



# Honors Conference Live Magazine

Thursday 3 & Friday 4 October 2013



Why do we  
invest in talent  
development?

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A safe  
environment for  
making mistakes

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We don't need  
more heroes

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## Colophon

### Live Magazine: Honors Conference 2013

The conference is organized by Rotterdam University. This Live Magazine® is a report of the two-day conference.

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## Breaking the mold

The 2013 edition of the international Honors Conference, which is all about 'Evoking Professional Excellence in Higher Education' kicked off in Rotterdam, the Netherlands on 3 October. Participants were literally shipped to the RDM campus on a specially chartered boat, allowing them to get an eyeful of beautiful Rotterdam.

On arrival, they were treated to a thought-provoking Keynote by Simon Kavanagh. He went from Dotcom to Dotbomb in just five years, after starting a multimedia company called Interact as a young entrepreneur. After this adventure, he returned to his first love, which was teaching. Taking from his own experiences, he wondered: can education offer you that same rollercoaster ride, where you are able to learn and make mistakes in a safe environment? As it turns out, it can!

The purpose of the KaosPilot School of which he is now part, is to create positive societal change through personal growth and enterprise. For KaosPilot, education is not about making people fit into the future, but about creating the frames for them to participate in creating it. What they're teaching is innovation, entrepreneurship and meaning. The things their students create must have value and be relevant. Not more but better. Not managers but leaders. The school focuses heavily on social enterprise and finds that you can't compromise on ethics. Its students only work with real clients with real problems. For three months every year, the entire classroom is moved to a different and challenging country. Why? Because they believe failure is a temporary state that provides experience and an opportunity for learning and improvement.

The second keynote by Claire Boonstra also focused on how education can and should be different. The vertical structure that forms the mold for our governments, businesses and schools today does not allow for people to be different. For instance, if your CITO scores are too low, you've already failed to qualify for higher-level education. As a student Boonstra was labeled a 'high potential', which steered her career towards the corporates. When she quit and founded Layer, the company's swift success and fame brought her to the World Economic Forum in Davos. The fulfillment of a lifelong dream! It was a disappointment. What she was looking for was not there. Eighty percent of participants were men in grey suits. They embodied their position, not their cause. Boonstra came to the conclusion that in a world that is structurally changing, it is very important to know what makes you unique and what your added value will be. She asked the people in the audience to close their eyes and ask themselves: What kind of people add value to the world? As it turns out, people never say bankers, managers or consultants. These are the kind of people who excel at taking exams. But what then, is the goal of education? Is it to score high in tests, or is it to find out what your talents are and where you can make a difference? The answer, should be clear. [JB]









## The talent files

Over in the former Port Director's Office, Janneke Breedijk's (Pluskids) session focused on her work in guiding gifted children, their parents and their teachers.

Passionate about transforming education, Breedijk is working with three honors students from the University of Professional Education Leiden - Bouke van Haasteren (Physiotherapy), Amber van Kooten Niekerk (Analytical Chemistry) and Mike van Dijk (Organic Chemistry). With Breedijk as their tutor, they are developing a system which enables each child to discover their strengths and talents. The aim is to personalise each student's education around the things that they excel at.

Breedijk gave an overview of existing student performance measuring systems, which mainly focus on test scores. The values measured in elementary school do not generally provide any predictive value for school or career performance. With the help of five fictional students that all educators have encountered, she asked the attendees how teachers can get the best out of students who all have such different needs. Children need to be trained to take responsibility for their own learning process to increase their motivation. Breedijk urged teachers to be more aware of how they can influence their students.

So what are these Talent Files? The students have proposed an alternative way of following a child's

development. This system will be used alongside tradition-

al cognitive learning and tracking systems. Known as the Talent Files system (see sidebar, page 6), it enables teachers to provide a rich learning environment. The system also helps teachers to research strengths, abilities and preferences together with their students. Details of each student's preferences and talents are documented in their personalised 'Talent File'. The file is then taken along with each student throughout pre-school. Using portfolios isn't new. Linking Talent Files to an existing learning system is. And making these files accessible for students, parents and teachers is a great step forward.

If anyone was still asleep from an early start this morning, Breedijk had a way to wake them up. The debate on measuring educational performance began, with one team arguing: "Learning progress in elementary school is only measurable by using figures and facts to make a fair measure for all". The other side put forward the motion that: "Measured values in elementary school do not provide any predictive value for school or career performance."

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Watch Ken Robinson's inspirational 'Changing Educational Paradigms' video: <http://youtu.be/zDZFcdGpL4U>



The session continued with an inspiring video: 'Sir Ken Robinson's Changing Educational Paradigms'. The short animated film explains how our education systems, conceived and constructed for a different era, severely limits a child's natural learning ability.

Breedijk concluded that to ensure that they enjoy learning and stay interested in education, our children need to be offered a rich learning environment where they can train their own thinking, creative and investigating skills. With systems like the Talent Files, instead of focusing on what a child is not good at, children will discover their own talents and their abilities to learn and progress. [SG]

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#### Some of the proposed Talent Files methods:

- ▶ Fill the file with movies/photos of situations in class and at home as a visual CV
- ▶ Game/Role playing
- ▶ Evaluating their own progress
- ▶ Talent Scouts
- ▶ Competitions as Skills Juniors (like Skills Talents but for Primary School)
- ▶ Multiple intelligence tests
- ▶ Expression style inventory tests
- ▶ Participate in honors programs (interdisciplinary and independent of age)





## Talent in action

Take your students for a walk to let them find their true talents. That's what Hans Dekker and his company Talent Walks intend to do. "While walking together, you are not looking at each other. It sort of levels the boundaries." Dekker got his idea for walking as a means to find potential during a hiking trip to Santiago de Compostela. "It didn't have any religious meaning, but it really struck me that everyone I met was telling about their life and their dreams."

For Hans Dekker that was the starting point for Talent Walks. While walking around the RDM Campus we get to know the others in the workshop as well as their talents. "I studied math before and now being a manager in education I still see that viewing things analytically is my strength." Finding out your own uniqueness is what Talent Walks helps students achieve. Hans Dekker points out Albert Einstein who, at the age of three, finally spoke his first words. "This milk is too hot," he complained, leading his mother to wonder why he never spoke up earlier. "It wasn't necessary until now," was his reply. It is all about putting your talents in to action. [TC]

**What do you hope to get out of the conference today?**



*"I'm hoping that the Keynote speakers are good. I also hope to meet people who are managing honors programs abroad to get inspiration for organising the honors programs at my own university."*

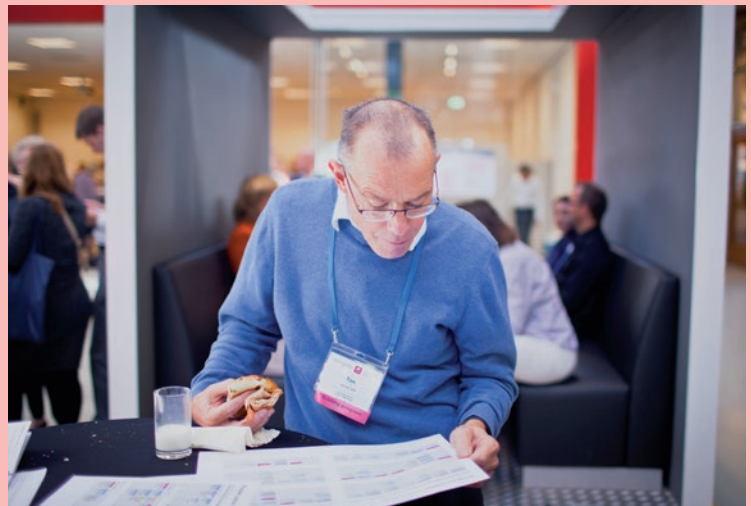
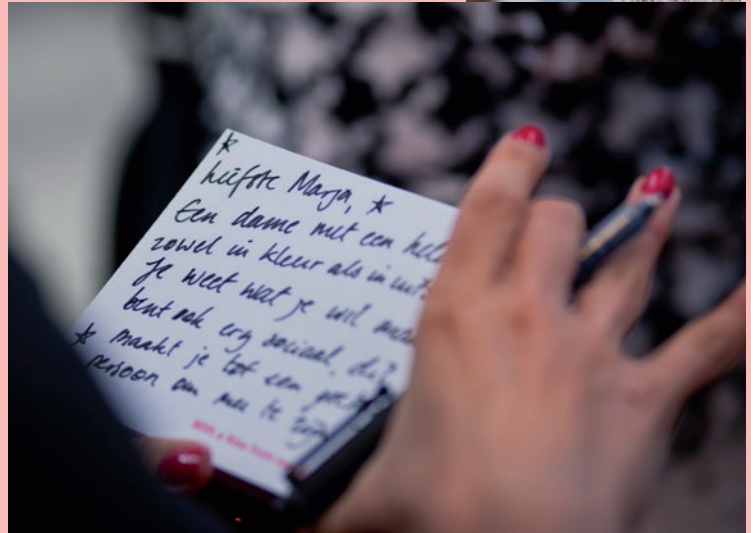
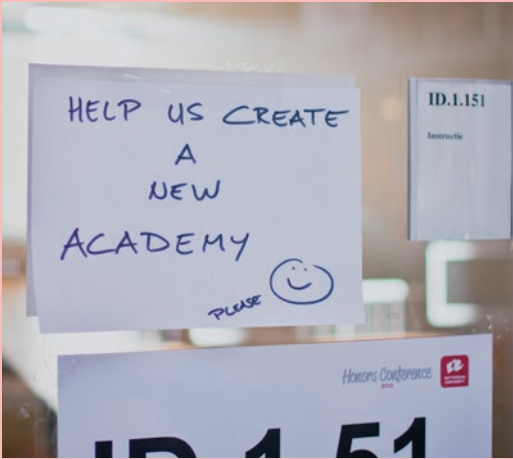
**Daan Gijsbertse**, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands.



*"I'm working on ways to help our peer coaches spot potential talent in younger students. I'm hoping that the conference will help me find new ideas to contribute to this project."*

**John Beentjes**, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, the Netherlands.









## A living, learning community

In one of the final sessions of the conference, Kevin Dean, Director of the Honors College at West Chester University, and Michael Jendzurski, former honors' student, gave a lively and amusing introduction to the college's honors program.

Dean explained how the program was overhauled from a static, segregated system where only certain disciplines were offered as honors subjects. What emerged was a program that put students into a living, learning community and taught them the value of interpersonal engagement. He introduced a fluid system comprising nine cross-disciplinary courses that cover the competencies in general education. Each course teaches a minimum of two disciplines and can be taught by a team of professors when necessary.

Jendzurski explained the program's three foundation courses:

- ▶ **Self-Awareness:** Addressing the transition phase of new students, building trust in yourself and learning why you are thinking in a certain way.
- ▶ **Public Discourse:** Learning public speaking and how to articulate and defend your position.
- ▶ **Ethics in a Tech Age:** Taking various established philosophies on life and applying these principles to a technical society and college life.

Skills learned in these courses are then applied to the following six systems: Education & Change, Community & Change, Stewardship & Civic Engagement, Technology & Change, Public Opinion and Community & the Arts.

One of the most important things students enrolled in the honors program are taught is to understand their purpose and what they, as part of a community, can do for society. With over 60 different academic degree programs represented, the richness that the students involved in this program could potentially bring to a future society is phenomenal. Dean's closing words were "We constantly ask our students: are you learning something and are you having fun? If you can answer yes to these two questions then you're in a better place than most people." [SG]















## We don't need more heroes

The first conference day ended with a panel discussion featuring professor and entrepreneur Guy Bauwen. To him, education is like bread: best when it's fresh.

The path towards 'fresh' education, should consist of the following six steps:

- ▶ Select a relevant business challenge
- ▶ Inject theoretical knowledge
- ▶ Conduct facilitated desk and field research
- ▶ Formulate lessons learned
- ▶ Disseminate findings and lessons learned
- ▶ Integrate lessons learned in curriculum

Bauwen also warned educators not to buy into some common and dangerous myths regarding innovation and entrepreneurship. For instance, Bauwen finds that there is plenty of talent and creativity to go around, and that a lack of it isn't the problem. And speaking of talent: 'heroes' like Steve Jobs and Richard Branson don't just achieve great things because they are great but because of the team effort that sustains them. Instead, the required focus should be on more strategic innovations, smart filtering, ROI valorisation, team capabilities and agile planning. After all, an old map is useless if the terrain is new!

According to Bauwen, exploitation and exploration should go hand in hand. And instead of just using one right on one left hand, entrepreneurs should use both. Different qualities should be allowed to complement each other and entrepreneurs should therefore surround themselves with people who possess qualities they might lack themselves. Another thing that needs to happen is that people go out into the field and actually 'sense' what the demand is and what their service or product should be. Desk research can't compete with actual experience.

For the honor students on the panel, Bauwen recommended they rebrand themselves. "You are not a student but a researcher. You are not a burden but a resource, because you give back to the company." After his presentation, both panel and audience members got to ask each other difficult questions about what they had just heard. It became clear that innovation is not something that people are automatically comfortable with. Some questioned if innovative thinking could even be taught at all, whilst others, like Keynote speaker Simon Kavanagh strongly disagreed. But this doesn't change the fact that all educators should strive to achieve it. [JB]



# Tweets!!!

## #hcrotterdam2013

Finally made it to Rotterdam. The weather is outstanding. Time for fries & mayo. Looking forward to Honors Conference 2013.  
@sfurtwengler

Simon Kavanagh: You have to be confident! We create confident creative and innovative leaders  
@HannaDrenth

'We put action first: real products, real clients. You have to get out of the classroom.'  
@Kaospilots

Wethouder @KorrieLouwes opent Honors Conference leuk interactief door 2 studenten te interviewen.  
@keesjoosten67

From confusion to control to co-creation. Good experience #Lego session with Simon Kavanagh. Tnx!  
@Marike\_Lammers\_

Claire Boonstra: We leven niet in een tijdperk van veranderingen, maar in een verandering van tijdperken.  
@HannetenBerge

Important to educate the teachers for excellent education  
@sschouwenaars

Ik bloos! Kreeg net een prachtig compliment van de complimentendames \*bloos\*  
@suzanneunck

Net interessante 'Talent Walk' gehad @HCrotterdam2013. Nu snap ik waarom @SCorporaal 's nachts gaat lopen met studenten.  
@JaninaBanis

We need to flip the system: allow failures, avoid ticking boxes, focus on passion!  
@keesjoosten67

Students sharpen their Innovation Lab and question each other  
@ronweer

Inspiring keynote by @MWolfensberger with great insights and an excellent Soprano!  
@HannaDrenth

Interesting presentation about Teaching Academic Skills and Attitude from Leiden University  
Getting ideas  
@sschouwenaars

Draait een honors program ook echt om de honors (eer)? Zo niet, tijd voor een ander naam?  
@Stevenx87

We rockten met de HU-community op #hcrotterdam2013 #posterpresentatie  
@HU\_honours

Veel belangstelling voor onze presentatie over succesfactoren voor honors #hcrotterdam2013  
@Saxion\_jolise

Na twee volle dagen #hcrotterdam2013... veel gehoord, ontmoet, gelachen, verwonderd, geleerd! Volgend jaar bij ons!!  
@liestimring

Final keynote with Bart v Rosmalen. About excellence and connection. Tells us about the nine muses  
@HU\_honours

Ingrid Nugteten is the most beautiful soprano. She was singing at #hcrotterdam2013. She gave voice where words were not enough.  
@MWolfensberger

Een ware uitputtingsslag, maar erg boeiend: een peereview met 14 innovatieve projecten van 160 Rotterdamse studenten  
@Sandra17607060





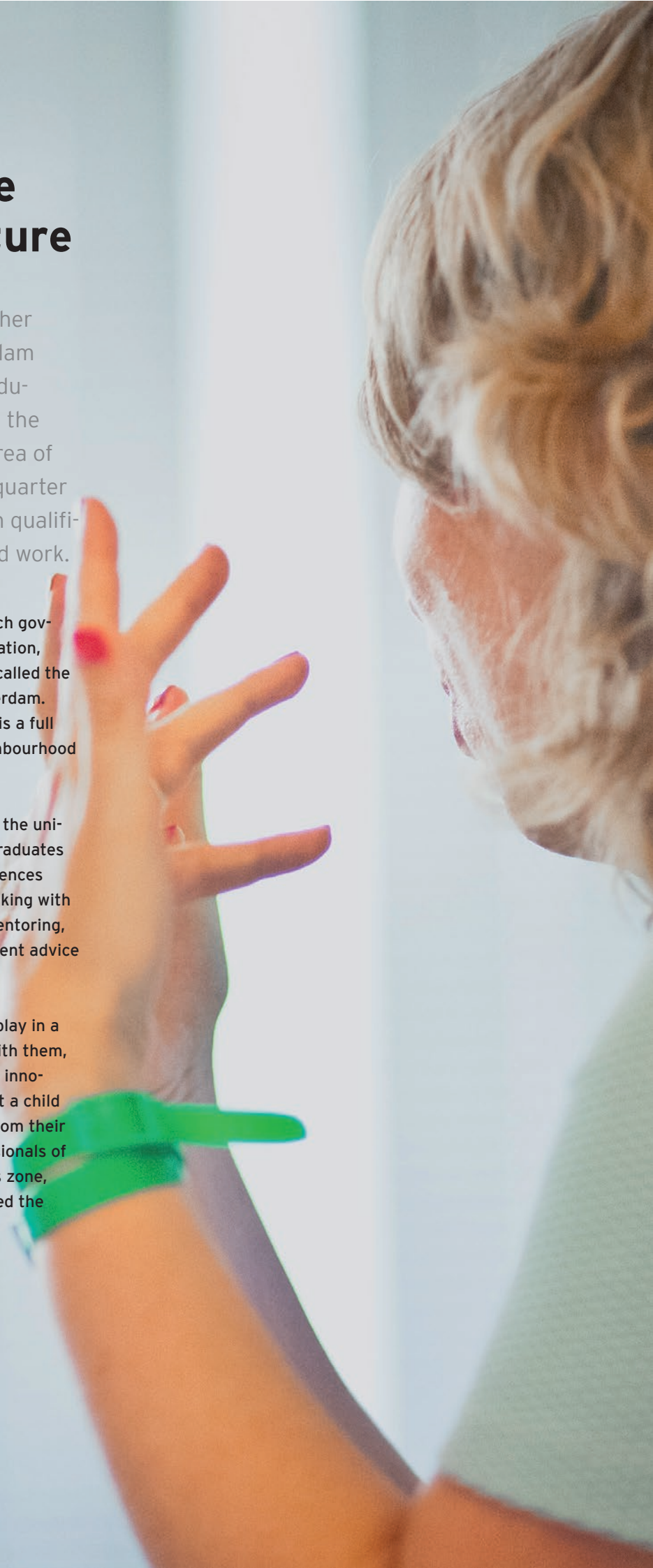
# Guaranteeing the best possible future

Nienke Fabries led a session about her work with projects that link Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences to educational and community projects in the South Rotterdam area. This is an area of poverty in the city where nearly a quarter of children do not leave school with qualifications that will enable them to find work.

To improve the lives of the inhabitants, a Dutch government program focused on improving education, work and housing. This resulted in a scheme called the 'Children's Zone' being set up for South Rotterdam. Already successful in Harlem, New York, this is a full circle concept with three specific goals: neighbourhood programming, excellent schools and family.

To help make long term connections between the university and the neighbourhood, many undergraduates from the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences spend at least one period of their studies working with children in Rotterdam South. They provide mentoring, offer homework guidance, personal development advice and coaching sessions.

Fabries concluded that the role that parents play in a child's education, and how schools interact with them, is becoming increasingly important. Constant innovation in education is the key to ensuring that a child from a deprived neighbourhood can escape from their background. And, by defining how the professionals of the future can best work within the Children's zone, children in Rotterdam South will be guaranteed the best possible future. [SG]







It's very important that students get frequent and constructive feedback.

But what constitutes deep learning? In what kind of environment can students learn to impact the world rather than just to do well on a test?

Undergraduate research is one of the most valuable ways for students to learn how to research, develop and communicate their ideas and collaboration is the key to learning. Students are encouraged to get involved in global projects that have a diversity element. Increasingly, students are being urged to do internships, preferably overseas, to get experience in a real world setting.

It's also very important that students get frequent and constructive feedback and that they are allowed time for structured self-reflection. They are also expected to share the results of their research publicly. In short, they are pushed outside of their comfort zones.

By working with community, government and private organisations, partnerships are created. These are key to collaboration and innovation. One of Elmhurst's stakeholders, Mercy Home for Boys and Girls, a residential care facility for youths in Chicago, gave an overview of how their partnership works. Focusing on helping residents to decide on post-secondary education options, they actively take teens on school or vocational visits. They also use programs such as the 'Do college for a day' scheme, which is run by the Elmhurst honors students.

Another key element of high-impact learning is preparing students for the workplace. It's Important for them to know what they are good at. Students need to know what an employer is looking for and how to communicate their ideas.

Elmhurst Undergraduate student Jessica Mueller gave a moving and inspiring speech which had some of the audience wiping tears from their eyes. She spoke frankly about her childhood experiences and how they influenced her project which took place at the Mercy Home. She explained how her work there provided her with a new appreciation of applied and high-impact learning. To her, it's not about the classroom, it's about learning her strengths, her passions and sharing experiences. Afterall, students remember the things they do better than anything they learn in a classroom.

Encouraging innovation through collaboration between students and community, government and business organisations: it's a win - win situation. [SG]

## Training future leaders

Mary Kay Mulvaney and her colleagues led a lively session on integrating high-impact educational practices and experiential education on Thursday afternoon.

At Elmhurst College's Center of Professional Excellence, Chicago, USA, they believe that a successful honors program is about learning what's beyond the classroom as much as what goes on inside it. Honors students are already academically strong when they arrive in the classroom; getting real world experience is what's going to help to develop them into future leaders. It's about creating education that is relevant to the individual and to their professional preparation.



# LEGO time!

How do you build a LEGO house with eleven people who each have a specific task and are not allowed to talk with each other? That was the task Simon Kavanagh of the Danish KaosPilot project put to the people with today. And it proved to be a tough challenge. While one participant was trying their best to make sure only two people were working on the second layer of the building, the other one was frustrated as that layer needed to be only red. But how to make that clear to each other?

Simon Kavanagh was an art teacher in Dublin before he found himself working in multimedia during the dotcom bubble in the nineties. "There were no textbooks on how to work in such a new field. We made a lot of mistakes but I can say those years taught me more than everything I learned before." Going back to academia, Kavanagh found out it hadn't developed its curricula since he left. "That's why I wanted to do something totally new." In letting students build a LEGO house together under these circumstances, Kavanagh learns them to work in a totally new environment. "Teachers no longer possess all the knowledge you need." [TC]





## Realising dreams

"When I visit the Netherlands of course I want to see a windmill, but that's not the memory I want to bring back." Professor Kevin Dean from West Chester University in Pennsylvania offers his students the chance to do part of their curriculum in South-Africa. Not only will they provide community service, the honors program is focusing on community-based research. Kevin Dean is not the only one offering these international learning experience. Similar programs are being organized in Ohio and Shippensburg University in Pennsylvania.

"We want to offer intellectual labor and challenge our students with complex, contemporary global issues," Kim Klein (Shippensburg) tells us. Students have to participate in communities with which the American universities partner. Belize, Dominican Republic and South-Africa all seem attractive holiday destinations but that is not what the program's intention. "We specifically go to communities to ask how our research can help them," Kevin Dean says. "For example, we ran a program in which we asked women in South-Africa about the dreams they have. They were very recognizable dreams like becoming a teacher, or doctor, or having a family. With that knowledge in hand, we managed to get them a counselor to guide them. Now, that's a memory you want to bring back." [TC]

What was the most inspiring thing you did yesterday?



*"I was really inspired by Simon Kavanagh's Lego session. It was a great creative way to learn how to work as a team and sort out problems."*

**Bernice Braid**, Long Island University, New York, USA.

What was your goal for attending the conference?



*"I came here to give the City as Text Masterclass, to present the results and get to know this beautiful city – we've walked around the entire city!"*

**Sara Quay**, Endicott College, Boston, USA



## Excited about excellence

Keynote speaker Marca Wolfensberger wasn't afraid to start the last day of the honors conference with a tough question: Why do we invest in talent development?

The first part of her answer was of a practical nature: to improve our economy, to deliver innovative graduates who are prepared for the different skills the future will require, and to be competitive now that education ranking has become increasingly important.

The second part of her answer focused on ideology. Investing in talent development will benefit society by creating educated people who follow their passion. It will promote democracy because everyone gets the education they need. It allows for respectful debate

and young people who dare to be leaders. But most of all, it will bring happiness because students who know their talents and feel they do what they are good at will thrive and be naturally able to excel. However, there is a dark side to the moon. Young people are increasingly burdened through expectations and (fear of) failing.

How does education deal with failure? Isn't it more interesting to teach people how to deal with failure instead of making sure they never fail?

The principle 'honors education', which is the focus of this conference, was introduced in America during the Roaring Twenties. Even then, the democracy argument was very strong. The idea that excellence rather than safety could boost democracy started to take shape. During the Cold War, loss of prestige and looking





vulnerable became a worry. This led to a rethinking of education, to a focus on excellence in various fields and towards raising world leaders. Honors programs sprung up all over the country. Today these programs are very competitive. Keeping in line with the ranking argument, the development of honors may be an answer to that trend, as well as a possible solution to the brain drain that plagues some areas.

Wolfensberger finds that international collaboration and exchange of students, as well as teachers, is the beating heart of our excellence. She asks: "Isn't it wonderful that honor education is spreading? That more and more students get a tailor-made education? For a problem to

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## "Why do we invest in talent development?"

be solved, a goal to be achieved or an innovation to be completed, a lot of work has to be put in by professionals first, but those moments are very precious. We can help our students reach those moments of inspiration."

In her search for honors pedagogies, Wolfensberger found striking similarities between the Dutch and American pedigree of excellence. For excellence to be achieved, three pillars need to support education. The first is 'creating community', the second 'enhancing academic competence' and the third is 'offering bounded freedom'. The last is of vital importance when motivating students and an important tool in educating

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youngsters to answer the question: What makes my life worth living?

The second Keynote speaker of the day, Ron Bormans, dared to step away from honors for a moment, and explained Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences' philosophy as follows: "Excellence should not be for the elite but for all. What excellence means is different for everybody. Therefore, the individual concept that is excellence, needs to be translate to the individual." A statement that touched on an important principle that Wolfensberger also mentioned: dignity of difference.

As an example he named a student whose talent was not recognized when she inquired about the honors

program, but who went on to write a fantastic final thesis about how honors and non-honor students see the program. She found that honors students saw themselves as internally motivated, as people who want to enhance competences, enjoy working with others and

do it because it's fun. Non-honor students, however, viewed them differently. Their perception of honor education was that it is something you do to boost your resume or to differentiate from other students.

Bormans went on to say that there is still a lot of work to do, when

talent is not being recognized. "Luckily, some students flourish even without support. Which supports our view that excellence is not just for the happy few. We must challenge each and every student to make the most of his or her talent. That's why we try to connect the

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"...excellence is  
not just for the  
happy few."





concept of excellence with professional education. And why we challenge them with complex multidisciplinary projects. We want them to act and think independently, as a person and as a professional.”

After the Keynotes, Marga Wolfensberger joined her colleague (and fellow infectious enthusiast) John Zubizarreta for a workshop on motivation, aptly named ‘Are you excited about honors’. Participants were asked:

- ▶ Why are we here?
- ▶ How do we recognize motivation?
- ▶ How do we promote motivation among honors faculty and students?

The answer to those questions wasn’t just spelled out, but played out with motivational exercises. When you put people together and give them a challenge, you create motivation. Almost acting their way through the work-

shop, Wolfensberger and Zubizarreta played out different modelling exercises. By splitting the class up in groups, they created excitement through perceived conflict and provoking reactions from their teacher students.

Were they excited about honors? You bet they were!

[JB]













## A nudge in the right direction

Can excellent students give a boost to curriculum development? This was the question posed by three students from Fontys University of Applied Sciences, Eindhoven, on Friday morning in the first part of a research-themed session.

Engineering students Diviya Kanagalingam, Deep Raj Khadka and Micheal Kruger - all part of Fontys' PROUD honors program ([see Sidebar](#)), started the session with a poll: how many participants had ever tried to evaluate their honors program? Only two hands went up, paving the way for some interesting discussion.

They presented their research, which posed the hypothesis that PROUD students are more experienced, have the skills needed to be a professional engineer and can help to change curriculums through their experiences. Their findings were that their hypothesis was supported: PROUD students can and do boost the curriculum by bringing back what they've learned during industry placements to adjust the program so that it's more relevant to the current needs of the workplace. They are also more concerned about the quality of their own education. »

focusing on work by Arie de Wild, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, and his study on Nudging. Funded by the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, the study aimed to find ways to help change the way in which people teach to get the best out of their students.

A nudge is a subtle intervention that tempts people to make certain decisions while still allowing freedom of choice. An example would be playing Spanish music in a supermarket with the aim to increase sales of Spanish wine. De Wild's research examined the application of nudges in higher education using four experiments - defined by students themselves - that measured the effect that nudging had on them. The results of some of these experiments were not as expected, so further work needs to be done.

Unbeknown to his audience, De Wild was also using them as subjects in an experiment to illustrate his work. Upon entering the room, people were given a red or green piece of paper. The red paper informed the participant that the presenter could ask them questions at any time; a frowning face told them 'you're not safe'. The green paper on the other hand told participants that they were 'safe' because the presenter was not allowed to ask them any questions today. His hypothesis was that those with the red papers would sit at the back, while those with the green would be comfortable sitting at the front. His hypothesis was not confirmed, probably due to the very small sample size: the audience did not seem to choose their seats based on what colour paper they had been given. However, as Einstein said, "The important thing is not to stop questioning"". [SG]

Designed for students by students, the Program for Outstanding Development - PROUD - finds ways to challenge high-performance students and keep them interested in their studies. PROUD students do paid work in companies alongside their studies to gain professional experience. Students are required to excel at project leadership, research, multi-disciplinary interaction and critical thinking.



a frowning face  
told them 'you're  
not safe'.





# *Giving honor a place to live*



Among the various workshops and challenges presented during this conference, one was very special in nature. Bachelor Architecture students from the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences were given the monster task of redesigning existing vacant living space on the Westerwagestraat in Rotterdam, for honor student housing in just two days. Having to present their designs at the last session of the conference, the students worked through the night to complete their designs and scale models. Knowing they would be presenting to architecture legend Herman Hertzberger on Friday.

Divided into eight groups of three students and under the watchful eye of Remko Remijnse from 2B4-Architects, the students brought their vision to life. Linda Frost provided much inspiration on Thursday, showing the students what already exists in the world of honor student living in her session on Thursday. Having done extensive research on the matter, the students couldn't have wished for a better expert to explain to them what works and what doesn't. Although she did challenge them to improve on existing examples, and to make the concept their own.

The students were told to incorporate the character of the city, the building and the honors program into their design. And of course to make it a place that honor students would want to live in.

The first group focussed on the needs of the students. Private sleeping and study areas, but sharing all other living quarters. They wanted to promote interaction and therefore designed shared work and living areas. Also present: a coffee bar, relaxing area and roof garden. Linda Frost commented that she loved how the washing machines weren't hidden in the basement, like they often are in the US, and that the students were given a great view. Herman Hertzberger criticized the idea of separating the functions of different spaces, calling it a bit old fashioned.

Who is this student? Asked group number two. They perceived honor students as interactive people, with an active social life. They combined those social needs with the need for study facilities and designed a 'social core'. And just like the first group, they got rid of the smaller, existing building to aid the view. Placing the accent on living together, the students designed stairways between the different living rooms. »













A feature Linda Frost loved. Herman Hertzberger once again didn't hold back in his criticism, telling the students their design reminded him of a centre for elderly people.

The third group opened with a bang, of their model, on the floor. But thankfully they were quickly able to rebuild it. This group also divided the building into public and honors areas, but kept the existing restaurant. They opened one side of the building up to the boulevard and connected both towers with two diagonal bridges. Which again reminded Hertzberger of facilities for the handicapped. The architect said he was waiting for a realistic design for this economic crisis, or rather the new economic reality. Elaborate diagonal bridges were deemed as simply unrealistic.

The wrecking ball was left alone by group number four, who opted to connect the five existing buildings and make them whole. They wanted to include space for shops that will be useful for the students. A green area was created in the centre square and on the roof. And the middle part was given a glass wall. Invoking the criticism by Bruno Setola that the design felt a bit like a zoo, making the honor students the animals.

Sharing the building with the city, that was group five's main objective. They also included an exhibition area in their plan, and made the ground floor open to the public. Students would have different levels of privacy. The higher they go, the more private. Students could work (or teach) on the ground floor and perhaps make some money. Although Linda Frost noted that students are of course consumers themselves, and easily seduced to part with their limited funds.

Group six envisioned the honor students to both attract and share knowledge in their honor housing. They

designed flexible and open work spaces on the ground floor, where students and civilians alike could come to work, study, live, or just get a coffee. They continued the theme of 'stimulated interaction' with 'inspirational rooms' for brainstorming and collaborations. A library would exist for residents only. They were the only group to explicitly welcome teachers to the building. Hertzberger liked the idea of the shared flexible work spaces, but found the design a bit stiff. To him, architects should be the people with great ideas. They should not just produce a different version of something that already exists.

The honor housing project design by the seventh group consisted of two towers. In one, there would be exhibition space for students and the public on the ground floor. The bottom of the second tower featured a coffee house, which the students would run themselves. The first floor was meant to provide interaction, living and cooking. Leaving the higher floors available for sleeping and more private activities. A design that proved a little basic for the tastes of commenters.

Project X was the name of the final honor housing design. The group wanted to achieve a single building where students and teachers could interact, and which included both public and private areas. Students could start their own business inside the building, where space would be provided for them. Short stay rooms where students could work on projects together where a very original addition.

The students completed their designs in less than two days, a challenge many honor student would be intimidated by. That's why the audience gave each one a well deserved applause. [SG]









### *Masterclass Herzberger*

Herman Hertzberger was kind enough to share his wisdom with the students, in an impromptu masterclass that kept participants in their seat, and away from their drinks, long after the wrap up party had started. According to Hertzberger there are no bad students, only bad teachers. He praised the students for completing what he called 'an impossible assignment'.

He explained to the students that real architects have to compete for projects every week. That's why it's extremely important to give the best possible presentation (and keep your hands out of your pockets).

"People must have real ideas. And the real new ones should come from students. You view this too much as a project and not as a place where people will live. Have empathy with the target users, the honor students. Even if you're not an honor student yourself. When you get an assignment that states you should focus on interaction, why not ask: What does that mean? Be specific. Make it real. Ask yourself: How can I seduce people in terms of space organization. Which is what this was." Hertzberger was frank about what it means to be an architect in this day and age, but left a little room for big dreams. "Today it's terrible. Architects are selling themselves out completely just to get work. We should not become opportunistic, instead we must approach it as a science and continue to search for unique ideas. Never stop working, never stop learning. I didn't, and I'm 81 years old."







During the two days, Eve Hopkins is the conference host. Besides hosting the central sessions she ran around to see and hear as much as possible of what is going on. This column is a 'wrap up', a conclusion of the conference.



## *How to navigate your way to excellence*

**What I've learned from this Honors Conference 2013, Evoking Excellence in Honors Education is the following advices, tips & tricks, a little manual of directions. Taken from to the key note speeches and sitting in on workshops, here we go.**

Never lose the possibility of a good start. When you plan, you prepare and eventually you will progress. You have to see to be able to understand and to act upon. You will become confused, you will succumb to conflict, but don't despair, it will eventually lead you to collaboration. The chaos you encounter, please navigate through it, take risks and create a mistake-free zone in your process.

Also, create a space where it all happens, where you can hang out together. Don't forget the importance of a good outdoor space. Ask what is relevant and how? Ask for feedback and make everyone responsible. Find value instead of just achieving status. Create what is unique, relevant and valuable. Turn innovation into business. Make the happiness argument a serious one. In order for a project to be not only successful but also sustainable, create a community around it. Make your project excellent and accessible. Without trust, nothing will come of it.

**In short, be a TEAM:  
Together Each Achieves More.**









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