

New Leadership For



Albert Dorman Honors College

Louis I. Hamilton became Dean of NJIT's Albert Dorman Honors College on July 1, 2017. Dr. Hamilton joins NJIT from Drew University, where he had served as director of the Baldwin Honors Program since 2013 and where he oversaw a complete review and revision of the curriculum, standardized seminars with an emphasis on research-based learning, and initiated an annual assessment of student outcomes. He also expanded the cultural experiences for honors students and developed student research grants for the program, which resulted in student publications in peer-reviewed journals and student presentations at professional and undergraduate conferences.

At Drew, Dr. Hamilton also was Chair of the Department of Comparative Religion and was the founding director of the university's peer-reviewed journal of undergraduate research, *The Drew Review*. Additionally, he co-chaired the Digital Humanities Initiative and served as the first Director of its Digital Humanities Summer Institute, where undergraduates worked as faculty research assistants using various digital tools for urban, social, historical and language analysis.

He is an active researcher as well, with a focus on the cultural history of medieval Italy and the Mediterranean, and has significant writing and editing credits on the topic. Dr. Hamilton is himself the product of an honors education and holds a B.A. in history from Villanova University, an M.A. in history from University of Virginia, an M.Phil. and Ph.D. in medieval history from Fordham University and a licence in mediaeval studies from the Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies in Toronto. He was also a Fulbright Scholar in Rome, Italy.

Dr. Hamilton recently shared his thoughts about the Albert Dorman Honors College with Christina Crovetto, editor of *NJIT Magazine*.

Q. In your role as Dean, what are your immediate priorities?

A. The Honors College is strong and a top 10 public university honors college by one recent ranking. One of my key priorities is simply to understand the college over the next several months and engage in conversations with the president and provost, the other deans, with the faculty, with the staff here and the scholars themselves so that I can understand the college's strengths and weaknesses. Part of that process is also collecting and analyzing as much data as I can by working with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to understand how the college is working, how it's meeting the needs of the university and where this can be strengthened because even as a top 10 college, it has to continue to change and improve — that's just how it works. That's my immediate priority.

Beyond that, another goal is to begin to focus on the curriculum we offer to the

scholars. We have been very successful in attracting top students from New Jersey and nationally to the college, and we're most successful in those major areas where Honors has a clear curricular program to offer the students. As a result we've been most successful in the pre-health majors. That points to one of the great needs for the college: programs of distinction within every other college that appeal primarily to the honors applicant. That's what we need to focus on to get to that next level and really reach full maturity.

Q. What (or who) inspires you as a leader?

A. My mother would always say to us, "Am I raising a leader, or am I raising a follower?" For her, that meant, "Do you have the character to make the right choices and stand alone, and do you have the capacity to help others make the right choices?" My mother was my school

of leadership. Beyond that, the kinds of leaders I admired growing up were Martin Luther King, Jr., Dorothy Day and Robert F. Kennedy. Those were the kinds of people whom we admired: people who stood up for what was right when it was incredibly challenging to do so. That's the ethos I want for the Honors Scholars.

We have a leadership program at Albert Dorman Honors College and we hope to foster students who become leaders in their fields, which our alumni are, but we also want still more of our alumni to become leaders in society. How do you do that? How do you shape that character to ensure that all Dorman Honors alumni can become leaders in society? Leadership for me is about service. We want the scholars to cultivate the art of paying it forward, seeing themselves as leaders, as people who have been the beneficiaries of other people's generosity and sacrifices, and as people who want to and will pay it forward to their community — their

community in the immediate sense of here in University Heights, in a larger sense in their academic field, and nationally. I am motivated to shape students that way; this has always motivated my pedagogy and it continues to motivate me in my role here as dean.

Q. What distinguishes Albert Dorman Honors College from other honors colleges?

A. What distinguishes the college nationally, among the things that make it a top 10 honors college, is the robustness of our service requirement as well as the academic level of our scholars. On the new SAT scale, the incoming class will

have an average score of 1460. For a public institution, we're essentially right up against the best private institutions in the country in terms of our students. The strong commitment to service (now 60 hours per year) is really a statement about the purpose of an honors college at a public university. We are committed to serving the citizens of Newark and New Jersey.

There was a great study that was published recently in *The New York Times* about the role an NJIT education has in transforming students'

A group of Albert Dorman Honors College students spent their spring break in remote regions of Nicaragua with Global Brigades, working to improve local health care efforts.

socioeconomic status. We certainly play that role for our students in the Dorman Honors College. We are a big part of NJIT's transformative capacity and so that likewise distinguishes us nationally. We're one piston in that engine of transformation.

Q. How is Albert Dorman Honors College partnering with business and industry to the benefit of students?

A. Dorman Honors is the home of the Center for Leadership and Professional Development. Within it, we have a program that Ms. Alicia Fegghi has initiated called Leaders for Hire, and



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that's working directly with local business people to give our students networking experience but also career advice and guidance. We're also in the beginning stages of evaluating our volunteer requirements so that they can become service-learning opportunities, and we are exploring ways to collaborate more directly with the Enterprise Development Center and the New Jersey Innovation Institute. One of the primary ways in which we collaborate with the business community is through the people we bring onto campus for the colloquium series. The larger business community, regionally and nationally, wants to be in front of these scholars and our scholars want to be in front of the business community, so we create opportunities throughout the year for a variety of networking events.

Q. What are your thoughts about strengthening relationships with alumni?

A. Our alumni are such an impressive group and I have already had the opportunity to have conversations with some of our alumni who are themselves the founders of, or parts of highly successful international businesses (such as Avaap, Lockheed Martin, Microsoft, Amazon, and Google). They have been very supportive of the college. We all want to deepen our future partnerships: our alumni want to create opportunities for their future fellow alumni. We're going



Dean Louis Hamilton meets with members of the Student Senate.

to revive the Honors Alumni Association and maintain a robust alumni presence on the Board of Visitors to make the Honors Alumni Association a bigger part of the college going forward. At present they are an important part of the large business network that we reach out to, and they continue to reach out to us so that we bring them on campus for networking events, Leaders for Hire and for other professional development events as well.

Q. What do you hope to achieve in the next five years?

A. My goal is to have a distinctive honors curriculum fully implemented in five years. In the next year, we will be laying the foundation for those curricular changes and then we will begin to implement them. In five years, realistically, we would just be about to graduate our first class that would have

gone through this revised curriculum, they would be juniors in five years. This would build upon what others have accomplished before me – but adding distinct and distinguishing honors programs within all the colleges. I would like a curriculum that positions the Honors College as a good neighbor; first of all, within University Heights and then outwardly, graduating scholars who have a character as well as an intellectual capacity that makes them stand out as Dorman Scholars so that whether they end up in California or in Europe or in Asia or in New Jersey, people will recognize the distinguishing characteristics of a Dorman Scholar, which should be a commitment to service leadership and the highest academic qualifications. To imagine, in five years, graduating a class that has been shaped that way would be really exciting to me. ■