Almost 50 years ago, Paul E. Hamel, chair of the Andrews University music department, was attending a conference on higher education in Chicago when he noticed in the schedule a session on Honors programs, which piqued his interest. He attended and returned to campus full of ideas for what could happen at Andrews.¹

The ideas did not stop there. President Richard L. Hammill appointed a committee to study the possibilities and present a proposal to the faculty. On March 4, 1964, the Student Movement on-campus newspaper reported: “Faculty to Evaluate New Honors Program.” Hamel, as chair of the committee, and his colleagues—Daniel Augsburger (modern languages), Asa Thoresen (biology), Elaine Giddings (speech), Donald Snyder (physics), and Leif Tobiassen (history)—had a large vision for Honors at Andrews: engagement and liberation would be its bywords. According to Hamel: “Engagement’ means giving the gifted student every opportunity to move ahead as rapidly as possible in the field of his particular interest. ‘Liberation’ would mean allowing the gifted student to free himself from the traditional and limiting regulations of individual courses and curricula.”²

Despite some who voiced concerns about creating what might become an elitist organization,³ the faculty approved the proposed Honors program, and a description first appeared in the 1966-1967 bulletin. Hamel, as first director, announced: “Andrews University will implement a new concept in Seventh-day Adventist higher education for the superior student when the new Honors program begins in September [1967].”⁴

When Hamel transferred to other university responsibilities, Merlene A. Ogden, a professor of English, was designated the new director. Ogden guided and inspired Honors students for the next 24 years.

The Honors committee believed from the beginning that student research should be a cornerstone of the Andrews Honors experience: “The

¹This article combines the work of several authors and Honors program directors, keynoted by an adaptation of “A Commitment to Excellence” by Meredith Jones Gray, which appeared in the Winter 2008 issue of the Andrews University alumni journal, Focus, pages 20 and 21 (http://www.andrews.edu/focus/). This article has been adapted by permission, and combined with brief historical notes from the other programs in North America (supplied by program directors), listed in historical order of program establishment.

²From Beginnings at Andrews University to Programs Across North America*
Honors student will be required to enroll in an interdisciplinary senior Honors seminar,” they wrote, which would include “presentations by the students of their research and independent study reports.”

Under Ogden’s direction, the Honors program grew academically, socially, and spiritually. The Society of Andrews Scholars, the student arm of the program, worked with the Honors faculty to expand the life of the Honors community. They organized the first annual Honors banquet, as well as a Sabbath retreat of special services, lunch, an afternoon discussion, and vespers.

Over the years, Ogden sought regional and national recognition for the program. It became a member of the Upper Midwest Honors Council, the Michigan Honors Association, and the National Collegiate Honors Council.

Today’s Honors program still bears a strong resemblance to that early vision. In the 2007-2008 school year, under the leadership of new Director L. Monique Pittman, Andrews Scholars attended the Chicago Symphony and visited the Art Institute in Chicago. At the annual Friday evening Agape Feast and vespers, the officers and sponsors served more than a hundred student and faculty guests. The Scholars are a thriving cultural, social, and spiritual community.

Academically, Andrews Scholars pursue a core of stimulating Honors classes to complete their general-education requirements. The senior Honors research experience is still the capstone experience, just as the first
Honors committee envisioned it. New levels of professionalism have been added: Junior Research Pro-Seminar to prepare the students for their senior projects, and a proposal defense with the Honors Council to help ensure sound research.

As the following list of presentations from the Fifth Annual Thesis Symposium (2007) illustrates, project topics range across the academic map:

“Hellenization, Romanization and Culture Change”
“Neuromodulation of Phonotactic Behavior in Female *Acheta domestica*: Possible Involvement of Biogenic Amines”
“College Students’ Consideration for Hybrid Vehicles: Andrews University’s Views on an Emerging Market”
“Effect of Season of Birth on Herd Retention and Production Through Two Lactations in Holstein Dairy Cattle”
“Re-inventing the Mousetrap: Improved Synthesis of Cyanostilbenes”
“Father Knows Best: Renaissance Masculinity Modeled on Stage in William Shakespeare’s *Henry IV*”

One of the more recent innovations has been a poster session held during the spring semester in which the students who plan to graduate with Honors display a visual presentation of their Honors topics: a poster explaining their theses, methodologies, and background information. In March 2008, some 40 scholars put on an impressive exhibit in the Chan Shun Hall lobby—a dazzling array of charts and graphs, concise outlines and careful definitions, illustrations, and professional layouts.

In April 2008, the John Nevins Andrews Honors Program came full circle to its annual grand finale. For almost 40 years, senior Andrews Scholars presented their research during the months leading up to graduation. More recently, the Honors Council decided to combine those presentations into a half-day event. Thus, the Annual Thesis Symposia still fulfill the ideals of engagement and liberation, the tradition of excellence, commitment, and service of the pioneers and leaders who dedicated themselves to Honors education.

Atlantic Union College (South Lancaster, Massachusetts)
*Timothy Trott, Director*

The complete Honors Program history at Atlantic Union College (AUC) lies buried in old files, but its beginning point is clear, 1968. What is now called the Honors Core Program was originally dubbed PII (“Program Two”). It was designed to be very different in delivery, grading, and expectations from the standard general-education program, “PI.” During the early years, many of the courses were team-taught, frequently met off campus, had very different assignments from “normal” classes, and were all graded Pass/Fail (this was during the “anti-grades” era of American higher education). A major player in the development of this program was Ottilie Stafford, who taught English at AUC for many years.

Over the decades, this program has undergone several re-evaluations, culminating in AUC’s current Honors Core Program, which consists of a series of specific interdisciplinary courses focused on community engagement and service, combined with emphasis on the development of independent and creative learners.
La Sierra University (Riverside, California)
Douglas R. Clark, Director

The earliest Honors program at La Sierra University, in 1971, founded by Fritz Guy, was labeled the Inter-disciplinary Program, and ever after affectionately referred to as “Inter-Dip.” Its claim to fame has been the number of interdisciplinary courses incorporated in the curriculum, a feature that has drawn rave reviews from students whose lives were changed forever through the rigorous process of expanding their view of the world and their place in it.

The next-generation Honors Program, birthed in 1983, resulted from a committee chaired by Robert Dunn. The structure of the program consisted of a breadth component incorporating a required freshman course—“What Does It Mean to Be Human?”—and a set of two-unit seminars to be elected from a variety of choices. The breadth was strengthened by required Honors activities, such as an on-campus event, a play, a concert, a dance recital, or a Sabbath outing. The depth component was fulfilled by the Honors thesis, when the student was essentially transferred—usually to his or her major department. Directors of the program during this stage included Gary Bradley (biology), Marte Erne (com-
communication), Ed Karlow (physics), and Paul Mallery (psychology).

In 2002, La Sierra introduced its current version of Honors education. Following a period of thorough research into current best practices, the Honors Council, under the direction of Paul Mallery, reshaped the program into a state-of-the-art curriculum built around international travel, community-building at all levels (class, residence hall, program, campus, local, and global communities), service learning, demanding research/scholarship projects, and portfolio preparation with an emphasis on developing worldviews in a context of diversity, academic rigor, and spiritual formation.

In the 1970s, Honors freshman composition, in the hands of Helen Evans (Zolber), became the inspiration for a multi-disciplinary program with the addition of Western Thought I (history and literature) and Western Thought II (art and music); a religion course, The New Testament and Its Environments; and a religion/sociology course, Religion in a Social Context. An interdisciplinary senior Honors seminar completed the package available to students in the 1980s. The Honors offerings formed a core of courses that fulfilled a portion of the general-studies requirement.

Several changes were made in the 1990s, as the program was expanded to include mathematics and science as well as humanities courses. The freshman history/literature sequence became "Western Thought," and the
upper-division sequence became “Science and the Arts,” a three-quarter combination of laboratory science and fine-arts study, with a calculus cognate. The Honors hours requirement increased from 32 to 38 quarter hours, and several interdisciplinary courses were added as Honors electives.

Today’s Honors students take 44 quarter credits of core courses plus Honors electives to complete a streamlined version of their bachelor’s degree general-studies requirements.

Pacific Union College (Angwin, California)
John McDowell, Director

Pacific Union College (PUC) has had some sort of Honors program for many years. During the late 1970s, students could graduate with honors if they had a high enough GPA and did an Honors project. The program continued to evolve, and by 1984, more detailed requirements were added. By 1984, these included requisite courses in history, English, 12 elective hours selected from a prepared list, and a capstone Honors seminar.

But in the late 1980s, the program languished until it was revived by Lorne Glaim. A radical rethinking and restructuring of the Honors program took flight in the fall of 1998 when Eric Anderson, now president of Southwestern Adventist University, constructed...
an “intellectually compelling curricu-
lum.” After visiting St. John’s College in
Santa Fe, New Mexico; and Thomas
Aquinas College in Santa Paula, Cali-
for
nia, he encouraged the adoption of a
“core text” or “great books” program,
which provided the template for the
design of the current program at
PUC—an interdisciplinary “great
books” seminar approach that since
1998 has undergone only minor modi-
fications following program reviews in

Largely through
the efforts of Douglas
Clark, the Honors
program at South-
western Adventist
University began in
the late 1970s as an
enrichment program with the profes-
sors organizing one- or two-credit-
hour seminars on interdisciplinary top-
ics so that students could enroll in
classes outside of the standard curricu-
lum. The team-taught seminars fo-
cused on a variety of topics such as cul-
tural literacy, the history and art of
film, myth, the legend of King Arthur,
the nature of love, the Cold War, and
chaos. Under the direction of Erwin
Sicher, Renard Doneskey, and Glen
Robinson, these courses became a full-
fledged Honors program, with specific
classes designated as Honors sections
(speech, history) and the inclusion of
an Honors thesis and thesis presenta-
tion. At present, Honors students take
nine credit hours of general-education
classes designated as Honors sections, plus three one-hour seminars, and complete an Honors thesis and thesis presentation. Within the past two years, Andrew Woolley, the current director, has begun leading Honors study tours, with trips to Italy in 2009, and to Greece in 2010. The 2011 class, “American Writers in Paris,” will be held in Paris and in the French Loire Valley.

**Southern Adventist University**
*(Collegedale, Tennessee)*

*Mark Peach, Director*

The Southern Scholars Honors program first appeared in the 1981-1982 college catalog. The first Southern Scholar graduated in 1984; 180 students have completed the Honors program since then. Jerry Gladson, the first director of the program, was followed by Ben McArthur and Wilma McClarty. Mark Peach has been director for the past two years.

The program is beginning to undergo some changes. Scholarship amounts have been increased. Because Southern Adventist University is an institutional member of the National Collegiate Honors Council, junior and senior Honors students will be attending the Southern Regional Honors Conference for the third year in a row (with graduating Southern Scholars presenting their senior projects). The student executive committee is taking responsibility for social events (one student is a voting member of the Honors committee). Beginning this year, there will be an Honors Composition 102 course, and an Honors core curriculum is in the planning stages. In short, after 25 years with few changes, Southern Adventist University is embarking on a mission of updating and improving its Honors program.
Honors courses at Union College began in the fall of 1996 with three classes—Honors Composition, Great Books, and The Holocaust (a class that has survived for 15 years). Formal designation of the requirements occurred concurrently in the fall of 1996.

The 1997-1999 bulletin has a one-paragraph description of the Honors option, with four classes listed. The 1999-2001 bulletin contained an outline of the program, but not until the 2001-2003 bulletin did a full listing of specific classes and requirements appear.

May 2000 was the date of the first Honors students’ graduation: Jeffrey Birth, who submitted a senior thesis on “Can Wildlife Art Be Justified as Fine Art?” and Christopher Burton, whose thesis dealt with “Iron Metabolism in the Human Body.”

The basic structure of the program remained the same for several years, with some modifications, until it was completely rewritten for the 2008-2010 bulletin. This major revision of the program added a focus on Global Issues and reduced the number of required general-education courses in comparison with non-Honors tracks at the college.

The history of Honors at Washington Adventist University (WAU) extends back to the late 1990s, when the school (then Columbia Union College) held a series of speculative Sunday meetings to determine student interest in such a program. In the early 2000s, a more formal process began, with an Honors Council charged to research and construct a template for an Honors Program. The general-education curriculum created by the council had a dual mission: academic excellence, combined with leadership and service requirements. Classes were to be interdisciplinary and to use innovative teaching strategies. The opportunities afforded by the school’s location near the nation’s capital were to be incorporated in curricular and co-curricular aspects of the program.

This program was inaugurated at the start of summer in 2004, opening with 22 students, of whom 13 were freshmen. Interdisciplinary courses fo-
cusing on local resources were developed, including the Civil War Study Tour, Art and Adventism, Shakespeare in Washington, Urban America, and Diseases in History. By 2006, community-building annual events, such as a dinner at the WAU president’s house, an Honors retreat, an end-of-year brunch, and a senior dedication had been established. Honors Program Awards of $750 and $1500 were made possible through outside funding, as was the creation of a paid student executive council consisting of three officer positions. Through these endeavors, the Honors community grew to its current size of approximately 50 members.

Oakwood University (Huntsville, Alabama)
Canadian University College (Lacombe, Alberta)

Both Oakwood University and Canadian University College have considered establishing Honors programs and continue to explore the possibility. While no formal Honors program presently exists at either school, each institution’s commitments to the types of educational experiences growing from Honors opportunities are strong.

Douglas R. Clark, Ph.D., is Director of the University Honors Program at La Sierra University in Riverside, California, and Coordinator for this special issue on Adventist Honors Programs.

NOTES AND REFERENCES
3. Hamel interview.
7. All of the information is taken from the conference bulletin. The authors of these papers are, respectively, Darrell J. Rohl, Rebecca Lee, Allison Hurlow, Rachel Knott, David Carbonell, and Bonnie McLean.