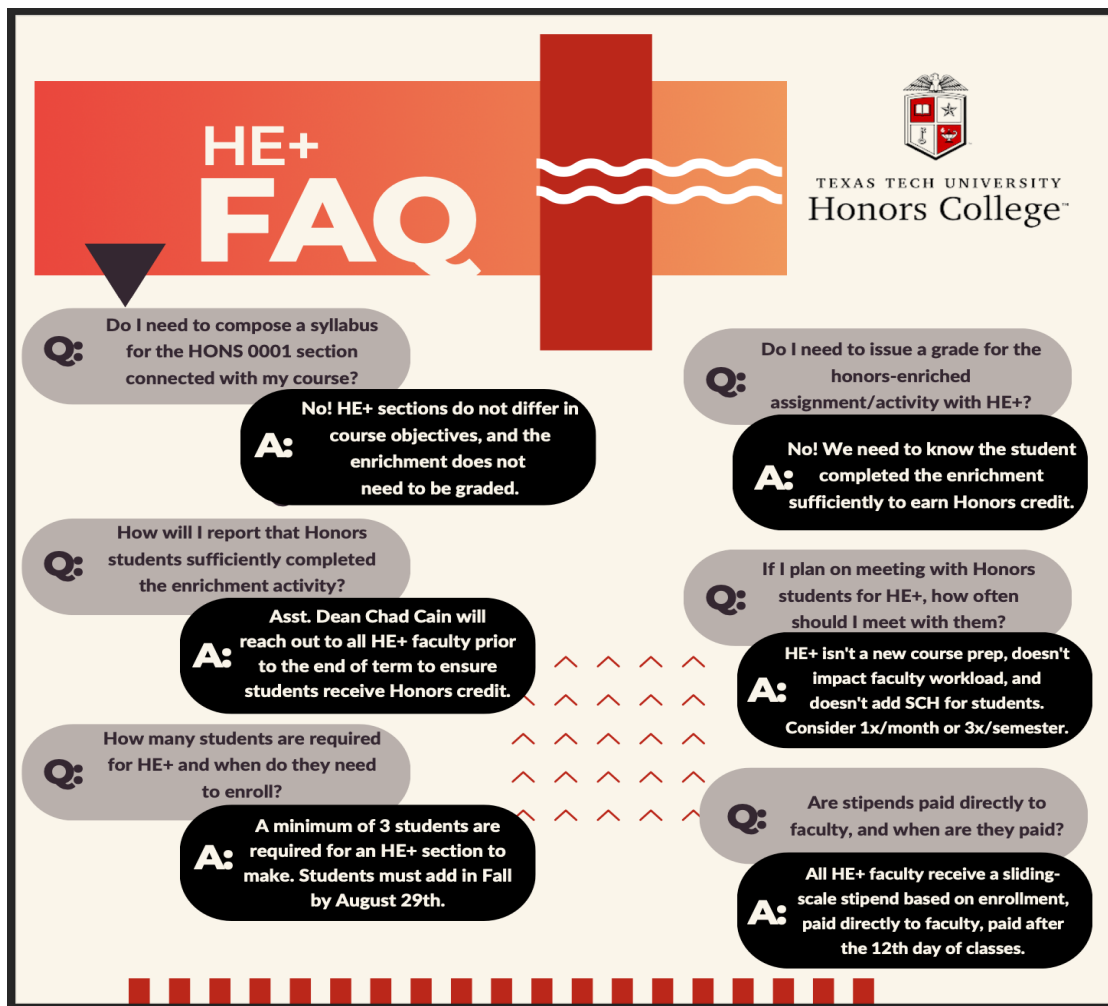
These pressures intersect with another looming challenge for higher education: the fear-inducing “enrollment cliff” (Wu, Chang, & Hu, 2021; Phillips & Jones, 2024). Demographic shifts point to a decline in traditional college-age populations over the coming decade. Many colleges, including those with established honors programs, anticipate reduced enrollment and a fiercer battle for top-performing students. This heightened competition compels administrators and educators to differentiate their curricular offerings and justify the added value of honors education. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated a shift toward hybrid or fully online modalities (García-Morales, Garrido-Moreno, & Martín-Rojas, 2021; Neuwirth, Jović, & Mukherji, 2021). These innovations broaden access and flexibility but also complicate how experiential projects can be carried out. Of course, technological advances require rethinking pedagogy. Universities increasingly expect honors programs to demonstrate innovation and capture students' attention through blended learning formats and digital portfolios (Colombari, D'Amico, & Paolucci, 2021; Rose & Ponce, 2024). Altogether, these evolving conditions mean that TPC

scholars have much to consider when designing or adapting honors-specific modules. Staying attuned to shifting student demographics, socio-political climates, technological innovation, and new learning modalities is proven to be critical. To continue to offer rigorous, relevant, and adaptable experiences for students with varied aspirations, these challenges need to be tackled systematically.

For some institutions, initiatives like enhanced honors programs serve as strategic responses to these challenges (Cox, 2018; Reynolds, Case, & Spritz, 2018). By offering flexible, competency-based pathways to academic distinction, these new, flexible programs appeal to students seeking meaningful and personalized educational experiences. They also align with broader trends in alternative credentialing, such as micro-credentials and badges (Ashcroft et al., 2021; Booth, Ponce, & Hodges, 2024), which recognize specific competencies and achievements within and beyond the traditional curriculum. These programs promise to not only support student retention and satisfaction but also contribute to the institutional mission by fostering innovation in teaching and learning.

We believe the case of the "honors enhanced" (HE+) initiative at our institution provides a compelling opportunity to study how such programs can be adapted to meet these goals. At our institution, a four-year Hispanic-serving university, administrators introduced the HE+ initiative in early 2023 to expand opportunities for honors students to engage in advanced, discipline-specific learning experiences. The program enables honors students to enroll in designated courses that include additional components beyond the standard curriculum, earning course hour-equivalent honors credits that count toward the 24-credit requirement for graduating with honors distinction. Figure 1 shows a faculty-facing poster containing high-level questions and answers provided by the honors college.

Figure 1. Faculty-facing FAQ poster (2023) from the Honors College. Textual content of the poster is transcribed in Appendix B.



The HE+ initiative emerged as part of a broader effort to modernize and enhance the university's honors program. Recognizing the need to provide flexible and scalable pathways to honors distinction, administrators designed the program to integrate seamlessly with existing curricula while maintaining the rigor and quality associated with honors education. Key goals of the initiative are twofold. First, the program supports the development of interdisciplinary competencies by encouraging faculty to design enhancements that draw on multiple fields of knowledge. Second, by incentivizing faculty to develop honors enhancements, the initiative stimulates the creation of novel pedagogical approaches that benefit both honors and non-honors students.

The HE+ program operates as an opt-in model within designated courses, where honors students complete supplemental assignments, projects, or research

activities that align with the course's learning objectives. These enhancements are developed collaboratively by faculty and honors program administrators to ensure consistency and alignment with institutional goals. The flexibility of the model allows it to be adapted across disciplines, enabling students to engage in honors-level work within their chosen field of study.

For example, in the context of our ENGL 2311 Introduction to Technical Communication service course, the HE+ component was designed to include supplemental UX projects that extended the standard curriculum (more details are included in Appendix A and covered in the discussion section). As we will explain later, this approach not only provided honors students with advanced learning opportunities but also aligned with the course's emphasis on real-world applications and interdisciplinary collaboration. The HE+ initiative reflects and contributes to several key trends in higher education, including competency-based learning, alternative credentialing, and the growing emphasis on customization and flexibility in academic pathways.

Competency-based learning focuses on the acquisition and demonstration of specific skills and knowledge, allowing students to progress at their own pace. The HE+ program aligns with this model by emphasizing the development of advanced competencies within the context of existing courses. Through honors enhancements in a technical communication course, students may gain deeper insights and practical experience in UX practices such as user research, design analysis, and project communication. Mentioned earlier, as traditional academic credentials face increasing scrutiny, alternative forms of credentialing like micro-certifications have emerged as valuable tools for recognizing student achievements. The HE+ program integrates elements of alternative credentialing by awarding honors credits for specific enhancements, providing students with tangible evidence of their accomplishments. This approach may not only benefit students but also enhance the institution's ability to demonstrate the value of its honors program to external stakeholders.

The HE+ initiative represents a considerably innovative approach in honors education, yet its implementation raises important questions about how such programs can be effectively designed, delivered, and assessed within specific disciplinary contexts. So, this study seeks to explore the impact of the HE+ program on student learning and engagement, focusing on its application within our ENGL 2311 course. By situating this case study within the broader context of TPC pedagogy, we aim to contribute to the growing body of scholarship that seeks to bridge disciplinary and institutional priorities, ultimately enriching the educational experiences of all students.

We are further motivated by the potential to shape the future of TPC programming. By encouraging greater participation of inspired students, this research sheds light onto TPC's capacity for rigorous, honors-level inquiry and innovation. It promotes TPC programs as a critical asset for addressing real-world challenges through applied learning. Additionally, the study provides insights into how university-wide priorities, such as honors initiatives, can be effectively integrated into TPC curricula. Finally, it carves out a space for new pedagogical research agendas, offering strategies to enhance TPC's relevance and impact within higher education. In the following sections, we establish our research questions and the methodological framework guiding this study.

## **Research Questions**

As revealed in our literature synthesis, TPC has seen limited exploration of honors-level initiatives within its programmatic design. While experiential learning, service-learning, and project-based pedagogy are widely studied in TPC, the integration of honors-specific components, particularly those aligned with university priorities remains underexplored. Additionally, although recent scholarship demonstrates the benefits of integrating UX projects into TPC classes—including improved student engagement, deeper understanding of user advocacy, and enhanced learning outcomes (Tham, 2021b; Martin, 2022; Rea & Balghare, 2025)—these studies have not examined UX integration specifically within honors contexts or as part of institution-wide honors initiatives.

This gap provides a valuable opportunity to investigate how honors-level projects can enrich TPC pedagogy, particularly by incorporating elements such as UX design and supplemental learning experiences. Given the documented positive effects of UX integration in TPC courses and the need to understand how such approaches function within honors programming, our initial research direction focuses on the practical outcomes of this pedagogical approach. Simultaneously, the broader challenge facing TPC programs—demonstrating their capacity for rigorous, honors-level inquiry while aligning with institutional strategic initiatives—necessitates investigation into scalable implementation strategies. To that end, this study articulates two core research questions derived from these literature-identified needs:

**RQ 1:** How does the HE+ initiative affect student engagement and learning outcomes in an introductory TPC course?

**RQ2:** What strategies are viable for integrating honors-level enhancements in TPC pedagogy?

By addressing these questions, our study aims to inform future curriculum design by evaluating the HE+ initiative's potential as a scalable model for honors engagement across institutional sizes and contexts and by identifying adaptable practices for aligning institutional strategies with TPC programming and pedagogy.

## **Methods**

To explore the impact of the HE+ initiative within an introductory TPC course, this IRB-approved study employed two primary research methods: 1) instructor reflections and 2) student surveys. These methods are selected for their complementary ability to provide rich, contextual insights into both the instructional and student experiences of the honors-enhanced coursework.

Instructor reflections provide a first-hand account of instructional decision-making, challenges, and successes (Kraft, 2002; Mallette, 2024). In this study, the instructor's reflections offer critical insights into the design and implementation of HE+ components, particularly the integration of UX projects. These reflections capture the process of ideating the coursework, the nuanced dynamics of classroom interaction, adjustments to teaching strategies, and the perceived effectiveness of the honors enhancement in a TPC course. Reflective practice is inherently iterative, allowing educators to document their evolving understanding and contributing to both the rigor and relevance of the study. In generating the instructor's reflections, the lead author of this research report met with the instructor to discuss reflection and writing tips.

Surveys are a well-established method of collecting data on students' experiences, perceptions, and outcomes (Plumb & Spyridakis, 1992; Scott, 1995; Barker & Stowers, 2007). In this study, survey questionnaires were administered three times--i.e., December 2023, April/May 2024, and December 2024. Five questions were asked in each survey:

1. We started the semester with articles about user experience (UX). Were those articles helpful in our discussion of UX as we moved from our discussion of usability in module 2 and began working on module 3?
2. Did meeting with the leadership team of your student org help you with the process of creating the documents?
3. Was your group receptive to the advance work you had done with your student org?
4. Were you able to share the deliverables with the org after module 3 wrapped up? What was the reaction of the leadership team to your deliverables?

5. Did you feel that your HE+ experience this semester was beneficial? Why or why not?

The survey to HE+ students aimed to capture their engagement, learning experiences, and perspectives on the honors-enhanced components. The open-ended survey questions above were designed to encourage students to articulate their experiences in their own words, supporting a rich qualitative dataset.

In terms of data analysis, the instructor reflections were analyzed through an inductive qualitative approach (Tracy, 2024), allowing themes to emerge organically from the narrative data (Blyler, 1996). Similarly, student survey responses are analyzed thematically to identify patterns in student engagement, learning outcomes, and the perceived value of HE+ components. To ensure validity, both data sources are triangulated to corroborate findings, providing a multi-perspective view of the HE+ initiative. Reliability is supported by transparent documentation of the analysis process and systematic treatment of qualitative data (Conklin & Hayhoe, 2010; Saldaña, 2014). Sentiment analysis and sentiment scores (Lei & Liu, 2021) were included in the survey analysis to quantify students' emotional and evaluative responses, offering a structured way to interpret open-ended feedback. By including polarity (positivity or negativity) and subjectivity (level of opinion versus fact), we could capture trends in participant sentiment across different aspects of the program. This approach strengthens our qualitative insights (e.g., McGuire & Kampf, 2015; Boettger & Ishizaki, 2018), providing a clearer picture of the program's perceived effectiveness and areas for improvement. These analytic methods, together, aimed to achieve a robust and reflective exploration of the HE+ initiative's impact on TPC pedagogy.

## **Results**

We organized this results section into two main parts: the instructor's reflections and the student survey findings. We begin by reporting the instructor's reflections because it contains useful background information about the conception of the UX enrichment in the TPC introductory courses, as well as the instructor's own pedagogical intentions that may be used to understand the students' feedback gathered from the survey.

### **Sophie's Reflections: An Instructional Vignette**

We asked the instructor, Sophie (pseudonym), who taught HE+ students in the introductory technical communication course to provide a first-person account of her experience in approaching the class. Her narrative, which was edited for length

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here, first reveals the collaborative process of developing honors enhancements and the practical considerations involved in curriculum adaptation:

I began my journey with the HE+ course in April 2023, when K.G., the course coordinator for English 2311 sections, emailed me to ask if I would be interested in having one of my Fall 2311 sections designated as an HE+ section. I was told that they piloted the sections in the spring 2023 term. After I agreed, S.H., then the Director of the BA in Technical Communication, encouraged me to be creative with how I approached the activities of my HE+ section. S.H. also mentioned that this might be a good project to work with J.T and R.G. (technical communication faculty members) and the UX lab in the English department, and I scheduled a meeting to discuss possibilities.

Sophie's account illustrates how the HE+ initiative leveraged existing departmental relationships and resources rather than requiring entirely new infrastructure. Her approach demonstrates the importance of connecting honors enhancements to established course objectives:

Our conversation during that meeting turned to issues of determining user needs and persona construction, and I slowly began to realize that there were strong ties from this concept to the third major assignment that I use in my 2311 course, where students assess the public facing communication of a student organization on our campus and create materials using free and readily available materials to communicate more effectively with the populations that they serve. Students are free to choose any student organization they want; some choose an org they are a part of, and some choose an org where they know members of the leadership team.

This connection to real campus organizations represents a key pedagogical choice that grounds UX learning in authentic contexts. However, Sophie's experience also reveals challenges in finding appropriate scholarly materials for this interdisciplinary approach:

My original thought was to choose readings that approached the issue of usability from a student affairs lens. I thought that the students might find it interesting to explore the role that student organizations play in contributing to their college experience, but I wasn't able to find what I was looking for. I ultimately chose the materials that discussed issues of user experience design, information architecture, and persona development.

The curricular adaptation Sophie describes reflects broader questions about resource availability at the intersection of TPC, UX, and honors education. It exemplifies how honors enhancements can provide differentiated learning

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experiences within existing course structures. Sophie's approach concludes with a feedback loop that extends learning beyond traditional classroom boundaries:

The semester begins with UX design readings and videos, followed by individual or group meetings to clarify the assignment and discuss approaches for engaging with student organizations. Students then meet with their chosen organization's leadership team to identify communication challenges and potential solutions. While regular 2311 students choose from eight possible deliverables, HE+ students can propose alternative options. For example, one Fall 2024 group created an onboarding pamphlet for the Student Government Association.

After completing their deliverables alongside the regular class, HE+ students present their work to their partner organizations for feedback. The project concludes with a brief survey reflecting on their experience and the organization's response to their deliverables.

As we will deliberate further in the discussion section, Sophie's narrative captured an important benefit of augmenting the introductory course with a practical UX project. Providing students the chance to work directly with student organizations was an attempt to allow students to deepen their understanding of UX design and communication management. By interacting with organization leaders, identifying real challenges, and creating practical solutions, students were given the opportunity to extend their learning experience beyond the classroom. Next, we turn to the student survey results to uncover a different layer of observation about the HE+ implementation.

### **Student Survey Responses**

A total of 35 student respondents across three sections of ENGL 2311 Introduction to Technical Communication completed the survey: 10 respondents in December 2023 (total student enrollment, N=12), 15 respondents in April/May 2024 (N=16), and 10 respondents in December 2024 (N=11). These survey responses offer detailed insights into students' HE+ experiences in their respective ENGL 2311 courses. The feedback highlights the program's strengths, particularly its ability to foster real-world skill application and collaborative engagement, while also identifying areas for potential refinement. Here, we highlight five key themes along with a sample of representative responses for context. Under each theme, we included sentiment scores (polarity and subjectivity) for comparison.

### ***Helpfulness of learning materials***

Students began the semester by engaging with articles on UX, which set the foundation for transitioning from usability concepts in Module 2 to the applied work in Module 3. Most students found these readings helpful, though their usefulness varied based on individual perspectives. For example, one respondent described the articles as "very helpful," elaborating that "they provided a strong foundation for the concepts we explored later in the semester and helped frame our discussions effectively." Another student shared a more moderate view, stating, "The articles were somewhat helpful; they gave me a good sense of UX principles, but I wish there had been more real-world examples to connect theory to practice."

The articles appeared to serve as a bridge for conceptual understanding, but some students indicated a desire for greater practical application. One student noted, "I felt the articles were useful for getting us to think critically about UX, but I would have liked to see more examples from industries or case studies." This suggests that while the readings were a valuable starting point, integrating more applied content could enhance their impact on students' learning. Sentiment scores for helpfulness of learning materials are:

- Mean polarity: 0.063 (slightly positive)
- Mean subjectivity: 0.094 (low subjectivity, indicating factual responses)

### ***Engagement with organizational learning teams***

Interacting with student organization leadership teams was a critical aspect of the program, offering students the opportunity to tailor their deliverables to the needs of their partners. Many students highlighted the importance of this engagement, which allowed them to ground their work in real-world requirements. One respondent shared, "Definitely, it was very helpful to have the background and expectations from the leadership team. It made our deliverables more targeted and relevant." Another student noted, "Meeting with the leadership helped us understand their goals and identify gaps we could address."

However, some students encountered challenges in coordinating with leadership. For instance, one respondent observed, "It probably would have been helpful if they were more available to meet with us earlier in the process." This feedback underscores the importance of timely and consistent communication with stakeholders. Despite these challenges, the opportunity to collaborate with leadership was widely appreciated, as it provided valuable insights that enhanced the quality of students' deliverables. Sentiment scores for engagement with organizational leadership teams are:

- Mean polarity: 0.208 (positive sentiment)
- Mean subjectivity: 0.392 (moderately subjective, reflecting personal opinions)

### ***Group dynamics and receptiveness to pre-work***

Group collaboration was another focal point of the survey, with students generally reporting positive experiences regarding their peers' receptiveness to pre-work completed with their student organizations. A student remarked, "Our group was very receptive to the work we had done. It helped us complete our portion efficiently and ensured everyone was on the same page." Another shared, "Yes, they especially liked the website concepts we proposed, and it helped spark productive discussions."

However, not all group dynamics were seamless. Some students mentioned variability in engagement levels among group members. One respondent explained, "Some group members were open-minded, but others didn't seem as interested in exploring new ideas." These differences in participation highlight the challenges of group work and the importance of fostering collaborative environments where all members feel motivated to contribute.

Despite occasional issues, the pre-work done with student organizations appeared to play a crucial role in aligning group efforts and ensuring deliverables were informed by stakeholder needs. The ability to connect preparatory efforts with final outputs was a recurring theme in the feedback, emphasizing the value of this structured approach. Sentiment scores for group dynamics and receptiveness of pre-work are:

- Mean polarity: 0.230 (positive sentiment)
- Mean subjectivity: 0.400 (moderately subjective)

### ***Sharing deliverables with respective organizations***

The process of sharing deliverables with student organizations was a significant milestone for students, allowing them to present the culmination of their efforts. Most respondents reported successfully sharing their work, with positive reactions from the leadership teams. One student described this experience: "Yes, we were able to share the deliverables with the leadership team, and they appreciated our work, especially the actionable insights we provided." Another highlighted a similar experience, noting, "We emailed the presentation and got good feedback, but I wish we had more direct interaction with them during the final stages."

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While the majority of students experienced positive outcomes, some encountered logistical challenges in delivering their work. For example, one respondent mentioned, "I ended up just having to email the presentation because scheduling a follow-up meeting with the leadership team wasn't possible." This suggests that while students were able to complete the program's deliverables, additional support in coordinating these final steps might further enhance their experience. Sentiment scores for sharing deliverables are:

- Mean polarity: 0.297 (positive sentiment, the highest among all questions)
- Mean subjectivity: 0.536 (moderately high subjectivity, reflecting personal experiences and opinions)

### ***Overall perceived impact of HE+***

When reflecting on their overall experience, most students expressed that the program was beneficial. They valued the opportunity to apply UX principles in a real-world context and develop skills relevant to their career aspirations. One respondent summarized their experience by stating, "Yes, I think I learned a lot in my HE+ experience. It gave me a clearer understanding of how UX fits into real-world projects, and I feel more confident about applying these concepts in my future work." Another student echoed this sentiment, noting, "UX is such an important part of the career field I'm pursuing, so this experience was highly relevant and gave me practical experience that I wouldn't have gotten otherwise."

Students also appreciated the program's emphasis on collaboration and stakeholder engagement. One respondent explained, "This experience taught me how to communicate effectively with clients and how to adapt my work based on feedback." Another highlighted the program's practical nature, stating, "It was a good balance of theoretical learning and hands-on application, which is rare in most academic programs."

Despite these strengths, a few students expressed reservations about the program's added value. One respondent commented, "I can't say it really felt more beneficial than other group projects I've done, but it was still a good learning experience." Another noted, "While I learned a lot, I think the program could have been improved by providing more structured feedback on our deliverables."

Sentiment scores for overall experience are:

- Mean polarity: 0.235 (positive sentiment)
- Mean subjectivity: 0.419 (moderate subjectivity)

Together, the survey responses generally skew positive across all questions, with the highest levels of positivity observed for "Sharing Deliverables" and "Overall Experience." Additionally, the moderately subjective nature of the responses indicates a balanced mix of personal opinions and factual reporting, providing a well-rounded perspective on students' experiences.

The feedback also points to several opportunities for enhancing the program. First, students suggested incorporating more practical examples and case studies into the initial UX readings to better connect theory to application. Second, ensuring timely and consistent communication with student organization leadership could address challenges related to stakeholder engagement. Third, fostering stronger group dynamics through team-building activities or clearer expectations might improve collaboration and participation. Finally, providing structured feedback on deliverables and facilitating more interactive sharing sessions with organizations could deepen students' learning and strengthen the program's impact.

Overall, the survey responses painted a positive picture of the semester-long program, highlighting its strengths in fostering real-world skill application, collaborative engagement, and stakeholder-focused deliverables. Students appreciated the opportunity to explore UX principles, work with student organizations, and develop practical solutions that addressed real-world needs. While the program was widely viewed as beneficial, the feedback also underscores areas for improvement, such as enhancing practical learning opportunities, refining group dynamics, and strengthening communication with stakeholders. By addressing these areas, the program can further enhance its impact and provide an even more valuable experience for future students.

## **Discussion of Findings**

Our analysis highlights the impact of incorporating UX methodologies into TPC courses. Based on the instructor's experience and student responses after experiencing the course, we examined the challenges and opportunities that arise when implementing such an approach to satisfy honors enhancement in TPC pedagogy. This section delves into the specific effects of HE+ and UX projects on student engagement and learning outcomes, as well as strategies for integrating honors enhancements in TPC pedagogy.

### **Effects of HE+ & UX Projects on Student Engagement and Learning Outcomes**

Overall, the integration of UX projects into the HE+ TPC course had resulted in positive impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. By working directly

with student organizations, students were able to bridge theoretical UX concepts with real-world application. Survey responses highlighted that students found the experience valuable in deepening their understanding of UX principles, with many expressing an increased confidence in applying these concepts in professional settings. The opportunity to engage in stakeholder collaboration and iterative design thinking allowed students to develop practical communication and problem-solving skills, making the course a more immersive learning experience.

One of the key advantages of incorporating UX projects into the HE+ course was the ability to provide students with tangible applications of their developing knowledge in UX. Rather than just engaging in conceptual materials, students were able to identify usability challenges within student organizations, collaborate with leadership teams, and create deliverables that had a meaningful impact. This direct engagement enhanced student motivation and investment in the course material, contributing to higher levels of engagement in the coursework.

### ***Students' overall perception***

As found in the survey, student feedback regarding the HE+ component was generally positive, with many students appreciating the hands-on experience and application of UX principles. The sentiment scores indicated an overall positive reception, with students particularly valuing the opportunity to interact with stakeholders and apply their UX knowledge in meaningful ways. The ability to work in groups and contribute to a common goal also fostered collaboration and accountability. However, some students expressed a desire for greater structure in the form of additional case studies or more practical examples early in the semester to provide a stronger foundation for their projects. Despite the positive reception, students did highlight areas for improvement. Some noted that the usability readings, while useful, could be supplemented with more industry studies to better connect theoretical concepts to workplace practice. Additionally, while most students found their collaboration with student organization leadership beneficial, some encountered challenges in scheduling meetings and obtaining timely feedback. Addressing these logistical issues could further enhance student experiences in future iterations of the program.

### ***Impact on course focus***

The inclusion of UX projects in the HE+ course positively influenced learning outcomes. The project-based approach helped students develop key competencies in user research, stakeholder communication, and iterative design. Additionally, students reported an increased awareness of how UX principles can be applied beyond industry settings, such as in student organizations and higher education

environments. Beyond technical skills, the HE+ activities also fostered important professional competencies, such as teamwork, project communication, and problem-solving. By working collaboratively with their peers and external stakeholders, students had the opportunity to navigate UX constraints and challenges.

### ***Project impact***

The UX project requirements played a crucial role in shaping the student experience. Having students engage with student organizations and tailor their deliverables to specific stakeholder needs helped create a more applied learning experience. Students appreciated the structured progression of the project, which allowed them to gradually build their skills before executing their final deliverables. However, as mentioned before, some students found the coordination with leadership teams to be challenging, particularly in cases where responses were delayed or inconsistent. Establishing more structured communication channels between students and organizational stakeholders may help mitigate these issues in the future. Additionally, students noted that while the project was valuable, clearer expectations and more structured feedback on deliverables could further enhance their learning outcomes.

### ***Other opportunities and challenges***

The most commonly cited benefits of the UX component in the course included the ability to apply design principles in a meaningful context, the hands-on nature of the project, and the relevance of the course. However, there were also some reported challenges. Group dynamics varied, with some students reporting that certain group members were less engaged than others. Some students also felt that the project could benefit from more structured feedback throughout the semester to ensure they were on the right track.

### ***Instructor's experience***

From an instructional perspective, the HE+ UX project provided a valuable opportunity to enhance student engagement and learning outcomes. Sophie's reflections highlighted how the project evolved over time and the ways in which it encouraged students to engage critically with UX principles. By allowing students to work on real design problems, the course provided an enriched learning experience that extended beyond traditional classroom instruction. However, Sophie also noted the pedagogical challenges associated with finding appropriate reading materials and ensuring that students had sufficient foundational knowledge before beginning their projects. The lack of readily available research at the intersection of UX and higher education presented a limitation in curating course materials. Additionally,

coordinating with student organizations required careful planning to ensure a smooth process for students. Future iterations of the program could benefit from more structured support in these areas, including the development of a curated repository of UX case studies relevant to higher education contexts.

## **Strategies for Integrating Honors Enhancements in TPC Pedagogy**

Based on our analysis, we posit that the integration of honors enhancements HE+ in TPC pedagogy offers a pathway to enrich student learning through experiential activities. By embedding UX-focused and project-based learning elements, educators can foster deeper engagement and skill development. The success of such initiatives depends on intentional curriculum design, faculty commitment, and institutional support, as we discuss here.

### ***Course design considerations***

Designing honors-enhanced components requires a strategic approach that differentiates HE+ coursework from standard TPC courses while maintaining alignment with desirable course objectives. One effective strategy is to incorporate additional readings and research components that provide honors students with a deeper theoretical foundation in the subject matter (e.g., UX). The instructor's experience in the HE+ sections of ENGL 2311 demonstrates the value of integrating specialized UX readings and structured opportunities for stakeholder engagement. Providing students with access to curated materials and workshops can further enhance the depth of their learning. In addition to expanded reading materials, honors-enhanced components can involve more extensive research and reflective practice. For instance, students could be required to conduct usability studies, evaluate existing communication strategies, and propose data-driven solutions. Encouraging students to present their findings at academic conferences or publish in student research journals could further distinguish the HE+ experience and provide valuable professional development opportunities.

### ***Incorporating UX approaches***

A core component of the HE+ initiative was the use of project-based learning, particularly through UX-driven projects that involved problem-solving. By requiring students to interact with student organizations, assess communication challenges, and develop tailored solutions, the course aligned with best practices in honors pedagogy, which emphasize active learning, research engagement, and collaboration with external stakeholders. Future implementations can enhance this model by incorporating industry mentorship, UX labs, and iterative feedback loops

to further refine students' deliverables. In addition, UX-driven projects would benefit from an iterative approach, where students engage in multiple rounds of stakeholder feedback and revision. Incorporating structured reflection activities--such as usability testing reports and peer critiques--can help students refine their critical thinking skills. Encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration with students from business, design, or computer science can also enhance the richness of the learning experience.

### ***Scaling and sustainability considerations***

Ensuring the scalability and sustainability of HE+ enhancements is critical for long-term success. While small-scale pilots can provide valuable insights, institutionalizing honors enhancements requires thoughtful planning. One strategy for scalability is to develop modular components that can be adapted across multiple TPC courses. For example, structured UX-based assignments can be embedded in multiple course sections with flexibility in the level of complexity for honors students. Additionally, creating a repository of successful projects and best practices can support faculty in implementing HE+ enhancements without requiring extensive new curriculum development.

Sustainability also depends on faculty buy-in and workload considerations, particularly given the reality that faculty are often overworked and overscheduled. Our institutional experience suggests that traditional professional development workshops may indeed create additional burden rather than support. Instead, our approach emphasized low-touch, integrated support mechanisms that worked within existing faculty workflows. The Honors College's explicit commitment that "HE+ isn't a new course prep, doesn't impact faculty workload" (see Figure 1 and Appendix B4) proved crucial for faculty participation. Rather than requiring extensive training, the program relied on faculty autonomy--as the Dean noted (Appendix B1), "You are the arbiter of what counts as an Honors enrichment in your field"--combined with readily available consultation when needed.

### ***Institutional and programmatic support***

University programs cannot be divorced from their institutional programming infrastructure. Thus, institutional backing plays a crucial role in the successful implementation of HE+ enhancements. Support from deans, department chairs, and program directors can help secure necessary resources, such as funding for UX tools, guest speakers, and project-based learning activities. Establishing formal partnerships with student organizations, campus UX labs, and external industry partners can also provide additional support structures. In addition to financial and logistical support, institutional recognition of faculty efforts is essential. Recognizing

faculty contributions in honors course development through incentives such as research grants, course releases, or professional recognition can encourage participation. Establishing an honors teaching fellowship program or structured faculty mentorship for HE+ courses could further incentivize engagement. Aligning HE+ initiatives with broader institutional goals—such as experiential learning, workforce readiness, and interdisciplinary collaboration—can strengthen support and ensure the long-term sustainability of honors-enhanced pedagogy in TPC programs.

In addressing sustainability challenges during an era of fiscal austerity, our institution's approach offers practical insights for resource-constrained environments. Rather than requiring substantial new funding, the HE+ initiative leveraged existing institutional infrastructure through strategic cost-sharing and creative resource allocation. The Honors College provided modest stipends (\$3,000 split between co-instructors) funded through existing honors program budgets rather than requiring new appropriations. This approach made faculty participation financially feasible without requiring department-level funding commitments.

## **Conclusion: Key Implications for TPC Programs**

This study contributes to the broader discourse in TPC by addressing gaps in the literature pertaining to TPC pedagogy in relation to honors programming. While much has been written about experiential learning, service-learning, and project-based learning in TPC, relatively little attention has been given to the role of honors education in shaping these practices. By documenting the elements and outcomes of the HE+ initiative, this study provides insights into how TPC can support and expand honors education, offering a pathway forward for similar institutions and programs. By highlighting the benefits and challenges of integrating honors enhancements into TPC courses, this research offers recommendations for educators and administrators seeking to advance experiential learning and interdisciplinary collaboration. Moreover, it underscores the importance of aligning high-level institutional initiatives with the unique strengths and needs of individual disciplines, paving the way for more inclusive and innovative approaches to honors education.

The findings of this study further reinforce the importance of aligning broad university initiatives, such as the HE+ program, with the specific needs and pedagogical objectives of disciplinary programs like TPC. While honors programs aim to enrich undergraduate education holistically, their successful implementation within specialized disciplines requires thoughtful integration that respects both the goals of the broader initiative and the instructional imperatives of the field. Our

study demonstrates that adapting a TPC service course for HE+ students through UX-focused projects not only provided enriched learning experiences but also reinforced key disciplinary competencies in audience analysis, usability, and design.

A growing emphasis on high-impact practices and experiential learning across universities has created opportunities for TPC courses to integrate into honors curricula in meaningful ways. As an applied field, TPC is uniquely positioned to respond to calls for innovation in teaching and learning through UX-based projects that challenge students to engage in real-world problem-solving. Our pedagogical case study highlights the potential of leveraging university-wide initiatives to enhance student engagement, deepen experiential learning, and reinforce professional skill development. However, these benefits are most effectively realized when pedagogical adaptations are developed in collaboration with faculty who understand the discipline's core learning objectives. Without such alignment, well-intended university programs risk introducing curricular modifications that may not fully serve the intellectual and professional goals of students in specialized fields.

This research also suggests broader implications for TPC pedagogy. First, it illustrates the value of incorporating UX methodologies as an honors-level enrichment strategy, positioning students to engage in more complex problem-solving and applied research. Second, it signals the need for greater institutional support in helping faculty translate high-level university initiatives into meaningful, discipline-specific learning experiences. Such support might include structured faculty development programs, opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration, and clear institutional guidance on integrating honors components without overburdening instructors or students.

Finally, this study reinforces the broader argument that university-driven academic enrichment efforts should not be imposed in a one-size-fits-all manner but should instead be adaptable to the needs of individual disciplines. By fostering a reciprocal relationship between institutional priorities and disciplinary expertise, universities can create honors experiences that not only serve their overarching missions but also meaningfully enhance technical and professional communication education. Ultimately, the HE+ initiative, as implemented in our study, demonstrates that when faculty agency, disciplinary expertise, and institutional innovation align, honors education can become a powerful mechanism for expanding experiential learning and advancing the goals of TPC programs.

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## **Appendix A**

This appendix contains a sample sequence of communications (from Fall 2023) and materials given to HE+ students during this course. During the start of the semester, the instructor wrote an introductory email (A1) to HE+ students giving them an overview of the enhancement project they will be assigned in the course. During Week 4 or 5, the instructor then provided detailed assignment descriptions about the HE+ project (A2), with examples and evaluation criteria (A3). An email was also sent around this time with a calendar snapshot (A4) emphasizing the important dates pertaining to HE+ students. Next, the instructor reminded HE+ students about their interview exercise (A5), highlighting a few items of importance. Finally, the instructor reminded HE+ students about the post-project meetings with their respective organizations (A6).

### **A1. Introductory Communication with Students**

Dear students, I am excited to begin this semester and I wanted to check in with you to give you an idea of what to expect.

We will be focusing on User Experience (UX) this semester. UX design (<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/topics/ux-design>) considers the elements that shape a user's experience with a product or service, how these elements make the user feel, and how easy it is to accomplish their desired tasks. We will discuss UX in a minimal way in our section of 2311, but this experience will give you a more in depth look at the type of research that is relevant in most disciplines. The work that we do as a part of our HE+ section will connect directly to the work we do in class when we get to our group project in module 3. We will begin by reading some scholarly articles about UX, particularly conducting a needs analysis, persona building, and prototype solutions.

Module 3 is a group project where you will choose the group members you want to work with, and then you will choose a student organization (no Panhellenic orgs), explore their online presences, and create deliverables that the organization can use to effectively connect with members, prospective members, and the campus community. I will ask you to identify a campus group early, and conduct interviews with members of the org first to assess their needs and later to assess their response to the deliverables your group created.

The readings and videos to get started are on our course Blackboard page, and I will be checking in with you again next week.

## **A2. Assignment Instructions**

Dear students,

Attached you will find the assignment description for module 3. Each group will write a recommendation report discussing your findings and recommendations, and you will choose two of the following things to create for your group:

- I. Create a one-page promotional flyer for the organization
- II. Create an infographic that the organization could use to educate the public about an issue important to the organization
- III. A social media campaign with at least five posts, appropriate hashtags, and maintenance instructions so that the members of the organization can keep the posts going
- IV. A 5-10 question survey to help the organization learn more about their audience's communication preferences (Note: your survey should ONLY focus on communication issues.)
- V. A redesigned website using Wix or WordPress or a similar site
- VI. A mockup for a mobile app
- VII. A 250-word TechAnnounce post to help your org connect with their audience
- VIII. A scripted podcast

As you begin to decide what you choose to create for your deliverables, please remember that we are focusing our design on helping the org better communicate their mission, purpose, and activities to their campus communities. We are not creating events for your org, however if your org is planning an event, you could create materials for it. Similarly, we are not fundraising or recruiting, however if your organization is already planning a fundraiser and would like a deliverable designed for this, that would be acceptable. I understand that this seems like a narrow distinction, and I am happy to talk through any ambiguities.

I have met with several of you and have really enjoyed hearing about your plans and the orgs that you want to work with. There are some of you who have yet to schedule a chat about your plans. I have office hours in 207 Humanities (formerly English and Philosophy), on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 11:00-12:20, and I am available via Zoom Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays by appointment. This is an informal chat to answer questions and give updates; it won't take long.

### **A3. Specific Assignment Descriptions (Module 3)**

#### ***Working as a Team to Solve a Complex Communication Problem***

Working successfully in teams to solve problems is an essential workplace skill. First you will form groups of 4-5, and then you will choose a student organization at Texas Tech, excluding fraternities and sororities, from this website:

<https://ttu.campuslabs.com/engage/organizations>. You may choose a student organization that you are a member of, although this is not a requirement. Some groups choose a student org that doesn't have a well-developed website or social media presence.

Your task is to thoroughly explore the websites and the social media accounts, paying careful attention to the mission of the student organization, and to analyze the Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, and Results (SOAR analysis). You will present your findings and recommendations to the rest of the class.

The purpose of our work is to help the organization to better communicate their values and activities with their members and other stakeholders and to better communicate and manage information internally. We are not fundraising, and we are not adding new events to their calendar. We are trying to help the organization to communicate more effectively using free, readily available tools.

Your solutions cannot include hiring someone to deal with the issues that you have discovered. You are not allowed to change the mission or the policies of the organization.

Module 3 includes the following:

Progress Report #1	Project Charter: Organization choice, rules, roles, expectations and consequences.	Due 10.17.23
Proposal	Outline your analysis of the organization's online presence, define their mission and explore their goals, decide which deliverables would be most useful for the organization, and explain your choice of deliverables.	Due 10.24.23
Progress Report #2	Agenda (ch. 9.6) and meeting minutes (ch. 13.3).	Due 10.26.23

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Progress Report #3	Gantt chart (ch. 9.7).	Due 11.2.23
Progress Report #4	RACI chart of tasks (ch. 9.6.1).	Due 11.9.23
Presentations	Upload presentation to Blackboard by class time the day you present.	11.14.23 and 11.16.23
Three Deliverables	Recommendation report and your choice of <b>TWO</b> of the following:  create a promotional flyer for your organization; create an infographic that the organization could use to educate; a social media campaign with at least five posts, appropriate hashtags, and maintenance instructions; a survey exploring communication preferences; a redesigned website using WordPress, Wix, or similar; a mockup of a mobile app.	Due 11.23.23

Progress Reports: 25 points each

Letters of Intent: 100 points

Oral Presentation: 150 points

Recommendation Report and Two Deliverables: 200 points

***Letter of Intent: This Will be Your Proposal Document***

According to 14.4 of our text, "A letter of intent is a short document that outlines the project you are intending to propose and some other basic information that is used to screen applicants for suitability."

Use the professional letter format; 14.4 provides a sample letter of intent. Your letter should be organized using the following headings: Online Presence, Mission and Goals, Proposed Deliverables, and Justification.

## **Presentation**

Presentations should be approximately 10 minutes in length and should include a PowerPoint.

Each group member should have a roughly equal speaking role.

The goal of a presentation is to connect with your student organization's leadership team and to persuade them that your understanding of their mission and the community that they serve and that your solutions can help them to communicate more effectively. Use the following outline to guide both the content of your presentation and the content of your Recommendation Report.

- I. Introduction
  - A. Include full names of all group members
- II. Overview of the Organization
  - A. Background
  - B. SOAR Analysis
- III. Effective Communication Solutions
  - A. What does your organization need to better communicate with their community and with the groups that they serve?
  - B. Demonstrate your solutions.
  - C. Why is your solution the best choice? Use the resources we have worked with in class, as well as other research to persuade your student organization's leadership team that your deliverables will help them to communicate more effectively. Anecdotal evidence is not sufficient.
- IV. Results
  - A. How will the student organization use the deliverables you are creating for them?
  - B. What can the student organization expect should they implement your solution?
  - C. What kind of maintenance will be required to keep your deliverables up to date?
- V. Conclusion

Your presentation and your recommendation report should be written using professional diction and should be carefully proofread and free from errors. Photos should not obscure the text in your PowerPoint.

### **Three Deliverables**

Recommendation Report: you should use the format from your presentation to organize your thoughts. ALL groups will submit a recommendation report.

Choose TWO of the following:

- I. Create a one-page promotional flyer for the organization.
- II. Create an infographic that the organization could use to educate the public about an issue important to the organization.
- III. A social media campaign with at least five posts, appropriate hashtags, and maintenance instructions so that the members of the organization can keep the posts going.
- IV. A 5-10 question survey to help the organization learn more about their audience's communication preferences (Note: your survey should ONLY focus on communication issues.).
- V. A redesigned website using Wix or WordPress or a similar site.
- VI. A mockup for a mobile app

### **Remember**

All documents produced should be considered formal, professional documents, and the choices that you make for each of the components should be made with this in mind.

## **A4. Calendar Snapshot**

Dear students,

Here is our calendar for our HE+ cluster. The dates are mostly flexible. I have also attached the assignment description for module 3 so that you can understand the scope of the project, the instructions, and the deliverables you will be creating for your org.

By September 22, you should have familiarized yourself with the following:

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- Videos of lessons 1-3 from DeNardis Introduction to User Experience Design: [https://learning.oreilly.com/videos/introduction-to-user/9780137534463/9780137534463-UED1\\_00\\_00\\_00/](https://learning.oreilly.com/videos/introduction-to-user/9780137534463/9780137534463-UED1_00_00_00/)
- Understanding the Difference between UX and UI: <https://careerfoundry.com/en/blog/ux-design/the-difference-between-ux-and-ui-design-a-laymans-guide/>
- What Are UX Personas and How are they Used: <https://www.uxdesigninstitute.com/blog/what-are-ux-personas/>
- Information Architecture: <https://usabilityhub.com/blog/information-architecture-in-ux>

September 25-October 6

- Decide if you want to work with another student from our HE+ cluster.
- Select the student org you want to work with; you can choose an org that you are currently affiliated with.
- Schedule a Zoom meeting on a Monday, Wednesday, or Friday with me to discuss your choices, your questions, and your interview plans with your student org. If you are choosing to work as a group, we will meet as a group.

Conduct interviews with your student org by October 17, when module 3 begins. The final deliverables for the module are due on November 21.

Complete experience survey by December 5

I will be adding this to our cluster's Blackboard page, as well as the link we will use for our Zoom meetings.

Please let me know if you have any questions!

### **A5. Instructions for Interview Preparation**

Dear students,

As you are scheduling your interviews and getting to know your groups and their communication needs, there were a couple of things that I wanted to mention.

- The level of formality of the interviews is up to you and the org that you are working with. These can be very casual chats, or they can be more structured. You can record them if you feel that it will be helpful for you, but it is not required.

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- The focus of the interview should be on communication. How do they currently communicate with their audiences and members? What apps do they use? What platforms have been successful for them? What would they like to see? \*Remember, we are prohibited from using TikTok by the mandate of Governor Greg Abbott.
- The focus of the conversations should be on helping the org communicate more effectively using free and readily available tools. WE are not building events for them, but if they need materials to communicate information about an event THEY are planning, that is fine. The same goes for fundraising and recruiting.

Please let me know if you have any questions! I am in my office (207 Humanities) from 11:00-12:20 Tuesdays and Thursdays, and I am also available via Zoom Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

### **A6. Instructions for Post-Delivery Meeting**

Dear students,

We finished our presentations yesterday, and I was pleased with the way yours came together. Now we will move to the next stage, which is following up with the student org that we have chosen. After Thanksgiving, please schedule about 30 minutes with the leadership team of your org, share your deliverables with them, and then gather their feedback about the following questions.

1. How well have we understood the needs of your student org?
2. Was the choice of the deliverables appropriate for the organization?
3. Does the design of the deliverables meet the needs of the organization?
4. Is the information provided in the deliverables appropriate to the needs of the org?
5. On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being we would not use this document and 10 being we plan to use this immediately, how likely would you be to recommend that your org use these documents?

In December, I will be following up with a quick survey about your experiences.

## **Appendix B: Expanded HE+ Information from Administrators**

This appendix contains a series of communications from university and departmental administrators that conveyed the initial concept of HE+, from the Honors College dean (B1) and the assistant dean (B2) to the undergraduate director of technical communication (B3). A textual transcription of the Honors College's informational flyer (Figure 1. FAQ sheet) is included (B4).

### **B1. Dean's Communication**

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you so much for being a part of our new way of reaching Honors students-- Honors Enhanced courses (HE+)! The success of our pilot last Spring is eclipsed by current faculty enthusiasm and student interest: this Fall, we have **54** faculty in **eight** colleges teaching **56** HE+ sections, with over **550** Honors students participating! Thank you!

For those who are new to HE+, we have an FAQ (attached) which addresses the most common questions which arise out of HE+. You are the arbiter of what counts as an Honors enrichment in your field, and whether a student sufficiently fulfills the requirement for Honors credit. If you ever need a willing ear to bounce ideas off, mine are available (as are Chad's). ☺

You are at the center of our mission to cultivate the life of the mind and a spirit of adventure within our Honors students. How lucky they are to have you-- and how lucky we are to have you as partners! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact us.

Have a fantastic semester!

Warmly,

Jill

Dean, Honors College

### **B2. Assistant Dean's Communication with Sample Pilot Courses and Stipend Information for HE+ Instructors**

Hi Prof. G. & Prof. S.,

As you may be aware, the Honors College has implemented an innovative way for Texas Tech University students and faculty to participate in the Honors experience,

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Honors Enhanced courses (HE+). In HE+ sections, participating Honors students enroll in a standard/non-Honors section as well as a connected zero-hour/zero-cost HONS 0001 section reserved for Honors students. Instructors of HE+ sections agree to enrich their Honors students' experience in the class with an additional honors-enriched project reserved for them (whether a group project, inquiry-based, service or experiential learning, etc.), and they are paid a stipend by the Honors College to do so. I'm attaching additional information about HE+ courses.

With the HE+ pilot we ran in Spring 2023, below are a few examples of the honors-enriched endeavors that some of the instructors chose to provide for their Honors students:

In an ANSC 3301 (Principles of Nutrition) section, the IOR had participating Honors students complete a few assignments (including a budget worksheet) in conjunction with lab work related to the course's subject-matter.

- In a BIOL 3416 (Genetics) section, the IOR had each participating Honors student create and give a presentation on a well-known scientist in the field.
- In a CHEM 1305 (Chemical Basics) section, the IOR had participating Honors students complete a couple of assignments... one was case study on a chemical spill; the other was students' measuring their carbon footprint.
- In an ENGR 1320 (Engineering Problem Solving I) section, the IOR facilitated a once-a-month virtual meeting and had participating Honors students collectively contribute to a shared database of initiatives relevant to the course's subject-matter.
- In a SOC 1301 (Introduction to Sociology) section, the IOR had participating Honors students submit an essay assignment (3-5 pages, with works cited) at the end of the semester.

In consultation with Dr. S.H., we in the Honors College would like to have your ENGL 2311-008, 010, 011, & 042 course as an HE+ section during Fall 2023. Below are the Honors students enrolled in your lecture section and (as a subset) those who have enrolled in the connected HONS 0001-H24 section:

[Student information redacted.]

If you agree to facilitate the honors-enriched project for the Honors students in the HE+ cohort— assuming all of the Honors students enrolled in your lecture also enroll in the connected HONS 0001 section (or at least the vast majority of them)— we can provide a \$3,000 stipend (split between the two of you).

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Our hope is that HE+ sections will dramatically increase the number of students who can fulfill the curricular requirements to graduate with Honors as well as increase the number of faculty who can participate in teaching Honors students, not to mention be an engaging way for students to learn from Texas Tech University faculty.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

C.C.

Assistant Dean, Honors College

### **B3. Undergraduate Studies Director Communication**

Dear S.,

Thanks for agreeing to pilot our Engl 2311 HE+ sections in the fall. I write with an update from C. C. Chad is an assistant academic dean in the Honors College and he will be able to answer any specific questions that you might have about the HE+ courses. As they have these set up, Honors students will be able to enroll (1-2 per class at most) in your different sections. The Honors college will identify these students to you and then you can draw on the following set of instructions to supervise their participation in a supplementary honors-enriched activity/project/assignment. Chad writes:

"I'm glad to provide basic feedback based on what we know from instructors who are a part of the pilot this spring. Some are setting it up where there is not a collective time when they get together synchronistically, but do an asynchronous check-in on a common platform (e.g., a MS Team page or Blackboard). For those who have arranged a set time to meet, we have expressed our preference that it be no more than once a month (or three times total during the term max) – I'm aware of one prof who has set a Zoom/Teams session at a mutually beneficial time at that frequency (with 8 students in her HE+ group), and it seems to work.

We in the Honors College do not want to be overly prescriptive – yet we're always glad to provide feedback and encouragement and advisement in an effort to better serve all stakeholders in the HE+ endeavor."

To sum up, you don't have to do anything special as part of your in class delivery or content. Instead, you'd offer some supplementary instructional content to support your HE+ students asynchronously or minimally synchronously alongside your normal course. It also sounds like what this assignment could be is entirely up to you.

K. and/or I would be happy to work with you. I'd encourage you to be as creative as you have time for! You could also work with J.T. and R.G. in the UX lab to have students do some sort of supplemental hands on work that they could then write up—that sort of thing.

S.H.

Director of BA in Technical Communication

## **B4. Transcriptions from Figure 1. Faculty-Facing FAQ Poster (2023) from the Honors College**

HE+ FAQ | Texas Tech University Honors College

Q: Do I need to compose a syllabus for the HONS 0001 section connected with my course?

A: No! HE+ sections do not differ in course objectives, and the enrichment does not need to be graded.

Q: How will I report that Honors students sufficiently completed the enrichment activity?

A: Asst. Dean C.C. will reach out to all HE+ faculty prior to the end of term to ensure students receive Honors credit.

Q: How many students are required for HE+ and when do they need to enroll?

A: A minimum of 3 students are required for an HE+ section to make. Students must add in Fall by August 29th.

Q: Do I need to issue a grade for the honors-enriched assignment/activity with HE+?

A: No! We need to know the students completed the enrichment sufficiently to earn Honors credit.

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Q: If I plan on meeting with Honors students for HE+, how often should I meet with them?

A: HE+ isn't a new course prep, doesn't impact faculty workload, and doesn't add SCH for students. Consider 1x/month or 3x/semester.

Q: Are stipends paid directly to faculty, and when are they paid?

A: All HE+ faculty receive a sliding-scale stipend based on enrollment, paid directly to faculty, paid after the 12th day of classes.

### **Author Information**

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