



BOSTON COLLEGE

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
MORRISSEY COLLEGE OF ARTS & SCIENCES

October 13, 2017

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing today to share important news about the path ahead for the Morrissey College Honors Program. I have decided, in consultation with the Provost and the President, that students in the class of 2021 will be the last group of first-year students admitted to the Honors Program. After the students currently enrolled in the Honors Program graduate, the Program will end. All current Honors Program students will have the opportunity to complete the program. Although course assignments and other details will need to be worked out, it is my intention that full-time Honors Program faculty members will have the opportunity to continue teaching in comparable full-time positions, even after the Program ends.

This decision comes after several years of deliberation about the future of the Honors Program. As you know, the Dean of the Morrissey College has served as the interim director of the Honors Program since January 2012. At that same time, a process began to renew the University Core Curriculum. Since 2012, this ongoing process of Core renewal has become a vital part of academic life at Boston College. As that Core renewal process has unfolded over the last several years, I have been giving careful thought to the role of the Honors Program in the Core Curriculum and in the life of Boston College at this moment in the history of the university.

The Dean of the College founded the Arts and Sciences Honors Program in 1958 with the aim of providing a more integrated and academically rigorous approach to a number of the subjects in the liberal arts curriculum required of all Boston College students. The heart of the program has long been a two-year sequence of Western Cultural Tradition seminars grounded in an integrated interdisciplinary approach to the great books central to the intellectual tradition that gave life to the university. A junior-year sequence of courses on the twentieth century and a senior-year thesis or capstone seminar requirement eventually joined the Western Cultural Tradition seminars to create the four-year Arts and Sciences Honors Program that currently exists.

When the Dean founded the Honors Program in 1958, the need for a highly selective program providing a distinctive approach to the university's liberal arts core seemed clear. The creation of the Honors Program was part of an effort to recruit superior students to Boston College and to promote the academic development of the university. In 2017, Boston College is a highly selective university with a challenging undergraduate academic program enrolling academically stronger students every year. The Scholar of the College and departmental honors programs provide students with the opportunity to do thesis projects with outstanding faculty scholars, and the Core renewal process has committed the university to making available

rigorous integrative interdisciplinary core experiences to all of our undergraduates. The pressing needs that led to creation of the Honors Program nearly 60 years ago no longer exist today.

Since the early 1970s, the College has also offered the Perspectives Program, which, like the Honors Program, is an integrated interdisciplinary Core program grounded in the great books of the Western intellectual tradition. A large number of our undergraduates fulfill their Philosophy and Theology core requirements through the Perspectives on Western Culture course (Perspectives I), and students who desire a four-year integrated liberal arts program can pursue such a course of study by completing Perspectives II-IV (Modernism and the Arts, Horizon of New Social Sciences, and New Scientific Visions). Even though the Arts and Sciences Honors Program will come to an end, the university remains committed to offering its students, through the four-year Perspectives Program, a distinctive interdisciplinary great books program with an integrative approach to the liberal arts, grounded in the Catholic intellectual tradition, and in service of the Jesuit, Catholic mission of the university.

With this letter I am also announcing a succession of leadership in the Perspectives Program and the launch of a process of renewal for Perspectives, which will take place within the larger context of our commitment to renewal of the Core Curriculum. Professor of the Practice of Philosophy Brian Braman has ably served as Director of the Perspectives Program since 1998. In the 2018-2019 academic year, Associate Professor of the Practice of the Humanities Chris Conostas will assume the role of Associate Director of the Perspectives Program, and he will succeed Professor Braman as Director of Perspectives in advance of the Fall 2019 semester. As an Honors Program alumnus and faculty member who is also an experienced teacher in the Perspectives Program, Professor Conostas is well suited to lead Perspectives forward in the years ahead. I am grateful to Professor Braman for the generous and dedicated service that he has provided for so many years and to Professor Conostas for his willingness to take on a new leadership role at an important moment of transition in this foundational Core program.

Beginning in the Spring 2018 semester, I plan to lead a faculty conversation that will explore how we might more deeply ground the Perspectives Program in its original interdisciplinary vision while also bringing it into dialogue with the experience we have gained through the last several years of Enduring Questions renewed core pilot courses. In a recently published essay entitled "The Recovery of Theology in a Political Mode," Professor Frederick Lawrence of our Theology Department described the origins of the Perspectives Program. He called attention to the importance of faculty formation in the program's success: "I believe the fact that Perspectives teachers eventually came to approximate the classic definition of the university as a *community* of scholars and learners within the multiversity was in large part due to ... the formation of its first couple of generations of teachers." He also noted that the program grew out of a conviction that "the renewal of liberal education for university undergraduates consisted in training students to read books worth reading and setting conditions in which they can form friendships based on understanding and loving special books together." It is my hope that these aspirations to a genuinely interdisciplinary conversation characterized by intellectual friendship and the formation of a community of teachers as scholars and learners will guide the work of Perspectives renewal that lies ahead.

The decisions announced in this letter reflect my conviction that, in many ways, the Boston College of 2017 has become the institution that the founders of the Arts and Sciences Honors Program dreamed of bringing into being. All of us who study, teach, and work today at this great university – an institution recognized as one of the most distinguished in the nation – owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the program’s leaders over the years, including the late Professor Albert Folkard, Fr. David Gill, S.J., Fr. Joseph Appleyard, S.J., and Professor Mark O’Connor, as well as to all the faculty members whose dedicated teaching and commitment to caring for their students have made studying in the Honors Program a transformative experience for so many.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Kalscheur, S.J." The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'G' and 'K'.

Gregory Kalscheur, S.J.
Dean