THE HONORS PROGRAM

These six students are among the participants in the Honors Program, begun in 1963 by the College of Arts and Sciences to provide a curriculum specifically tailored for the superior student. They and others have responded enthusiastically, even gratefully, to the educational challenge which the program offers the gifted.
Dr. Carlton Berenda lectures an honors colloquium, the high point of the program. The colloquia are limited to a dozen students and led by two professors from different disciplines.

Dr. Paul Ruggiers, David Ross Boyd professor of English and the director of the honors program, hopes to establish an endowment to provide scholarships in the future.

IN A LARGE state university like OU, one will find a conglomeration of academic abilities among its legion of students, including the very, very low and the very, very high. Some who have entered the University barely managed to squeeze into the top 75 percent of their class in high school and thus are eligible for admission; others are the cream of the intellectual crop—in the top one or two percent of their class, award winners, scholarship recipients, the academic all stars. Often the plodders are thrown with the scholastic swifties to no one's benefit.

In recognizing the need to provide an opportunity for the qualified student to flex his academic muscles fully, to realize his potential unimpeded by a pace which of necessity must be
HALLENGE THE GIFTED

generated to the average and which many of the brighter students find stifling, boring, the College of Arts and Sciences came up with the Honors Program. In stating the purpose of the program, its prospectus contains these words: "The aim... is to challenge the gifted student and to enable him to attain a deeper understanding of the intellectual goals of his tradition."

To direct the program, Dean William E. Livezey named David Ross Boyd Professor Paul Ruggiers, who now divides his time between his English classes in Kaufman Hall and the Honors office in the basement of Bizzell Library. From his subterranean cubicle Dr. Ruggiers administers a far-flung program embracing a score of departments and challenging the

gifted through three particular phases: general honors courses, the colloquium and the departmental honors.

GENERAL HONORS COURSES: The general courses begin on the freshman level and extend through the undergraduate curriculum. The classes are small, the pace is swift, the professors are the best. Entering freshmen with ACT scores of 24 or better or second-semester freshmen with an overall B average are eligible to enroll in honors courses. On completion of his work in the University College and his admission to the College of Arts and Sciences, each honors candidate is asked to make a formal application for full admission to the program. Thereafter he is required to maintain a 3.0 average in his overall work and a 3.25 average in his major field. In the College Honors aspect of the program, of which the general courses are part, a student must complete at least 15 hours of honors courses outside his major and minor. Nine of these hours must be beyond the freshman level of which three must be honors colloquium in the junior or senior year.

THE COLLOQUIUM: "The colloquium is the high point of the program," says Dr. Ruggiers. Offered for the first time this year, colloquia are limited to no more than a dozen students, and each is led by two professors from different fields. This semester one colloquium on the philosophical implications of the atomic theory on Western civilization is being taught by a chemistry professor and a philosophy professor.

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Honors which is led by an Honors Advisor in each department. 

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS: The participating department defines the terms of its honors offerings, but the student must complete at least six hours in departmental honors courses. In his last semester he must take a comprehensive written examination prepared and administered by the department and evaluated in cooperation with the Honors Council. The department assigns the senior honors student a special project which might entail a special research project or a directed reading program. The department may require a senior thesis and oral examination.

Students who do not wish to participate in the full program but who are qualified by grade average may be admitted to honors courses through special permission. The student’s final average determines the specific honors degree granted to him. A grade point of 3.25 entitles him to a bachelor’s degree with honors; 3.50, with high honors, and 3.75, with highest honors.

The students, with some reservations, dig the program:

“There’s a lot more discussion and competition in the honors courses. Often no consensus is reached. One must think for himself—deeply, critically and creatively—if he is to gain from the courses.”

“In the honors section there is more attention to detail. We sometimes get off the track and go off in another direction, exploring and feeling around. These sidetrips can be enormously valuable.”

“The good courses, the good instructors, the small classes are what attracted me. I didn’t enroll simply to be able to say that I was in the Honors Program, so I could feel elite or part of the frontal lobe set.”

“It’s stimulating. There is less sticking to an inflexible format—no feeling that we absolutely must cover every little paragraph in the text—and I like that.”

“You’re up against good competition, and I respond. One tends, I believe, to function at the level of his class.”

“Color the Honors Program successful and give it an A.”
Intended as a grand alliance of gifted students and superior teachers, the honors program provides an opportunity for intellectual stimulation and enrichment. Four of the professors who participate in the program are Dr. Kenneth Crook (above), David Ross Boyd professor of chemistry, who with Dr. Berenda leads a colloquium on the philosophical implications of atomic theory in western history; Robert Reigle (below), assistant professor of history, who teaches a general course, and Dr. Charles Reeves (at left in left photo), professor of classics, who with Dr. Tom Smith, associate professor of the history of science, leads a colloquium on the age of Pericles.