

Presentation by Elizabeth Farris to the UCA Board of Trustees, February 22, 2013
Permission to Name the Honors College after Dr. Norb Schedler

Mr. Chairman,
Members of the Board,
President Courtway, and
All Assembled,

Today I become a petitioner to the Board in asking for approval of the request to name the UCA Honors College for Dr. Norbert O. Schedler. Board Policy 402 specifies that when a naming request is made to the President he must appoint a study committee to evaluate it. Vice President Ronnie Williams chaired that committee and forwarded to the President a recommendation to approve. I am here to present the merits of this request.

Dr. Schedler, UCA Distinguished Professor Emeritus, founded the Honors College during my father's presidency. Dr. Schedler and Dad sat under the shade of a tree near the old Administration Building on a hot day in August of 1981. Dr. Schedler—Norb—wondered aloud to Dad, that, if the university could offer remedial courses to students who needed them, could it not also offer a comprehensive program for what he called the "severely gifted."

Norb had been talking up this idea with a handful of faculty, hoping that an honors college might help UCA recruit and retain talented students and improve the stature of the university as a whole. Dad went into his office, thought about it, and then wrote Norb a note that said, "I want one of those next year." Following a feasibility study Dad said "recruit your first class;" but despite his support, there were concerns about whether an honors college at UCA would work. How easy would it be to attract the "severely gifted"?

In the fall of 1982, Dr. Schedler brought to campus a class of just under sixty students with an average ACT score of 26.8. An honors center took shape in McAlister Hall, as did a four-year academic program that soon would rival features of private liberal arts colleges—small class sizes, close faculty/student relationships, mentored research, and the intense study of big-picture ideas. The program reflected Norb's own educational heritage. By May of 1986 the Honors College awarded a minor degree in Honors Interdisciplinary Studies to its first twelve graduates.

What has happened since? I had a chance to visit with Dr. Rick Scott, the current dean and Norb's partner for the past 28 years. His position as president of the National Collegiate Honors Council gives him a pretty good view of the national honors landscape. He told me that in the quarter century since graduating the first class, "the UCA Honors College has become one of the most fully realized examples of a living and learning community in honors education anywhere." This is striking when you consider that there are about 1,000 honors programs and 120 honors colleges in the United States. I looked carefully at the request Dr. Scott submitted to President Courtway. The evidence he lists of success in the Honors College is worth reading out loud:

- Recruiting now has four applications for every opening, and those admitted have average ACT scores of nearly 30 and average high school grade points over 4.0
- First year retention rates exceed 95% nearly every year
- More than 100 faculty at UCA work with Honors College students on individual research and creative projects each and every year
- Nearly 900 students have studied abroad or done formal research or internships, supported by Honors College TAG and URGE scholarships
- Over 80% go into medical school, law school or graduate school
- UCA's first Rhodes Scholar is Honors College graduate Rhett Martin; the college has also produced a Truman Scholar, Fulbright Scholars, Rotary Ambassadorial Scholars, and a Jack Kent Cooke Fellow
- The Honors College developed the first Honors Online Community in the United States, and held two national workshops on educational technology for National Collegiate Honors Council
- Honors faculty hold leadership positions in national and regional collegiate honors organizations, including the highest offices in the United States
- After the May Commencement this year, over 1430 students will have graduated from the UCA Honors College

I know Dad thought that founding the Honors College was a turning point in the academic life and reputation of UCA, and I think it is time to acknowledge Dr. Schedler's impact. Why now? The Honors College and Division of Advancement are working on a campaign to raise millions of dollars to endow scholarships for study abroad and undergraduate research. Naming the program will help rally support among alumni, faculty, and friends who want to say thanks. The Honors College celebrates its thirtieth anniversary this year, and next month Norb will celebrate his 80th birthday. The legacy of our university and that of Norb will forever be connected by the way his vision helped students and colleagues to flourish. I am asking today that we formalize this connection by approving the request to have at UCA, the Norbert O. Schedler Honors College. Thank you.