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In January, AAC&U’s campaign for Liberal Education and America’s Promise, or LEAP, will reach the halfway mark. We launched the initiative in January 2005 and promised to continue through January 2015, AAC&U’s centennial anniversary. The ultimate goal, as I hope readers already know, is to make the aims and intended outcomes of liberal education the preferred framework for all students’ college learning, whatever their background, career aspirations, or life circumstances. (For additional background and information on the LEAP initiative, please visit www.aacu.org/leap).

The current national focus on access and completion—the twin priorities for bills pending in the House and the Senate—provides a sobering reminder that LEAP still has a long way to go to achieve that goal. While it is now a policy priority to ensure “some form of postsecondary learning” for all or most Americans, both the House and Senate bills go out of their way to avoid making any nuanced distinctions between a high-quality college education and forms of learning that are, by design, short-term, closely focused on a specific set of job skills, or disconnected from any larger responsibility for either the student’s overall development or the future of our society.

This studied lack of policy attention to what really matters in college might be taken as a backhanded compliment to higher education: “whatever you’re doing, it’s a good thing! Do more of it for more people!” But, in fact, this “whatever” mentality is already moving huge amounts of federal money to programs that serve short-term demands rather than long-term U.S. needs and interests. For example, disproportionate amounts of Pell Grant support for low-income students already flow to programs that used to be called “trade school” but now have been relabeled “college.” The result, for many, is time and money spent badly. Investing citizens’ tax dollars in illiberal education is the equivalent of bundling “liar loans” into securities and trading them for huge profits. If we keep doing it, we can expect similar depletion of our most important national resource: American capabilities.

If the nation is going to make a huge new investment in postsecondary learning—as it must—then we need, as a society, to establish a clear understanding of the kind of learning that will build meaningful opportunity for Americans and a vibrant future for our society. This is what the LEAP initiative is all about. It has brought educators and employers together around a shared and contemporary conception of essential learning outcomes. Graduates who achieve those outcomes will be liberally educated—and prepared for a demanding economy, as well.

The counterargument we can expect from policy makers is that today’s students need jobs. Implicitly and often explicitly, they resist liberal education as a luxury that an economically anxious country just can’t afford. In fact, it’s just what an economically anxious country needs most!

For too long, proponents of liberal education have accepted the basic premise of this policy resistance, agreeing or even insisting that liberal education is really about the love of learning—“learning for its own sake”—and, therefore, different in both ethos and spirit from the kinds of learning that make students employable and promotable. Or, ignoring the economic point, we have insisted that liberal education is a necessary preparation for democracy and a self-governing citizenry. Notwithstanding the very real merits of these positions, they have hardly won the day. Even as the United
States declares college a prerequisite for opportunity and success, the nation has gone “agnostic” on what students need to accomplish while in college.

Both this issue of *Liberal Education*, and the LEAP initiative with which it is connected, propose that we need to make—and support—a very different argument about the importance and value of liberal learning.

In the twentieth century, proponents of liberal learning drew a sharp dividing line between “practical” or career studies and the “true liberal arts.” Today, we contend, we need to erase that distinction and insist that liberal education is, among its other virtues, practical. In a turbulent economy where industries are awash in change and where the combination of inventiveness and judgment is key to any organization’s future, the most practical possible education is one that prepares students to make sense of complexity, to chart a course of action that takes full account of context, to engage in continuous learning, and to take responsibility for the quality and integrity of what they do.

In the words of the Clark/AAC&U conference whose papers are synthesized in this issue, a good liberal education should take pride in preparing students for “effective practice.” And how well it actually does that needs to become one of the hallmarks of excellence in this new global century.

Richard Freeland, who, with colleagues at Clark University and with me, designed the Clark/AAC&U conference, calls on us all to recognize that engagement with the world of practice helps us fulfill the most enduring goals of liberal education: deep understanding, the integration of ideas with values, and thoughtful reflection on one’s responsibilities to self and others. Building from years of research into successful intelligence, Tufts’s Robert Sternberg shows how and why attention to a fuller set of goals for learning not only helps us make better decisions, but also allows us to break free of the exclusions that have characterized “elite” education for much too long. Vanderbilt’s Janet Eyler underscores the importance of experiential learning as a catalyst for much that is important and powerful in a life-enhancing liberal education. But she also points to the qualitative dimensions that are too often neglected when we add a “field” component to the undergraduate curriculum.

I was also struck that the wonderful paper from Miami of Ohio’s David Hodge, Marcia Baxter Magolda, and Carolyn Haynes, and the fine paper from our colleagues at Lawrence University—which was submitted to *Liberal Education* outside the conference format—both make, in very different institutional contexts, the same essential point. If our goal is to teach students how to see themselves as makers of both meaning and important decisions, then the curriculum needs to lead them, in a purposeful and developmental way, through forms of learning that model the intended capabilities and provide successively more challenging ways of practicing them.

The Clark/AAC&U conference showed that we know what we need to help students achieve and that we also understand how to mobilize educational resources to help students apply their learning to unscripted questions and real-world contexts. But the policy challenge still remains. Collectively, we need to create new engagement with policy leaders to help them think harder—and wider—about what it will take to reap the full benefit of the national investment in postsecondary learning.

It took a long time to persuade policy makers that a rigorous high school curriculum was the best predictor of college success. But schools leaders have finally won that battle. Now we need to persuade policy makers that a rigorous and multidimensional college curriculum is the best predictor of economic success. Embracing—and deepening—the strong connections between liberal learning and effective practice is a necessary first step.—CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER

Even as the United States declares college a prerequisite for opportunity and success, the nation has gone “agnostic” on what students need to accomplish while in college.
As part of the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, AAC&U is convening a series of invitational forums designed to draw public and campus attention to the LEAP vision for liberal education in the twenty-first century. The forums are designed to engage academics, business leaders, K–12 educators, policy makers, and community leaders with the essential learning outcomes and high-impact educational practices identified in the LEAP initiative. The programs draw on the innovative work of campuses, and also call upon key stakeholders to provide leadership for carrying action agendas forward in specific state and regional contexts. LEAP forums are supported by generous grants from the Charles Engelhard Foundation and the John Templeton Foundation, and by contributions from participating and hosting institutions.

The third LEAP forum, cosponsored and hosted in Massachusetts by Clark University, was focused on “Liberal Education and Effective Practice.” Over two days in mid-March, participants considered ways of enhancing undergraduate programs in the arts and sciences in order to empower students to be not only sophisticated, well-informed thinkers but also effective doers. Sessions were organized around the presentation and discussion of a series of papers commissioned specially for the occasion; versions of those papers are published here in an expanded Featured Topic section, following a more in-depth overview of the Clark/AAC&U forum itself. The issues explored at the conference were anticipated in an article written by Richard Freeland, one of the conference’s principal organizers and now Massachusetts commissioner of higher education, and published here last winter. We’re very glad of this opportunity to follow up.

In the abbreviated Perspectives section, an article by four faculty members of Lawrence University—all from different disciplines—describes an innovative curricular response to the growing use of technology to create and sustain an “electronic tether” between students to their parents. Through engagement with forms of “individualized learning,” Lawrence students have been able to achieve greater intellectual and emotional autonomy. Finally, rounding out the issue is an appeal for “empowerful” teaching, for teaching that leads students to engage in personally meaningful ways with their own education.—DAVID TRITELLI
AAC&U MEMBERSHIP 2009
1,210 members

DOC 17%
ASSOC 11%
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*Specialized schools, state systems and agencies, international affiliates, and organizational affiliates

MASTERS 29%
BACC 27%

Upcoming Meetings

• January 20–23, 2010
AAC&U Annual Meeting:
The Wit, the Will . . .
and the Wallet: Supporting
Educational Innovation,
Shaping Our Global Futures
Washington, DC

• February 18–20, 2010
General Education and
Assessment: Maintaining
Momentum, Achieving New Priorities
Seattle, Washington

• March 25–27, 2010
Faculty Roles in
High-Impact Practices
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

AAC&U invites contributions to its
Gallery of Writing, a dedicated space
within the larger online exhibition of
writing hosted by the National Council
of Teachers of English (see www.
galleryofwriting.org). The form or
mode of writing is up to the writer; a
submission might be an e-mail message,
a letter, an essay, a poem, or a digital
composition, and it might be in video,
visual, or some other format. The theme
of the AAC&U Gallery is the meaning
of liberal education in the twenty-first
century. The Gallery of Writing was
officially unveiled on October 20,
2009, as part of the National Day on
Writing, a celebration highlighting
the variety and importance of writing
daily life. More information about
the AAC&U Gallery is available
online at www.aacu.org/gallery.

New Director of
Project Kaleidoscope

AAC&U and Project Kaleidoscope
(PKAL) have announced that Dr.
Susan Elrod, professor of biological
sciences and director of the Center for
Excellence in Science and Mathematics
Education at California Polytechnic
State University, will be the new di-
rector of Project Kaleidoscope. Elrod
will assume the PKAL directorship in
January 2010 and will serve as a member
of AAC&U’s senior staff. This appoint-
ment culminates a year of transition
planning for a new and continuing
affiliation between AAC&U and PKAL.
More information is available online at
www.pkal.org.

AAC&U membership 2009

liberal.education nation

A New Blog from the LEAP Initiative

As part of the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative,
AAC&U has launched a new blog called “liberal.education nation.” The
blog features postings and perspectives on liberal education—how it is changing, why it is so
important in today’s world, and what people are
saying about it around the country and the world.

Debra Humphreys, vice president for communications and public affairs
at AAC&U, is the blog’s contributing editor. Guest contributors are Helen
Chen, research scientist at the Stanford Center for Innovations in Learning;
Troy Duster, Silver Professor of Sociology and director of the Institute for
the History of the Production of Knowledge at New York University; Ashley
Finley, director of assessment for learning at AAC&U; Kevin Hovland,
director of global learning and curricular change at AAC&U; George Kuh,
Chancellor’s Professor of Higher Education at Indiana University-Bloom-
ington; Nancy O’Neill, director of programs in the Office of Education
and Institutional Renewal at AAC&U; Carol Geary Schneider, president
of AAC&U; and David Tritelli, editor of Liberal Education.

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www.aacu.org

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The Clark/AAC&U Conference on Liberal Education and Effective Practice during his tenure as the Jane and William Mosakowski Distinguished Professor of Higher Education at Clark University. He is currently the commissioner of higher education for Massachusetts.

A central goal of the conference was dialogue between educators and successful professionals who had experienced a traditional liberal education as undergraduates.
Effective Practice

Liberal Education and Effective Practice
5. How might a restructuring of liberal education to promote effective practice impact efforts to foster academic success among students from diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds? (Paper: “Race-Conscious Student Engagement Practices and the Equitable Distribution of Enriching Educational Experiences”; Author: Shaun Harper)

Summary versions of the commissioned papers are published in this issue of Liberal Education. The complete essays can be found on the Web site Clark has created as a resource for those interested in the link between liberal education and effective practice (www.clarku.edu/leep).

Points of consensus
Two days of intense discussion produced a remarkable level of agreement among both academics and practitioners. In particular, conference participants came together around four fundamental points. First, as Tufts University’s Bob Sternberg argued in our first session, there is a less than ideal alignment between the professed goals of liberal education and both the learning experiences we typically offer within the arts and sciences and the concept of intelligence that underlies such programs. If we are serious about preparing our students to engage competently and constructively in adult organizational, social, economic, and civic contexts, it is imperative that we focus attention on the relationship among our purposes, our curricula, and our pedagogies.

Second, a traditional liberal education is very successful in developing some of the skills and modes of inquiry needed for effective practice, including mastery of complex intellectual material and the capacity for analytic reasoning. At the same time, conventional educational practices are less effective in fostering other essential qualities, such as applying ideas in authentic settings, integrating materials from diverse disciplines to solve unforeseen problems or to construct new knowledge, and working with others in problem-solving situations.

Third, complementing conventional educational practices with nontraditional learning opportunities can significantly enhance the capacity of undergraduates to translate ideas and values into effective action. These opportunities include various forms of experiential education—internships, co-ops, service learning, undergraduate research, and community-based research—that conference participant George Kuh calls “high-impact” practices.

Fourth, while some forms of experiential education, such as study abroad and undergraduate research, fit easily into conventional programmatic structures, internships, co-op placements, and service-learning opportunities have proved more difficult to integrate fully into undergraduate education. We have much work to do within the liberal arts and sciences to find ways to link these powerful learning experiences to established curricular patterns.

When, at the end of the conference, we asked ourselves if we were persuaded that pursuing the kinds of changes we had been discussing made sense for programs of liberal education, one of our practitioner-participants, venture capitalist and one-time Harvard history major Rick Burnes, commented that this was a “no-brainer.” Wellesley College President Emerita Diana Chapman Walsh and her coauthor and former dean, Lee Cuba, offered a similar conclusion. After thinking carefully about the educational potential of these changes, Walsh and Cuba wrote that “one scratches one’s head and wonders why everyone doesn’t just do it.” The answer, they suggested, takes the form of a classic double bind: “faculty support
is a sine qua non for significant progress, and widespread faculty support is elusive at best.”

The conference devoted much attention to matters of great potential interest to faculty. Vanderbilt University Professor Janet Eyler presented a wealth of research supporting the proposition that experiential education not only fosters the capacity for effective practice but also enhances cognitive development in traditional academic terms. Miami University President David Hodge and his collaborators, Marcia Baxter Magolda and Carolyn Haynes, showed how restructuring Miami University’s honors program around experiences that develop intellectual maturity, a secure sense of identity, and the capacity for successful social relationships greatly increased the engagement of undergraduates in their education. George Kuh, along with Connecticut College’s Armando Bengochea and Wesleyan University’s Steven Stemler, offered both data and anecdotes demonstrating that “high-impact” learning experiences can enhance the success of undergraduate programs in successfully engaging students of color.

Ongoing challenges

Despite the availability of persuasive evidence regarding the educational value of experiential learning, our discussions returned again and again to the widespread lack of professorial interest in pedagogical matters. Given this reality, several participants suggested that the most constructive way forward for leaders wishing to foster links between liberal education and effective practice is to avoid direct challenges to existing programmatic structures, while engaging faculty in discussions about the educational outcomes they consider important and in assessing the effectiveness of current programs in achieving those outcomes. Carefully constructed self-study experiences—what William Sullivan of the Carnegie Foundation called “learning communities”—can lead academic professionals, who are, after all, serious educators, to conclusions they might resist if presented as starting points.

Conference discussions also drew attention to sources of resistance to change beyond faculty attitudes and priorities. Several participants with administrative experience noted that integrating “high-impact” practices into undergraduate programs can be hard, time-consuming work. It can also be costly. If administrative leaders want faculty members to devote energy to this effort, they need to create space and offer rewards for doing so, while also committing the necessary resources. As former Purdue University President Martin Jischke pointed out, educational questions cannot be considered separately from other aspects of institutional life, including priorities attached to scholarly productivity and community service. Academic institutions are social, cultural, and economic systems and the behavior of faculty and staff will reflect the values and priorities of those systems. Paul Grogan, president of the Boston Foundation, added an important cautionary note: colleges and universities must not permit an emphasis on effective practice to lead to perceptions of diminished academic depth and rigor among prospective students and their parents.

In the end, our conference did not find ready solutions to the challenges of linking liberal education with a concern for effective practice. Nonetheless, we were impressed and encouraged by examples of institutions that have done impressive work in this arena, and we came away from our time together with a heightened commitment to advancing this cause in the institutional and professional settings to which each of us is connected. We were also energized by encountering a rich body of research, thought, and experience that provides a compelling case for doing so—and by the urgings of our practitioner colleagues to take this matter seriously. In sharing our ideas with the broader academic community through the papers that follow and the additional materials available on the Clark Web site, we hope to lend support to colleagues who share our belief in the value of this cause and to enlist others to join the movement.

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aacu.org, with the author’s name on the subject line.
In 1968, I was a highly motivated college student taking an introductory psychology course. Having done poorly on IQ tests as a child, I wanted to figure out why my scores were so low. Things did not go as I had hoped they would. I received a grade of C in the course, and my professor commented to me that there was a famous Sternberg in psychology—and that it was obvious there would not be another one. I switched my major to math; but after failing the midterm exam in the introductory course for math majors, I decided that, actually, a C looked pretty good, relatively speaking.

A decade and a half later I was chairing the department at Yale in which the professor who gave me that C was still teaching, and three and a half decades later I found myself president of the American Psychological Association, the largest association of psychologists in the world. I commented to the past president, a Stanford professor, that it seemed to me ironic that the president of the organization had received a C in introductory psychology. He gave me a look of astonishment, and commented that he, too, had received a C in introductory psychology.

The kind of experience I had in introductory psychology is by no means limited to that course or even to psychology. Many low-level courses, graduate as well as undergraduate, are taught in such a way that the goal seems to be nothing more than the memorization of facts and concepts. In some schools, especially those with large classes, virtually all testing is done in short-answer or multiple-choice format. What is the problem?

I tell the story of my introductory psychology experience because it illustrates something that, at some level, we all know. The skills people need to succeed in their careers do not always closely resemble the skills needed to succeed in college courses, especially introductory courses. Life rarely presents multiple-choice or short-answer problems. As the report How Should Colleges Assess and Improve Student Learning? (AAC&U 2008) makes clear, this is not merely my own personal opinion: employers overwhelmingly reject multiple-choice tests and other traditional instruments of assessment. Moreover, the competencies such tests measure are not the ones employers value. What, then, are the skills they value? College Learning for the New Global Century (AAC&U 2007) identifies a number of such skills, including inquiry and analysis, ethical reasoning and action, and synthesis. In this article, I try to boil down the rather long list of highly valued competencies into a set of key skills needed for school and job success.

I argue that these are the principal skills that colleges need to develop in order to produce the active, educated citizenry of the future.

The WICS model
The overall model for liberal education is called WICS, which is an acronym for Wisdom, Intelligence, and Creativity Synthesized. The basic idea is that citizens of the world need creativity to form a vision of where they want to go and to cope with change in the environment, analytical intelligence to ascertain whether their creative ideas are good ones, practical intelligence to implement their ideas and to persuade others of the value of those ideas, and wisdom in order to ensure that the ideas will help achieve some ethically based common good, over the long and short terms, rather than just what is good for them and their families and friends.

The WICS model differs from the traditional model for liberal education, which emphasizes primarily memory and analytical skills.
Creativity Synthesized: Liberal Education
Traditional methods of teaching as well as tests of conventional ability and achievement tend to emphasize stored knowledge of facts and basic skills. Such knowledge and skills are important. One cannot think creatively to go beyond what is known, for example, if one does not have the knowledge to move forward. Similarly, one cannot apply what one knows if one knows nothing. The problem is that stored knowledge can be inert and essentially unusable. Analytical skills can help one evaluate existing ideas, but they cannot help one come up with ideas of one's own; nor can they help one adjust to a world that is changing rapidly and that leaves behind people who cannot flexibly adapt to its shifting demands.

The risk of the traditional system is that it creates self-fulfilling prophecies, whereby those who do not test well are not given full opportunities in college to succeed. WICS is a framework that can help us get beyond self-fulfilling prophecies in admissions, instruction, and assessment.

Admissions through WICS

Is it possible that many students who are not now being identified as having impressive credentials for college or graduate work might, in fact, be so identified if they were assessed in a way that looked at creative and practical, as well as analytical, forms of skills? While at Yale, I led the Rainbow Project, a research study that sought to answer this question (Sternberg and the Rainbow Project Collaborators 2006). A wide variety of studies have shown the utility of the SAT as a predictor of college success, especially as measured by grade point average. The Rainbow measures were designed to supplement the SAT Reasoning Test, which now measures reading, mathematical, and writing skills. (At the time of the study, the writing component had not yet been added to the SAT.)

The Rainbow Project collected data at fifteen schools across the United States, including eight four-year colleges, five community colleges, and two high schools. The 1,013 student participants were, predominantly, in either their first year of college or their final year of high school. Here, I discuss the analyses for the college students alone, because they are the only participants for whom we had available college performance data. The total number of participants included in these analyses was 793.

Baseline measures of standardized test scores and high school grade point averages were collected both to evaluate the predictive validity of current tools used for college admission criteria and to provide a contrast for our current measures. All Rainbow assessments were administered either in paper-and-pencil format or via the World Wide Web. The measures of analytical skills were provided by the SAT plus analytical items of our own invention. One, for example, required students to figure out the meanings of neologisms from natural contexts—a novel word is embedded in a paragraph, and its meaning must be inferred from the context. Other measures required students to complete series of numbers and figural matrices.

We assessed creative skills by using both multiple-choice and open-ended measures. In one open-ended task, students chose two from a list of unusual titles—"The Octopus's Sneakers," for example—and wrote a short story to fit each. In another, they chose picture collages and orally told two stories based on them. And in a third, they captioned cartoons chosen from among several provided as options.

We assessed practical skills by using both multiple-choice items and performance-based measures called "situational-judgment inventories." In one of the latter, the students were...
The skills people need to succeed in their careers do not always closely resemble the skills needed to succeed in college courses, especially introductory courses

asked to respond to movies depicting situations that commonly confront college students—asking for a letter of recommendation from a professor who shows through nonverbal cues that he does not recognize the student, for example, or figuring out what to do after eating a meal and not having the money to pay for it. A “commonsense questionnaire” presented everyday business problems, such as being assigned to work with a coworker whom one cannot stand, and a college-life questionnaire presented everyday college situations for which a solution was required.

The new assessments provided very substantial reliability gains over traditional measures. As predictors of freshman-year academic success, the Rainbow assessments were twice as reliable as SAT scores alone. They were 50 percent more reliable than SAT scores combined with high school grade point averages.

In addition to predicting success in college, an important goal of the study was to develop measures that reduce racial and ethnic group differences in mean levels. We found that our assessments did reduce racial and ethnic differences relative to traditional assessments like the SAT. Although the group differences were not eliminated entirely, our findings suggest that measures can be designed that reduce racial and ethnic group differences on standardized tests, particularly for such historically disadvantaged groups as black and Latino students. These findings may also have implications for reducing adverse impact in college admissions.

In 2005, I moved from Yale University, where I was the IBM Professor of Psychology and Education and the lead collaborator in the Rainbow Project, to Tufts University, where I became dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. Since Tufts strongly emphasizes the role of active citizenship in education, it seemed to offer an ideal setting within which to put into practice some of the ideas from the Rainbow Project. Accordingly, Lee Coffin, the dean of undergraduate admissions, and I instituted the Kaleidoscope Project, which represents an implementation of the Rainbow ideas, but also goes beyond them to include in its assessment the construct of wisdom. Other collaborators—Christina Bonney, Liane Gabora, Linda Jarvin, and Tzur Karelitz—have since joined the project.

Whereas in the Rainbow Project we used separate high-stakes tests to collect student data, in the Kaleidoscope Project we used the college application. It just was not practical to administer a separate high-stakes test, such as the Rainbow assessment, for admission to a single university. So instead, to the application that is prepared by the more than fifteen thousand students who seek admission each year to the schools of arts, sciences, and engineering at Tufts, we added optional questions designed to assess WICS. A creative question asked students to write stories with titles such as “The End of MTV” or “Confessions of a Middle-School Bully.” Another asked students what the world would be like if some historical event had come out differently—if Rosa Parks had given up her seat on the bus, for example. Yet another creative question, a nonverbal one, gave students an opportunity to design a new product or an advertisement for a new product. A practical question queried how students had persuaded friends to accept an unpopular idea, and a wisdom question asked how one of their passions could be applied toward a common good. The advantage of the Kaleidoscope approach is that it has gotten us away from the high-stakes testing situation in which students must answer complex questions in very short amounts of time under incredible pressure.

We found that Kaleidoscope scores correlated only minimally (0.1 or less) with the SAT, and the kinds of racial and ethnic differences encountered on both the SAT and the Rainbow assessments disappeared. This means that the Kaleidoscope scores predicted less than 1 percent of the variance in SAT scores. Students who scored at high levels on the Kaleidoscope assessment have shown increased participation in extracurricular activities during their first year of college, relative to those who did not score as high. Academically, these high-scoring students performed at levels comparable to students who excelled in ways other than through Kaleidoscope, such as in student government, musical, athletic, or other forms
of high school participation. Thus, the assessment provided a way of predicting leadership involvement, independently of racial or ethnic group, and without any sacrifice in academic skills. Such projects can be done at the graduate level as well. My colleagues and I designed an admissions test for a large and highly rated business school in the Midwest. We showed that we could increase prediction accuracy and decrease both sex and ethnic group differences in admissions (Hedlund et al. 2006).

How does one assess answers to questions that seem so subjective? The assessment is done using well-developed rubrics. For example, we assess analytical responses based on the extent to which they are (a) analytically sound, (b) balanced, (c) logical, and (d) organized. We assess creative responses on the basis of how (a) original and (b) compelling they are, as well as on the basis of their (c) appropriateness to the task with which the students were presented. We assess practical responses on the basis of how feasible they are with respect to (a) time, (b) place, (c) human and (d) material resources, and (e) how persuasive they are. We assess wisdom-based responses on the extent to which they (a) promote a common good by (b) balancing one's own interests with the interests of others as well as with larger interests, (c) over the long and short terms, through (d) the infusion of positive (prosocial) ethical values.

Teaching and assessing for WICS
Can we teach for WICS—the kinds of skills and attitudes that really matter in life and in jobs? Yes, there are many techniques that can be used to teach for WICS in any subject-matter area and at any level. Our belief that we could have success in this realm dates back to a study in which my collaborators and I tested over three hundred high school students across the United States (Sternberg et al. 1999). The test was designed to select students, based on their analytical, creative, and practical abilities, for placement in sections of a college-level summer psychology course. When we divided the students into groups, we noticed something unexpected. Students in the high-analytical group—that is, those who excelled in the abilities measured by conventional tests—were mostly white and middle class. Many had previously been identified for other programs as gifted. Students in the high-creative and high-practical groups were ethnically diverse, and many had never before been identified as gifted.

The question, of course, was whether those identified as strong in creative or practical abilities actually performed at high levels academically. The answer was clear: when students were taught, at least some of the time, in a way that matched their patterns of abilities, they excelled. In other words, the creatively and practically oriented students did excel academically, so long as the way they were taught matched, at least some of the time, the way they learned. Good teachers use a variety of teaching methods to accommodate the diverse learning styles of their students; any student taught in a way that is responsive to his or her pattern of abilities can excel. After concluding this study, my colleagues and I went on to show that teaching to diverse styles of learning does indeed improve achievement relative to teaching that emphasizes just traditional memory-analytical patterns of learning and thinking (Grigorenko, Jarvin, and Sternberg 2002; Sternberg, Grigorenko, and Zhang 2008; Sternberg, Torff, and Grigorenko 1998).

I currently teach for WICS in a course on leadership in the Department of Psychology at Tufts University. The course is open to undergraduates at all levels and in all fields of specialization, and it has no prerequisites. The course involves a textbook on leadership theories and research, as well as a book of case studies of leadership and two books by leadership theorists on their own views on leadership. Consider as well four additional features of the course.

First, in every class except the first and the last, a leader comes and speaks to the students for about fifteen minutes on his or her leadership experiences. The leaders come from all domains of life, including politics, finance, management, the arts, sports, and religion. Then for an additional forty-five minutes, the class asks questions of, and has a discussion with, the leader. Students’ interactions with the leaders give them a chance to develop as well as to challenge their own beliefs about leadership.
Second, every class except the last involves an active leadership exercise. For example, in the first class, a shill joins the students and pretends to be one of them. After I go through the syllabus, the shill challenges it and complains that it is inadequate in a variety of ways. Students are amazed at the shill’s audacity. When he finishes with his complaints, I thank him, and then note to the class that every leader, sooner or later, confronts public challenges to his or her authority. The question is not whether it will or will not happen—it will—but rather how the leader handles such challenges. Students divide themselves into three groups and then simulate how they would handle public challenges. In another class, students have to “hire a dean.” They divide themselves into three groups. One simulates the formation of a vision statement, the second simulates a job interview, and the third simulates a persuasion interview to entice the selected candidate to come. In another class, students simulate how they would deal with an incompetent team member. And in another, each of three groups formulates a proposal to improve the university and then has to persuade the class, acting as funders, to fund their project.

Third, students are required to complete both individual and group projects. For the individual projects, the students apply leadership concepts to their own leadership experiences as well as those of other leaders whom they’ve interviewed. For the group project, the students use course principles to analyze the leadership of a major known leader (past choices have included Bill Clinton, Bill Gates, and Kenneth Lay).

Fourth, all exams are open-book, open-note. The idea is to convey to students that leaders are leaders by virtue of their ability to apply what they know to leadership activities. For example, the final exam presents the story of a leader, told from the time she first undertook a leadership position to the time she considered leaving it, and the students have to analyze her leadership performance at every step along the way.

Conclusion

WICS provides a unified model of liberal education for admissions, instruction, and assessment that can be used at any level and for any subject matter. One advantage of WICS is that it goes beyond more traditional models that emphasize memory and analytical learning and, as a result, enables all students to capitalize on their strengths and to compensate or correct for their weaknesses. And since it reduces racial, ethnic, and other differences in performance commonly found in traditional assessments, the WICS model provides a basis for tertiary education that represents the realities of the twenty-first century, rather than those of a bygone era.

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Engaged Learning

Enabling Self-Authorship and Effective Practice

RECENTLY, through its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2007) synthesized the college outcomes necessary for successful practice in twenty-first-century life: knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative learning. Because these outcomes span the cognitive, social, and personal dimensions, achieving them requires more than information acquisition or even critical analysis. It requires transformative learning, or learning “to negotiate and act on our own purposes, values, feelings, and meanings rather than those we have uncritically assimilated from others” (Mezirow 2000, 8). Most importantly, it entails a shift from uncritical acceptance of external authority to critical analysis of authority in order to establish one’s own internal authority. This internal authority is what developmental theorists call self-authorship, or the capacity to define one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations (Baxter Magolda 2001; Kegan 1994).

Kegan argued that self-authorship requires us to “take charge of the concepts and theories of a course or discipline, marshalling on behalf of our independently chosen topic its internal procedures for formulating and validating knowledge” (1994, 303). According to him, self-authorship not only encompasses epistemological maturity, it also requires cultivating a secure sense of self that enables interdependent relations with others and making judgments through considering but not being consumed by others’ perspectives. Effective partnering, work, and citizenship in a diverse society necessitate the capacity to manage external realities using the compass afforded by our internally generated beliefs, identities, and social relations.

Evidence abounds that, in recent decades, students have typically entered college relying on perspectives they have uncritically accepted from others and are not sufficiently challenged and supported to transition to internal authority during college. Students who have experienced significant challenge, particularly as a result of marginalization, may exhibit self-authorship prior to college or during college (Abes and Jones 2004; Pizzolato 2003; Torres and Hernandez 2007). Intentional efforts to promote self-authorship in college also show promise. The possibility of developing self-authorship earlier than has typically been observed implies that a carefully sequenced and developmentally appropriate curriculum can help college students develop self-authorship.

We advance a new model for a university-wide curriculum that we call the “Engaged Learning University.”

David C. Hodge, Marcia B. Baxter Magolda, and Carolyn A. Haynes

We advance a new model for a university-wide curriculum that we call the “Engaged Learning University.” Based upon research on student development, this model features principles and practices that lead students steadily toward self-authorship in which epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal
maturity are integrated. Before articulating details of this model, we describe the evolution of students’ meaning making during and after college. Then, we offer an engaged learning philosophy to promote transformational learning, and finally, we conclude with a description of our comprehensive curriculum designed for twenty-first-century life.

The evolution of self-authorship

The concept of transformative learning is grounded in the constructive-developmental perspective advanced notably by Jean Piaget (1950). This perspective asserts that people construct reality by interpreting their experiences and that the ways of constructing reality evolve according to regular principles of stability and change. We generate meaning-making structures, or “rules,” based on our experiences of how the world works. We use these rules to interpret new experiences until we encounter experiences that cannot be explained by our rules. Initially, we regard those experiences as exceptions; but when too many exceptions overwhelm our current meaning-making structure, we adjust it to a more complex one that accommodates the new experiences. For example, if adolescents are socialized via their schooling to accept authority uncritically, then they bring to college the meaning-making structure that holds all knowledge to be certain and possessed by external authority. If they are challenged and sufficiently supported to learn to evaluate knowledge claims and generate an internal belief system, then they exchange their initial meaning-making structures for increasingly complex ones.

Adopting increasingly complex meaning-making structures represents the developmental growth that underlies transformational learning and assists students in achieving the complex learning outcomes of liberal education. Despite variations in pace and particular dynamics that vary by group, research portrays adult development as a journey from following external formulas, through a crossroads in which one’s internal voice begins to unseat external formulas, to internally defining one’s beliefs, identity, and social relations. Those who regard all knowledge as certain trust others more than they trust themselves, seek others’ approval, and follow external formulas. Individuals begin to move into the crossroads when they gain an awareness that knowledge may be uncertain, begin to take stands that differ from the authority figures in their lives, and recognize the limits of dependent relationships. In learning contexts, they rely heavily on external sources for knowing but are aware of the need to construct their own perspectives. Working through these tensions to view knowledge as contextual, view identity as internally constructed, and achieve the capacity for mutual negotiation in relationships yields self-authorship.

Self-authorship enables learners to evaluate information critically, form their own judgments, and collaborate with others to act wisely. It is, however, necessary to adopt increasing complex meaning-making structures in the epistemological, intrapersonal, and interpersonal dimensions. For example, students who learn to analyze knowledge claims critically and to generate their own ideas have achieved a self-authored epistemological structure. Yet, to achieve effective practice in life, they must also have a self-authored intrapersonal structure that enables them to register disagreement and to argue for their perspectives. In addition, they need a self-authored interpersonal structure that values standing up for one’s beliefs over gaining affirmation from others. To illustrate the need for all three dimensions for superior practice, consider the nurse-practitioner who knows from his understanding of infectious disease that the doctor is prescribing an outdated and ineffective treatment but does not say so for fear of admonishment. Lack of complexity in one dimension can inhibit the use of complex meaning-making structures in other dimensions.

An educational philosophy for promoting self-authorship

The promotion of self-authorship entails a fundamental shift in how we imagine and structure the whole undergraduate experience. As an initial step, it requires that we shift away from what Barr and Tagg (1995) have termed an “instructional” paradigm, which emphasizes instructors telling students what they need to know, to a “learning” paradigm, which emphasizes the design of active learning environments that encourage students to construct their own ideas.

Yet, a more ambitious transformation that extends beyond Barr and Tagg’s learning paradigm must occur for students to construct new
knowledge. To discover new ideas, learners must possess an internal set of beliefs that guide decision making about knowledge claims, an internal identity that enables them to express themselves in socially constructing knowledge with others, and the capacity to engage in mutually interdependent relationships to assess others’ expertise. These capacities cannot be cultivated solely by engaging actively with the raw materials and tools of the academy or by participating in a student-centered classroom, although these are essential. Instead, they emerge gradually when educators foster students’ holistic growth through continuous self-reflection, seamless and authentic curricular and cocurricular experiences that steadily increase in challenge, and appropriate levels of support.

Put succinctly, the following are the key tenets of our intentional, engaged learning philosophy:

1. Guide students to develop an internally defined and integrated belief system and identity, which prepare them personally and intellectually for lifelong learning.
2. Actively engage students in discovering new knowledge in a sequenced, developmentally appropriate way to enable them to evaluate evidence critically, make informed judgments, and act ethically.
3. Create a vibrant campus learning community that blends curricular and cocurricular learning opportunities and capitalizes on the roles of all constituents (faculty, staff, and students) in promoting student learning.

In order to achieve these tenets, educators must progress away from giving answers to and exercising authority over students and toward encouraging questions from and sharing authority with students (Mitchell 2006). At first blush, this shift sounds simple. As students gain intellectual and personal maturity, educators steadily relinquish authority and empower them to assume greater agency over the discovery process and learning environment. Yet, in practice, this educational philosophy requires intentional design; a shared sense of ownership and, thus, partnering among educators and students; continuous critical reflection; and heavy doses of patience and courage.

Although the Engaged Learning University aims to empower students as thinkers and scholars, it does not imply that educators must meet students’ every wish, coddle, or befriend them. What it means is that educators must move away from the traditional role of the expert or avoid the tendency to seek students’ approval and instead push students to gain intellectual, relational, and personal maturity through continuous feedback and high expectations. Educators can help students become more internally focused by validating them as thinkers and burgeoning scholars, presenting thorny problems and topics that lend themselves to multiple legitimate perspectives, introducing them to competencies needed to address those topics, and helping...
them form, and accept responsibility for, their own decisions and actions in ways that are consistent with their own identities. Figure 1 (below) illustrates the students’ journey toward self-authorship.

A three-tiered, comprehensive, developmentally sequenced curriculum

At Miami University, we have established a three-tiered framework to help our educators design learning environments and curricula that promote students’ development toward self-authorship (Taylor and Haynes 2008), and we hope to advance this or similar frameworks across the university. Underlying the framework is what Baxter Magolda (2004) calls “the Learning Partnership Model,” which advances three educational principles: (1) validating students’ potential as scholars, (2) situating learning in their experience, and (3) mutually constructing meaning with them. Although the principles undergird all three tiers, the way they play out in practice shifts depending on the students’ developmental level.

The first tier is designed for students who are generally new to the college experience, tend to view knowledge in absolutist terms, have a limited vision of themselves as legitimate authors of new knowledge, and thus rely on external authorities for guidance and approval. To meet the needs of Tier 1 students, Miami’s Office of Liberal Education recently instituted the “Top 25” project, which offers grants to support departments as they redesign their largest enrollment, introductory liberal education courses to make them more discovery-oriented. A geology survey course, for example, was transformed from an entirely lecture-based course into one that invites students to engage several inquiry-based modules. Similarly, a theatre appreciation course now offers students the opportunity to witness a weekly “master class” of experts who demonstrate a fundamental principle of drama. At the other weekly meeting, students assemble in small groups to write and perform their own mini-plays that illustrate the mastery of the principle introduced in the master class.

Transformations are also being made outside the formal classroom. The University Honors Program recently revised its approach to summer orientation in order to help new students move away from depending so heavily on authority figures, such as parents, for their choices. Rather than simply give students a handout with a list of program requirements, advisers now ask students to engage in a series of reflective exercises prior to course registration. Students, for example, write an imaginary dialogue about their goals for their college experience between themselves and a dominant figure in their life and then are invited to think about how they can fulfill what they seek in college while still maintaining a relationship with this important person. Meanwhile, parents meet elsewhere to discuss their hopes and concerns for the students. Advisers help parents identify ways that their role will need to shift in order to enable students to gain
mastery over their own decisions and development.

Experiences that encourage students to balance external authority and their own voices push them to move toward Tier 2, or the "crossroads" phase. Students typically arrive at this phase when they begin to question external authorities’ definitions and beliefs, recognize that knowledge is not absolute, and begin to identify their own beliefs, interests, and approaches to their personal and academic lives.

To foster students’ development, Tier 2 experiences offer students opportunities to make key decisions about the learning experience; practice authentic methods, approaches, and skills of scholarship or leadership with others; and explore how discovery processes and ideas align with their budding system of beliefs. An example in the cocurricular realm is our Scholar-Leader Living Learning Community in which the residents (sophomores and juniors) and the hall director brainstorm diverse ideas and collaborate to construct their own community standards, hall outcomes, and programming. In the academic arena, Tier 2 faculty members encourage students to participate in the process of discovery, focusing on authentic questions and problems. For example, after noting students’ natural interest in Sudoku, mathematics professor Jeffrey Wanko decided to discard the typical approach to math courses and invite students to apply various aspects of logical thinking and spatial reasoning to a variety of linguistically and culturally independent puzzles and then work collectively with him to design original puzzles.

Note that the role of the Tier 2 educator has shifted from serving as the principal designer of the learning environment with the aim of actively involving students in the topic of study (which was appropriate for the Tier One context) to one who codesigns the learning environment with the students. This sharing of authority aids students in fashioning their own perspectives on learning and discovery and in feeling a sense of belonging in the scholarly and professional world.

When the internal voice overtakes external influences, students are moving toward self-authorship. Marcia Baxter Magolda found in her longitudinal study that this phase features adults who have “shifted from ‘how you know’ to ‘how I know’ and in doing so began to choose their own beliefs. They acknowledged the inherent uncertainty of knowledge and took up the challenge of choosing what to believe in this context . . . This emerging sense of self required renegotiation of existing relationships that had been built on external approval at the expense of personal needs and the creation of new mutual relationships consistent with the internal voice” (2001, 119–20).

Although few participants in Baxter Magolda’s study actually reached this phase
while in college, we believe that with the appropriate levels of support and challenge, students can attain this level of development prior to graduation. Students founding their own organizations, spearheading major leadership endeavors in their Greek organizations, and initiating community-service initiatives are appropriate out-of-class opportunities for Tier 3 students.

Culminating projects, such as a thesis, also provide potential venues for developing students’ personal and intellectual maturity. The capstone course offered by the Department of Manufacturing and Mechanical Engineering, for example, requires students to operate as design engineers in a multidisciplinary team with the faculty adviser serving as “consultant,” rather than co- or lead investigator as in Tier 2. A recent capstone focused on designing, fabricating, and installing a human-powered water pump system for the village of Gwele Kona in Mali, West Africa, so that an orphanage could be built. To complete this project, students had to study the native language and culture and investigate the geography in order to develop the design and implementation plan. They also had to raise funds, pack and ship the pump system they selected, design a reliable and affordable power source, and travel to Mali to assist with the installation. Although the site selected by a local drilling contractor failed to yield water, the students nevertheless made a significant impact on the community. One of the Mali leaders sent the following message to his pastor detailing what happened:

It is very hard for me to tell you that our drilling work has failed . . . The villagers are very sad and disappointed, and . . . I was really downcast when I saw tears in people’s eyes, but I could not show my anger because I had to strengthen everybody as a leader . . . We praise the Lord for . . . the Miami students who were here to install the pump . . . Even if we have not found the water we were looking for, their names will be written in the story of these villages—the story of the heroes who have fought the battle for water, the battle for life. Inspired by their students’ diligence, the engineering faculty will ask next year’s capstone team to learn from this team’s work and try again—just as scholars build on the work of others.

This team project would not have been possible for students to achieve in their first year or Tier 1. The students needed to have attained a certain level of personal, relational, and intellectual maturity—a maturity made possible through supportive and challenging learning environments that gradually increased in sophistication throughout their undergraduate lives.

Research demonstrates that self-authorship benefits all learners because they are able to manage complex intellectual, work, and personal challenges (Baxter Magolda 2001, 2009); overcome the effects of oppression, racism, and marginalization (Abes and Jones 2004; Pizzolato 2003; Torres and Hernandez 2007); and engage in authentic, interdependent relationships with diverse others (Yonkers Talz 2004).
the principles of the Learning Partnerships Model—validating them as fellow scholars and professionals, encouraging them to apply the principles in ways that are aligned with their particular departmental contexts, and co-constructing new ways of educating together.

Educators who have engaged in large-scale organizational transformation at other institutions emphasize the challenging nature of the process. In telling the story of how the Learning Partnerships Model was used to reframe general education at Virginia Tech, Terry Wildman notes that “old designs run deep. Indeed they are embodied in the classrooms where knowledge is delivered, in the curriculum practices where requirements are checked off, in the space utilization policies where time is parsed out in small manageable chunks, in the textbooks where knowledge is carefully scripted and decontextualized, and even in the organizational structures where disciplines can be isolated and protected within their own departments” (2004, 250–1). Using the lessons learned at other institutions, we will focus on the following strategies:

- Make concerted efforts to deploy faculty, staff, and parents as partners in students’ development.
- Engage educators through “communities of practice” to invent new ways of learning and collaborating across traditional boundaries.
- Use assessment to guide practice.
- Revise policies and practices to move away from a focus on customer satisfaction, checklists, and formulas toward authentic reflection, development, and learning.

We have already taken steps to advance institutional transformation, including the “Top 25 Project” as well as a new faculty and staff “community of practice” focusing on engaged learning and involving fifteen departments.

To achieve our vision, we must clarify and remind ourselves to focus on what universities do best: advance the learning and liberal education of all.

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The Power of Experiential Education

JANET EYLER

Experiential education can lead to more powerful academic learning and help students achieve intellectual goals commonly associated with liberal education.

In his comedic persona of Father Guido Sarducci, Don Novello captured the central challenge to educators in the liberal arts: providing an education that sticks and is usable. Father Guido’s solution was to bypass an expensive four years of liberal education; in his “five-minute university,” students would pay twenty dollars and spend five minutes learning what the typical college graduate remembers five years after graduation. In economics, that would be supply and demand; in Spanish, como esta usted and muy bien. For any of us who have traveled to Madrid and tried to call on our college Spanish, this strikes a chord.

The challenge for liberal educators is to design learning environments and instruction so that students will be able to use what they learn in appropriate new contexts—that is, to enable the transfer of learning. This is, of course, a bigger challenge than the one recognized by Father Guido. Graduates need not only to remember what they learn, to develop and retain a “broad knowledge of the wider world (e.g., science, culture, and society) as well as in-depth study in specific area of interest,” but also to have “a sense of social responsibility, as well as strong and transferable intellectual and practical skills such as communication, analytical, and problem-solving skills” (AAC&U). Effective citizenship requires students to be knowledgeable, to be able to use what they know, to have the capacity for critical analysis, and to be equipped for lifelong learning; personal, social and intellectual goals are intertwined. Yet programs designed to develop students’ personal, social, and economic capacities are often separated from the core academic experience.

Experiential education, which takes students into the community, helps students both to bridge classroom study and life in the world and to transform inert knowledge into knowledge-in-use. It rests on theories of experiential learning, a process whereby the learner interacts with the world and integrates new learning into old constructs.

Experiential education

Within professional programs, there is a long tradition of including field experiences as a way to build practitioner skills and facilitate the move from theory to practice. Two of the most common forms of workplace learning are cooperative education and the internship. In cooperative education, students alternate periods of paid work with campus study or split their time between the workplace and the campus. While cooperative-education programs have waned, internships are increasing. Most college students now complete an internship. Career centers at liberal arts colleges, disciplinary journals devoted to college curricula, and the popular press are keeping up a steady drumbeat encouraging faculty members to support, and students to obtain, internships in order to ease the transition to the workplace. And this is paying off for students: internships and cooperative education are increasingly important for job placement (National Association of Colleges and Employers 2008).

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FEATURED TOPIC

JANET EYLER
Service learning—a form of experiential education that combines academic study with service in the community—emerged in the 1970s and has since grown exponentially. The pioneers of service learning believed that the combination of service and learning would improve the quality of both and that it could lead to educational reform and democratic revitalization. Service learning is distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by its commitment to certain values as well as its inclusion of continuous, structured reflection. From the outset, service learning has been oriented to the achievement of academic goals in all fields, including the liberal arts. It fits easily into most disciplines, and with some creativity it can be fit into virtually all disciplines. Models range from add-on, extra-credit, or assignment options to the thorough integration of service as a class “text.”

Experiential education has been a commonplace in vocationally or professionally oriented programs for many years, but field-based pedagogies have struggled to gain legitimacy in the liberal arts. As advances in cognitive science have begun to blur the line between academic and practical learning, awareness of the relevance of experiential education to achieving goals of the liberal arts has increased. And a similar awareness has also increased among employers who are increasingly less concerned about particular vocational skills and who are demanding the same skills, abilities, and habits of mind long valued by the liberal arts (Business-Higher Education Forum 2003; Peter D. Hart Research Associates 2006). Additionally, since the 1980s, there has been renewed interest in the civic role of colleges and universities and a call for increased civic literacy for students; this has fueled much of the interest in service learning as a way of achieving the goals of liberal education so central to citizenship.

Experiential education has value far beyond building the kind of social skills, work ethic, and practical expertise that are important in professionally oriented programs. In fact, experiential education can also lead to more powerful academic learning and help students achieve intellectual goals commonly associated with liberal education, including

- a deeper understanding of subject matter than is possible through classroom study alone;
- the capacity for critical thinking and application of knowledge in complex or ambiguous situations;
- the ability to engage in lifelong learning, including learning in the workplace.

Experiential education also identifies the practices necessary for achieving these outcomes, particularly the use of structured reflection to help students link experience with theory and, thereby, deepen their understanding and ability to use what they know.

**Mastery and use of subject matter**

A fundamental goal of liberal learning is mastery of both broad and specialized bodies of knowledge. The inability to call on this knowledge base is what Alfred North Whitehead (1929) described nearly a century ago as the problem of “inert knowledge.” Often, students cannot apply even recently learned information to new situations. Modern cognitive scientists ascribe this inability to apply what is learned to a failure to conditionalize knowledge; the learners don’t see the relevance and cannot access what they know when confronted with an opportunity for transfer (Bransford, Brown, and Cocking 2000). Life is not organized by chapter, with tests to signal what information to apply. Unless students learn explicitly to recognize when their knowledge might be useful, can recall that knowledge,
and know how to apply it, they will fail to transfer what they know; their understanding is incomplete.

Transfer of knowledge requires deep understanding. Recall and reproduction of material taught in the classroom do not constitute understanding. For knowledge to be usable, it has to be acquired in a situation. Otherwise, it is segregated from experience and unlikely to be remembered or transferred to new experiences. Well-understood material can be retrieved from memory and used in new situations because it is linked with multiple experiences and examples and not isolated from other experience and knowledge.

A small study comparing student learning in classes on legislative politics with student learning in internships at a state legislature found that both groups did equally well on a traditional test of facts (Eyler and Halteman 1981). But when challenged to develop a strategy for enacting policy, the interns incorporated the need to engage powerful and well-placed legislators and to organize support, while the classroom-based students drew on the formal steps about how a bill becomes a law. Experiential education, as this and similar studies have shown, leads to deeper, more nuanced understanding of subject matter.

Organizing student learning in ways that give students agency is also associated with deeper understanding. Communities of learning that encourage cooperation and reciprocity among students improve learning and are particularly well suited to field-based projects. Students’ commitment and curiosity are fueled when they take responsibility for action with consequences for other people, and this, in turn, leads to increased effort and attention. Such engagement is instrumental in achieving mastery of the subject matter and also in confronting the intellectual challenges that promote cognitive development.

**The capacity to deal with complex new situations**

To achieve such liberal learning goals as effective citizenship and engagement in lifelong learning, students need the capacity to perceive and address ill-structured problems, tolerate ambiguity, make warranted judgments, and act while continuously seeking and refining further information. Neither tolerance for ambiguity nor critical thinking is simply a function of information, skill, and social ability or even of repeated practice, but rather both require intellectual capabilities that are not now generally attained before college graduation.

Students often arrive at college with simplistic ways of viewing knotty problems, and they may not be able to recognize an ill-structured problem. They are likely to see their task as learning right answers rather than understanding the difficulty of framing issues and problems and understanding that the very nature of difficult problems makes one clear solution unlikely. Or they may reject discussion as pointless because they regard disagreement as simply a matter of opinions, any of which is equally valid. King (1992) argues that most students graduate without attaining a level of reasoning ability that would allow them to frame, explore alternative perspectives, reframe, and resolve problems, while understanding that future information may call for a reevaluation of one’s current position. Yet these analytic capabilities are fundamental to the process of judgment, to solving problems in the workplace, and to making decisions in a democracy. The tendency to cling to simplistic black-and-white answers to problems, to fail to reevaluate assumptions in the light of new circumstances, and to assume that disagreement is sinister represent failures of liberal education.

The process by which students develop the capacity to use advanced formal reasoning processes involves confronting dissonant information and making sense of it. It requires students to monitor their own understanding and to recognize and grapple with alternative perspectives. This process of intellectual growth can be promoted through experiential education, which fully engages students and commits them to resolving the challenges they address. Service learning is particularly appropriate, since it commonly focuses on issues that give rise to ill-structured problems or what Schön termed the “swampy lowlands” where problems are “messy and confusing and incapable of technical solution” (1995, 28).

The cognitive dissonance that leads to intellectual growth is more likely to occur when students care. A college student who is bored...
about the economics of health care, for example, may find it more engaging when the person he or she is working with has to “game the system” to obtain needed care. The personal connections and the need to be effective in the field create a level of engagement and caring that increase the likelihood that students will recognize the contradictions within their own assumptions or will be open to perspectives different from their own and feel the need to resolve these differences. This is the process that creates increasingly adequate cognitive abilities for dealing with complexity and uncertainty.

A national study of college students tested the power of service learning to facilitate cognitive development (Eyler and Giles 1999). Students who were involved in intensive, highly reflective service-learning courses showed significant increases in reflective judgment over the course of their study as compared to those in less-intensive service-learning courses and those with no service-learning experience at all. These gains were measured through problem-solving interviews during which students demonstrated their reasoning capacity. Subsequent work by others has been consistent with this finding (Steinke and Buresh 2002; Steinke and Fitch 2003; Ash and Clayton 2003).

**Developing skills for lifelong learning**

Classic transfer of learning stresses the match between the learning context and the situation in which learning is applied. In the twenty-first century, even if students were able to apply classroom learning effectively, they would soon find it outdated. Students don’t just need to learn “job skills” on the job; the capacity for continuous learning is critical.

Building this capacity for continuous learning is another way to frame the role of experiential learning in transfer. What Schwartz, Bransford, and Sears (2005) call “transferring out”—that is, the direct transfer of new learning to a situation—is often limited by the lack of well-developed expertise of novice learners. They note that particular forms of instruction prepare learners to “transfer in,” to use previous learning to interpret the situation and develop a strategy for future learning. If students are engaged in problem solving before being presented with new information, rather than simply learning information through reading and lecture, they are more likely to be able to solve a novel problem. This distinction has importance for how liberal learning built around authentic workplace or community challenges might enhance the capacity for further learning in that subject area. Integrating problem- or project-based challenges into the study deepens understanding of concepts and theories and also prepares students to meet new challenges.

Studies of internship and service-learning programs have demonstrated that students who repeatedly engage in structured reflection during field experience are more likely to bring a strategic learning orientation to new challenges (Eyler 1993; Eyler and Giles 1999). Experiential education blurs the line between theory and practice; theory lacks meaning outside of practice. In order to develop strong skills for continuous learning, students need opportunities to practice those skills in envi-
environments consistent with lifelong use and as they acquire disciplinary mastery.

The difference between experiential learning in the classroom and in workplace or community settings is not only a matter of subject-matter content or instructional principles, but it is also existential. Students in experiential education learn as workers or community participants with a need to know in order to get a job done, not just as students who need to take a test. Students even in problem-based classroom instruction frame their learning in terms of grades and pleasing the professor, while those same students talk about respect, achievement, and the quality of their contribution in an internship placement (Eyler 1993). Others have observed this same phenomenon in which adults in the workplace frame their learning in terms of their particular roles, while students learning the same material in the classroom approach it from the perspective of the teacher’s demands (Cobb and Bowers 1999).

There is a profound mismatch between how students learn in the classroom and how they will later learn in the community (Resnick 1987). In the workplace or in addressing community issues, learning often occurs collaboratively, is organized around concrete situations, makes use of tools and resources, and is iterative, whereas classroom-based learning often involves decontextualized knowledge, manipulation of abstract symbols, and highly individual efforts. Knowledge in the classroom tends to be compartmentalized into disciplines, whereas in use in the community or workplace it tends to be organized around problems or domains of practice.
Quality matters
While experiential education can contribute to liberal learning, achieving this outcome requires careful structuring and supervision of out-of-classroom student experiences. Studies of service learning have shown that poorly structured programs that do not integrate service with the academic curriculum make little contribution to student learning, even though they may help students develop in other ways (Vogelgesang and Astin 2000; Eyler and Giles 1999). Literature on internships, cooperative education, and school-to-work programs also mentions the integration of field experience with curricular goals—learning through doing—but often there is a mismatch between the stated goals of programs and the actual experiences of students (Moore 1981; Parilla and Hesser 1998). Internships are often run like independent studies with little faculty oversight or opportunity for structured reflection.

In order to justify the inclusion of work or community service as part of the liberal arts curriculum, attention needs to be paid to ensuring the quality of the intellectual as well as the work experience. Guidelines for creating high-quality experiential education programs and helping students make the most of their experiences are similar and consistent with much of the literature on effective liberal education. They include

- work or service clearly related to the academic goals of the course or program;
- well-developed assessments that provide evidence of the achievement of academic objectives;
- important responsibility for the student;
- site supervisors who understand the learning goals for the student and partner with the academic supervisor to provide continuous monitoring and feedback;
- an academic supervisor or instructor who pays close attention to the students’ work in the field and partners with the site supervisor to provide continuous monitoring and feedback;
- attention paid to preparing students for both the practical challenges of their placements and for learning from experience;
- continuous, well-structured reflection opportunities to help students link experience and learning throughout the course of their placements.

Reflection and feedback
The most critical factor for achieving powerful learning outcomes from experiential-learning programs is the inclusion of opportunities for feedback and reflection. Challenging, continuous, context-appropriate reflection turns work experience into learning experience. It is easy to underestimate how intensive reflection must be in order for it to have an impact; it is not unusual to find faculty members who believe their program provides adequate reflection even though the effects on students fall short.

There are a number of models and tools that provide a foundation for organizing reflection. The reflection cycle developed by David Kolb (1984) has been widely embraced by advocates of experiential education, and others have built on that work (Ash and Clayton 2004). It is a useful choice because it is simple and intuitive, making it easy for students to use as a facilitation tool with their peers and for faculty members to use in written assignments and discussion. The cycle moves from experience to reflection and then back to experience. Students are encouraged to connect the concrete and the abstract and to connect reflection with action, and they are pushed to make sense of their experience in terms of what they are learning in the classroom as well as to draw implications for further application or study.

If experiential education is to be reflective throughout then care must be given to planning, and this process should be embedded in the experience from start to finish. One tool for organizing the reflection process is the reflection map (Eyler 2002). Like the Kolb model, the reflection map is a simple and intuitive tool that helps the instructor accomplish several goals. It focuses on reflection alone—in class and in the field—before, during, and after the field experience. Students are prepared for learning and gain ownership through planning their academic goals. Classroom time is conserved by building reflection into other settings, and the process encourages continuous iterative reflection rather than a single paper or event at the end of the field experience. This is particularly important for cooperative education and internships where regular classroom meetings are difficult to arrange.

Even when professors understand the importance of reflection for linking field-based experience to the subject matter being studied, they may find it difficult to design courses to
accomplish this. Instructors need training and support to use experience as a “text” for their courses, and departments need to take ownership of placing faculty in charge of formulating goals for experiential education and facilitating internship seminars and service-learning classes. Logistical support is important but should not be isolated from the academic program.

Conclusion
Of course, experiential education can help students transition more gracefully from college to work, and community-service experiences prepare them to be more engaged citizens. But experiential education can also improve the quality of liberal learning itself and increase the likelihood that students will be able to use throughout their lives the knowledge, critical abilities, and habits of mind acquired in their studies. This does not happen automatically or easily, however. Faculty members who are dubious of awarding credit for volunteering or for work do have a valid point. But such credit is for learning; the challenge for faculty members in the liberal arts is to incorporate experiential education into their instruction and to assess the learning outcomes of these experiences. This requires a clear sense of what learning in the community or the workplace can add to the understanding of subject matter, training in skills to recast appropriate courses to integrate these experiences, and logistical support for placement and monitoring of student work that is more closely connected to the curriculum. Liberal arts programs need to support faculty involvement in the planning and implementation of experiential education. Without this attention to both structure and faculty leadership, experiential education will remain at the periphery and its promise will not be realized. 

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EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES can enrich an undergraduate liberal education and produce graduates who are prepared to grapple, imaginatively and responsibly, with the complex challenges they will face throughout their lives. A growing body of empirical evidence supports that contention. Yet much remains to be learned about how to lead liberal arts colleges to take seriously their obligation to educate students for effective and ethical practice in the world.

The case for an expanded understanding of student learning is even more urgent in the context of growing challenges facing a national system of higher education that many argue should be stronger. Although the critics would not agree that engaged or experiential education is the omnibus answer (or, for many, any answer), the diagnosis—lack of meaning, integration, coherence, unified goals, focus, purpose, innovation, measurable impact—resonates with the prescriptions offered by William Sullivan and Matthew Rosin (2008) in *A New Agenda for Higher Education*. That agenda would embed the goal of “critical thinking” in a broader context of “practical reasoning” within which faculty would work side by side with students, helping them learn the practice of bracketing the “critical moment” by, first, anticipating and, later, testing it against messy and real problems in the world.

A consensus is emerging that we know a lot about how to educate college students to become “positive forces in the world . . . willing to act for the common good and capable of doing so effectively” (Colby et al. 2003, 7); that a sizeable and growing number of American institutions, representing virtually all types, is making this goal a priority; and that a great deal more can be done to advance this goal as a national ethos for American higher education across all sectors and for all students.

The literature abounds in guidelines, principles, and best practices from dozens of case studies. Every institution is different, of course, and because educating the whole student requires a special kind of holistic learning, the most successful programs embody a learning culture seen as both pervasive within an institution and particular to it. Nevertheless, several general lessons can be learned from institutions that are striving to educate their students for lives of consequence:

• integrating effective practice as an intellectually rich subject of study in departmental and interdepartmental offerings across the undergraduate curriculum and at each stage of a student’s college career
• employing “pedagogies of engagement” that connect with students both emotionally and intellectually; support complex learning of problem-solving, communication, and interpersonal skills; and enhance the likelihood that knowledge will be retained and transferred to new situations
• surrounding classroom instruction with thought-provoking cocurricular opportunities that test students’ learning on real-world problems, build their confidence, and motivate reflective practice
• supporting this emphasis on education for action through recognition and incentives for faculty and staff
• reinforcing it in the campus’s physical, social, and cultural environment and its institutional relationships and conduct
• championing it at the highest levels of the institution
• turning their attention to how to assess the impact of these interventions, an area that all agree needs further development

As the field drives toward consensus, the literature nonetheless fails to address three important questions. First, despite caveats about limitations in study designs and dangers

DIANA CHAPMAN WALSH and LEE CUBA

**Liberal Arts Education and the Capacity for What’s Holding Us**

Much remains to be learned about how to lead liberal arts colleges to take seriously their obligation to educate students for effective and ethical practice in the world.

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of overgeneralizing from one setting to another, the major research projects cast a wide net for maximum applicability across all types of institutions serving all types of students. This approach universalizes at the expense of particulars. Complexities in institutional cultures, governance structures, resource constraints, student demographics, and the local nature of faculty work may go a long way toward explaining why this well-lit path is not a thoroughfare. Reading the literature, one scratches one’s head and wonders why everyone doesn’t just do it. Could it be that it’s just not that easy?

Second, what accounts for the gap between the ambitions of the “movement” (to rally support for a wider conception of liberal education) and the specific initiatives and programs being offered as testimony to its potential? If the critics are justified in their claim that undergraduate education needs to be fundamentally rethought, then developing guidelines, promoting engaged pedagogies, and encouraging civic, moral, and political education are short steps on a long journey. What’s holding us back? The answer may reside in the third lingering question.

The literature includes rare cases of faculty leading new initiatives in experiential learning, and commentators pay lip service to the skepticism of mainstream faculty. But few acknowledge that if the new agenda (or any agenda) for higher education is to become a movement, it faces a double bind. Widespread faculty support is a sine qua non, and widespread faculty support is elusive at best. Our third question, then, is what would it take to win faculty allegiance to this new agenda?
Our experiences leading a faculty

We offer our own story in partial answer. When Diana Chapman Walsh arrived at Wellesley College in 1993 to lead her alma mater as president, she was met by a faculty uncertain of its ability (or resolute in its inability) to reach consensus on its educational philosophy. Consciousness of this situation, lodged in the college’s culture and governance structures, was alive in the fresh memory of a debacle at the close of a high-profile planning process. The faculty had debated and rejected, seriatim, all but one minor item in a package of curricular recommendations advanced by a prestigious faculty committee.

To neutralize feelings of defeat and polarization, the newly appointed dean, Nancy Kolodny, set out to lead her faculty colleagues in a restructuring of the curriculum. She orchestrated a complicated and high-stakes curriculum review that became a major focus of the first three years of the Walsh presidency: the main event at all faculty meetings and a subject of discussion at every meeting of the trustees. At the outset, many faculty resisted the idea of another potentially divisive effort to air and argue their differences about the essential elements of the college’s educational program. Sweeping curricular changes were rare and required ratification by a two-thirds majority vote. Individual courses and departmental offerings were refreshed constantly, but these local adjustments could be effected privately or collegially, outside of the formal rules-making processes. Innovation germinated locally, in the imaginations of inventive teachers, stimulated by the curiosity of students, and in the creativity of departments dissatisfied with the status quo. While this process continuously revitalized course and departmental offerings, it left unaddressed the coherence of the overall student experience and the faculty’s collective responsibility for the quality of every student’s education.

So the rookie president lent the weight of her new office to the dean’s effort to muster the faculty behind a process they were inventing on the fly. And she created a second associate deanship to focus on curricular renewal, a position to which she and the dean recruited Lee Cuba. The deans enlisted over 160 volunteers (from a faculty of 225) to work for two years on five task forces, and then drew from the task forces a working group to spend a summer synthesizing recommendations and thrashing out priorities.

The third academic year opened with the synthesis report as the object of extensive discussion among all constituencies and in all relevant standing committees of governance. Faculty were splintered, and the odds of reaching a consensus seemed small. The deans were listening to many voices, modifying the proposals, and titrating when to exert pressure and when to pull back. In the end, the faculty approved, by a solid margin, a new quantitative reasoning requirement, entirely revamped distribution requirements, and the option of half-unit courses. This third provision, deceptively innocuous, was a foot in the door for new kinds of teaching and learning, including courses focusing on experiential learning. Beyond these changes to the curriculum, the three-year conversation had stimulated the faculty’s thinking about pedagogy, the quality of intellectual life, and the aims of a Wellesley education—big topics we revisited repeatedly over subsequent years. We convened working groups and task forces and commissioned in-depth studies to review many aspects of the college experience, among these “global education,” the advising system and the first-year experience, the evaluation of faculty teaching and student learning, technology-assisted learning, interdisciplinary research and teaching, the role of the department chair, the state of the honor code, the contributions of diversity to educational excellence, and the role of experiential learning at Wellesley.

Building structures for experiential learning

Immediately on the heels of the curriculum review, Walsh commissioned a working group on experiential education cochaired by Cuba and the director of the Center for Work and Service, an administrative department that had recently been created by merging a long-standing career services office with a newer center for community service. The dual chairmanship of the working group was intended to bridge the gap between the administrative units responsible for academic life and student life and to forge stronger links between faculty and administrators. We also wanted to encourage a more comprehensive perspective on how to help students weave together disparate elements of their college careers.

The group’s 1996 report, “Translating the Liberal Arts Experience into Action,” put forth
a rationale and a strategy for expanding service and experiential learning. Citing 1994 data that indicated a relatively high level of participation by Wellesley students in internships and other forms of experiential learning (45 percent of graduating seniors, compared to a median of 31 percent among thirty-one comparison schools), the group noted that opportunities for students “to tie their internship and service experiences to their classroom learning are informal and idiosyncratic, leaving undeveloped a fertile area pedagogically.”

Granting that its plan would “require a considerable shift in perceptions and attitudes on the part of faculty members … [and] a considerable process of learning,” the working group proposed a systems-change approach. The report called for the creation of faculty fellowships, faculty workshops and seminars, and a fund for course development, as well as supportive administrative structures and practices, all of which were implemented. The fellows produced working papers on aspects of experiential learning, acted as consultants to the campus community on issues of learning and teaching, facilitated integration and advocacy of the new programs, and became change agents. And the working group report fed directly into our thinking for a comprehensive fundraising campaign.

In June of 1998, we took the trustees on a retreat to review a proposed table of needs for a future campaign. In a background paper for the retreat, Walsh noted that the campaign could begin to resolve “tensions between the liberal arts and the new competencies, [and] between knowledge and service.” If somewhat obliquely, she had put experiential learning on the table for the campaign. The trustees set a $400 million campaign goal, including $20 million for internships and experiential learning. Donors were asked to support the college’s efforts to “provide an innovative and integrated educational experience that extends from the classroom, to the campus, to the world.” The goal of ensuring that students make vital connections—“between thought and action” and “between the college’s history of privilege and its ethic of service”—resonated powerfully with donors who responded generously with endowment gifts for internships.

The college went on to endow two all-day campuswide conferences, each in a different way training a spotlight on the fruits of a liberal arts education. Emphasizing students’ scholarly work, the Ruhlman Conference (begun in 1996) reflected the faculty’s desire to break down barriers to interdisciplinary teaching and learning and to strengthen intellectual life on campus, two persistent themes from the curriculum review. “Ruhlman” was such a success that, five years later, the vice chair of the board worked with Cuba to design the Tanner Conference in an attempt to break down barriers between curricular and cocurricular learning and to integrate students’ education with real problems “outside the bubble.”

The two conferences brought into the public sphere activities that tend to be private. Both required student participants to enlist a faculty adviser, emphasizing that vital partnership; both stressed community, collaboration, and the enactment of the ideal of living a life of learning. The Tanner Conference echoed and extended themes developed by the working group on experiential learning. It provided a venue for the exchange of insights from off-campus experiences, showcased the learning that occurred in a wide range of practical settings, brought recent graduates back to campus to discuss the lasting impact of these experiences, and demonstrated compellingly a wider range of possibilities for learning by doing and serving.

An important meta-level question was ever present: how to support faculty engagement in a process of continuous improvement. Faculty time was our most valuable asset, and we wanted to use it wisely. That meant using data creatively and asking the right questions (a skill at which we improved). It also meant listening to faculty voices for their worries and insights about where our vulnerabilities were.

What we didn’t do was mobilize the faculty to hammer out a unified philosophy of education, much less one that centered on an active pedagogy that would have challenged beliefs about the autonomy of faculty to define what constitutes effective teaching in their own classrooms. We were clear that our overriding goal was to continue improving the quality of what was, by all standard metrics, an excellent education. We did persistently advance the goal of asking hard questions and assembling increasingly rich empirical data to inform our
understanding of our educational strengths and weaknesses. We did cultivate a “culture of evidence.”

**Lessons learned**

We offer this brief case study to suggest the complexity of leading a faculty through a process of institutional change. From the outset, we supported faculty who were willing to experiment with modes of active learning, faculty who were reaching outside the classroom to engage students in the problems of the world around them. We wanted to move the center of gravity gradually in the direction of Dewey’s pragmatic engagement, adding to the college’s tradition of closed classroom learning more community and service learning, moving from primarily discipline-based to more problem-based learning, and, especially, moving from individual to collaborative study. We believed that these transitions could be supported, in part, by the creative use of instructional technology and more careful assessment of learning outcomes. We wanted to be sure that Wellesley was participating in these debates and was self-consciously positioned within what we saw as a growing movement in higher education, even if we found ourselves standing at times in reasoned opposition to elements of it.

In retrospect, what did we accomplish? The systems-change approach advocated in the 1996 report on experiential learning did influence the faculty, in part because we were strategic in the faculty fellows we enlisted, in part because we avoided further faculty votes, and in part because we were fortunate to secure extensive donor support. We worked to build meaningful faculty engagement, and we learned from experience that the faculty would not be engaged directly. We learned that the only available recourse was a different strategy, a growth strategy, working by indirection, slowly building alliances, learning along the way. We made small inroads that gradually opened wider pathways.

In general, our approach facilitated innovation by faculty members inclined toward experiential learning, but left a less visible imprint on the entire faculty than would have been made by an initiative more deeply planted in the classroom and the academic year. The incentives for new course development must have been inadequate in amount or design; very few Wellesley courses have a service-learning component. While the college has devoted significant resources to providing high-quality experiential opportunities for large numbers of students, and while many of these opportunities are directly connected to the curriculum (international study and undergraduate research in particular), many others (notably internships and service opportunities) are not, leaving students on their own—with the notable exception of the annual Tanner Conference—to connect what they are learning on campus to their extracurricular work.

In conclusion, we note that our story unfolded in a tiny corner of the nation’s vast and varied higher education establishment. The residential liberal arts college, although a “distinctively American” symbol of the very idea of “college” (Koblik and Graubard 2000), accounts for less than 1 percent of enrolled undergraduates. Yet highly selective residential liberal arts colleges are, in many ways, the institutions best suited to take up the cause of producing graduates who will, as so many of their mission statements promise, not only make a difference in the world but make a better world. The emphasis these schools place on teaching; their intimacy of scale; the dedication and quality of their faculty, staff, and trustees; and the support they enjoy from generations of loyal graduates are great assets. So too is the general feeling that, at heart, what they are (or should be) doing is transforming young people into responsible and caring adults with the reasoning skills and the courage to defend the ethical distinctions and judgments that will inform their decisions through lives of learning in the service of causes larger than themselves.

But it cannot be said that these institutions, as a group, are in the vanguard of the movement to broaden the aims of an excellent liberal education. Nor, as a whole, are the most selective research universities. Would it matter if they were out front leading the charge? We think it might, but we see serious obstacles to this leadership in the structures of...
these colleges and universities and, specifically, in faculty dynamics. The structural barriers are by no means unique to the top-ranked institutions, but they are most clearly visible there—not because their faculty are uniquely difficult, but because they are uniquely powerful.

In the top research universities, first of all, efforts to align teaching with pedagogies of effective practice do not “count” in the metrics that matter to faculty. In a system that disproportionately rewards research over teaching, few incentives encourage faculty seeking tenure to commit the time needed to design and incorporate new pedagogies into their courses. At liberal arts colleges—where good teaching is expected and rewarded—many faculty remain concerned about the extra time necessary to develop courses that contain meaningful field components. Senior faculty will openly say that they felt free to teach community-based learning courses only after they were tenured; some counsel junior colleagues to steer clear of this distraction until they have cleared the tenure bar.

Second, because many believe that pedagogies of effective practice are discipline-specific, they respond to calls for reform with the rejoinder, “that’s not what I do.” For faculty working within the scholarly traditions of laboratory science or social science fieldwork, hands-on learning has a practical and historical resonance. For faculty in other fields, however, new pedagogies focusing on student experience outside the classroom may seem inappropriate and disconnected from the methodological traditions in which they work. Humanists who teach close readings of texts or close encounters with works of art may feel that their forms of learning (“experiential” in their own way) are being devalued, and for those who by training and practice engage their research subjects individually, it’s not obvious how to collaborate with undergraduate students on research projects.

Faculty are naturally most skeptical of experiential opportunities they see as least closely aligned with a traditional liberal arts education and least relevant to the curriculum. While study at another academic institution or undergraduate research opportunities are relatively unobjectionable, educational experiences that take students out of the classroom for significant periods in an educational calendar perceived as a zero-sum game can provoke disagreements over how undergraduates should allocate their time and what constitutes “knowledge,” “learning,” or an “educational experience.”

While debates about the essence of a meaningful liberal arts curriculum are healthy and necessary for every college and university, too often they fail to address the pointed questions that might promote a more nuanced understanding of how and what students are learning: In what specific ways can active learning experiences enhance students’ learning? What institutional goals do these approaches address? What coherence, if any, is there among the varieties of experiential opportunities students are being offered? What is the relationship between traditional classroom learning and experiential learning opportunities? How should various experiences be sequenced through a student’s college “career”? Are there developmental stages at which particular experiences might be most beneficial, and how do the answers vary—by types of students, by disciplines, by other factors? How do students understand the place of individual experiential learning offerings in their overall education? How well-aligned are students’ goals with those of the institution?

Engaging faculty in useful conversations that will foster innovations in experiential learning will take time. Creative, patient, and persistent senior administrative teams will adroitly have to guide institutions of “higher learning” to themselves become “learning organizations,” advancing what Derek Bok (2006, 333) calls “a campuswide process of renewal and improvement.” We can only hope they can move fast enough to keep up with the pace of change.

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TO REFLECT ON THEIR EXPERIENCES at a private liberal arts college, ten students of color met with the president, key administrators, and several white faculty members a few weeks before graduation. All from low-income families and urban environments, these undergraduates had entered the institution through a program designed to protect them from the alienation and disengagement often experienced by underrepresented students. Before the start of their freshman year, this cohort was equipped with resistant responses to the racist stereotypes and differential treatment they would likely encounter, they were socialized to rely on each other for friendship and support, and they were exposed to recent liberal arts college alumni who shared with them useful navigational insights. In sum, they entered this predominantly white institution prepared to productively confront racially stressful educational conditions. Four years later, they attended a meeting to reflect as seniors on how strikingly different their college experiences were from what they had initially expected.

Most notably, they felt institutional agents had done a commendable job of engaging them, both inside and outside the classroom. Each student described meaningful collaborative experiences with professors on campus. Given the racial homogeneity of the faculty and administration, they were admittedly surprised to have been sought out for participation in an array of enriching educational experiences. The four who studied abroad characterized the experience as life-changing. Those who spent summers working in professional settings related to their majors spoke enthusiastically about the value internships added to their classroom learning and readiness for postcollege endeavors. All expressed gratitude for the effort educators expended not only to make them feel welcome, but also to ensure they graduated with the same outcomes and portfolios of rich learning experiences long enjoyed by white students at the college. Finally, seven of the ten attributed their admission to highly selective graduate schools to the investment professors had made in them; the remaining three suspected they would have fared less well on the job market had they not been afforded opportunities to enhance their leadership, problem-solving, and communication skills via out-of-class activities, student organizations, and service learning experiences.

This fictitious story indicates what is possible when educators and administrators take seriously the responsibility of engaging diverse student populations in educationally purposeful ways. The ten students’ reflections substantiate claims regarding equity and inclusiveness that institutions make in admissions materials, on Web sites, and in mission statements. Furthermore, their assessment of the college experience differs markedly from what has been routinely reported in higher education research concerning the disengagement and alienation of racial minorities at predominantly white institutions.

In this article, race-conscious student engagement is offered as a method likely to

SHAUN R. HARPER

Race-Conscious Student and the Equitable Distribution

Race-conscious student engagement can compel more racial minority students to reflect on powerful learning opportunities, institutional enablers of achievement, and outcomes-productive experiences.
Engagement Practices of Enriching Educational Experiences
compel more racial minority students to reflect on powerful learning opportunities, institutional enablers of achievement, and outcomes-productive experiences similar to those described by the seniors in the story. This version of student engagement is defined, and the benefits it accrues for faculty members and institutions overall are made clear later in the article. But first, current racial gaps in the engagement of undergraduates are illuminated and discussed.

**Racial disparities in high-impact educational experiences**

In a 2006 article, University of Southern California researchers Edlyn Vallejo Peña, Estela Mara Bensimon, and Julia Colyar observed that “not only do African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans have lower graduation rates than whites and Asian Americans, they also experience inequalities in just about every indicator of academic success—from earned grade point average to placement on the dean’s list to graduation rates in competitive majors” (48). While these and other racialized outcomes disparities cannot be attributed to a narrow set of explanatory factors, one thing is known for sure: college students who are actively engaged inside and outside the classroom are considerably more likely than their disengaged peers to persist through baccalaureate degree attainment.

How students are advantaged by educationally purposeful engagement has been well documented and clearly explained (Harper and Quaye 2009; Kuh et al. 2007; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Also, Rendón (1994) has revealed the academic and interpersonal benefits associated with using engagement opportunities to validate racial minority students, particularly at colleges and universities where they are underrepresented. Furthermore, engaged students typically accrue the desired outcomes that are central to liberal education—knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, personal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning (Association of American Colleges and Universities 2007).

The Enriching Educational Experiences benchmark on the National Survey of Student Engagement (2008) includes a robust set of activities that are known to enhance student learning and development:

- having serious conversations with peers from different ethnic backgrounds, religious faiths, and political orientations
- actively participating in student organizations and out-of-class activities
- using the Internet, instant messaging, and other electronic resources to work collaboratively on class assignments
- participating in a learning community or some other formal program where groups of students enroll together in two or more common classes
- taking foreign language courses
- completing an independent study or self-designed major under the supervision of a faculty member

In addition to these, Indiana University Professor George D. Kuh (2008) has identified a set of “high-impact” educational practices that necessitate active learning and sustained engagement, such as study abroad programs, service-learning opportunities, undergraduate research programs, summer internships, and senior year capstone projects.

Kuh highlights these high-impact practices as being particularly profound because they require students to interact in educationally purposeful ways with professors and peers, including those who are different from themselves, often over extended time periods. Another feature of these practices is that students typically receive substantive feedback on their performance while becoming more skillful at synthesizing and applying what they learn in one setting (e.g., a community service site) to another environment or situation (e.g., an internship or the classroom). Additionally, they afford students deeply reflective opportunities to clarify their personal values and better
understand themselves in relation to others. Specifically regarding racial minority students, Kuh uses data from the National Survey of Student Engagement to acknowledge the compensatory effects of engagement in these high-impact practices. For example, he notes that, as they became more actively engaged, lower-achieving Latino first-year students earned grade point averages that surpassed those of their white counterparts. Also, highly engaged black students were more likely to exceed their white peers in persistence toward baccalaureate degree attainment. Kuh concludes that, “while participation in effective educational activities generally benefits all students, the salutary effects are even greater for students who begin college at lower achievement levels, as well as students of color, compared with white students” (19).

Despite the magnitude of these high-impact engagement experiences, racial minority undergraduates are considerably less likely than their white peers to enjoy the educational benefits associated with them, as shown in Table 1 (below). At first glance, engagement differences between white seniors and their racial minority peers may seem trivial. However, taken as a whole, the sum of these gaps is both troubling and noteworthy. Across the five experiences, white students cumulatively outnumber Latinos by 23 percent, blacks by 20 percent, and Asian Americans by 6 percent. Service learning is the only high-impact activity in which racial minorities are invariably more engaged than white students. At the end of his report, Kuh offers several important suggestions for improving achievement and increasing student engagement in high-impact educational experiences. In the next section, I offer an approach to educational practice that can effectively close racialized engagement gaps between students of color and their white peers.

**What are race-conscious engagement practices?**

Effective educational practice demands consciousness of the environmental factors that either stifle or enable engagement among racially diverse groups of students. Such awareness should compel educators and administrators to respond in ways that increase their capacity to normalize the kinds of experiences described by the ten students of color at the beginning of this article. What I propose here is a version of student engagement that is fundamentally different from commonly accepted definitions of the term.

In my view, effective educators treat engagement as a verb, rather than a noun, and attribute the presence of engagement inequities to institutional dysfunction. That is, the popular approach of only determining what students do to become engaged must be counterbalanced by examinations of what educators do to engage students. Put differently, questions concerning effort must be shifted from the individual student to her or his institution. Effective educators avoid asking, what’s wrong with these students, why aren’t they getting engaged? Instead, they aggressively explore the institution’s shortcomings and ponder how faculty members and administrators could alter their practices to distribute the benefits of engagement more equitably. Accepting institutional responsibility for minority student engagement and success is the first step to race-conscious educational practice.

**Table 1. Percent Participation in High-Impact Activities among College Seniors by Race**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Research with Faculty</th>
<th>Study Abroad</th>
<th>Service Learning</th>
<th>Internship</th>
<th>Senior Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>African American/Black</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: National Survey of Student Engagement, as cited in Kuh (2008)*
Also important is the distinction between equality (treating all students the same) and equity (giving students what they need to accrue the same outcomes as others in a particular context). Race-conscious educators acknowledge qualitative differences in the experiences of racial minority students, especially when few are enrolled and same-race mentors are in short supply. Pitzer College, for example, enrolled a total of twenty black male undergraduates and employed only three full-time black faculty members in 2007; Earlham College enrolled thirteen Latina undergraduates, but employed only one Latina professor full time in 2007 (National Center for Education Statistics 2008). Race-conscious educators
understand that on campuses such as these, the underrepresentation of certain minority groups requires tremendous institutional effort to make equitable the powerful educational outcomes associated with active engagement. This would entail, for instance, professors deliberately inviting minority students who ask interesting questions in class to their offices afterward to brainstorm ways in which they might collaboratively explore deeper insights into such questions.

At the many institutions that are demographically similar to Pitzer and Earlham, expecting minority undergraduates to comfortably initiate interactions with faculty, seek out engagement opportunities with the same ease as their white peers, and visit campus offices staffed by people who lack cultural competence, unfairly puts the onus entirely on the students. Contrarily, institutional agents who embody what Peña, Bensimon, and Colyar (2006) call “equity-mindedness” proactively foster collaborative relationships with and on behalf of students who are likely to be harmed or distracted by racism, routine racial microaggressions and stereotyping, and constant reminders of their underrepresentation. In response to previously noted racial differences in study abroad, for example, instead of presuming racial minority students will be self-inspired to inquire about overseas learning opportunities, staff in the international programs office should work with ethnic culture centers, professors who teach ethnic studies courses, and leaders of minority student organizations to more effectively disseminate information. Also, assembling a panel of racial minority students who previously studied abroad to reflect on their experiences and demystify the application process is another way of making such opportunities more attractive to their same-race peers.

Race-conscious educators do not embrace colorblindness. They understand that “I do not see color” is an overused and offensive way of denying the unique experiential realities of racial minority students in predominantly white situations. Instead, these educators engage in qualitative questioning as a form of assessment. They regularly invite students to describe how they experience classrooms and the larger campus environment, to disclose how they spend their time outside the classroom, to articulate their expectations of the institution and its agents, and to recommend ways the institution can enhance their learning, development, and engagement. Race-consciousness compels educators to use firsthand insights from students in self-reflective ways by attentively pondering such questions as, how do I contribute to the cyclical production of engagement disparities that disadvantage racial minority students? How can I more deliberately engage these students in my research and other value-added, enriching educational experiences on campus? What have I done to help racial minorities who have taken my courses get into competitive graduate schools? How do personal biases and stereotypes affect my engagement with racial minority students?

Race-conscious educational practice also occurs without the tokenization of racial minorities. While educators and administrators should enact their engagement efforts with a high degree of intentionality, they must avoid congratulating themselves on working closely with one, two, or only a few of these students. Alternatively, they ought to collaborate with engaged students to strategically get other underrepresented minorities involved in high-impact activities. Lastly, race-consciousness requires replacing confessions of inadequacy (“I don’t really know how to get minority students engaged”) with committed efforts to remediate personal and professional shortcomings. This occurs through reading the student engagement literature, attending conferences where practical suggestions for engaging diverse student populations are offered, seeking corrective assistance from experienced colleagues, and pursuing instructive insights and creative techniques from high-performing institutions that effectively engage racial minority students. (For additional strategies, see Harper and Quaye 2009.)

**How engagement can be mutually beneficial**

For sure, race-conscious student engagement, at least as described in the previous section, requires considerable effort from institutional agents. So, why would an administrator or faculty member voluntarily engage in all the
practices necessary to engage racial minority students? On its own, an altruistic response like “because it is the right thing to do” is shortsighted. If that were indeed a sufficient motivator, more educators would already be actively engaged in working to close racialized engagement gaps between minority students and their white peers. Critical race theorists posit that whites who endeavor to improve the status and conditions of racial minorities rarely do so without first identifying the personal costs and gains associated with such efforts (Delgado and Stefancic 2001). Thus, it is important to make clear how majority persons will benefit from their work with and on behalf of minorities. Not well documented in the higher education literature are the educational profits conferred to individual faculty and predominantly white institutions when racial minority students are engaged in an assortment of high-impact activities. To reveal these benefits, I continue the story introduced at the beginning of this article.

After listening to the ten seniors of color reflect on what they gained from participation in enriching educational experiences, the faculty and administrators shared their perspectives. A sociology professor began by talking about a paper she produced with a student of color who had been actively engaged in service-learning work. Reportedly, this student’s deep understanding of poverty within the local community enriched their data analysis and enabled them to offer a powerful set of implications that the professor contends she would have been unable to conceptualize on her own. This example helped another faculty member recall his eight-week summer trip to Bolivia and how the Latino students who went along challenged him to reconsider erroneous interpretations he had long held about the culture. Later, after having previously received multiple rejections, he was finally able to get his article accepted for publication in a top Latin American studies journal. He attributed this and a range of instructional benefits to his study abroad experience with students who possessed a better understanding of Bolivian culture.

An assistant professor in the chemistry department confessed that she had attended predominantly white institutions all her life—in fact, there were no people of color in her doctoral program. Thus, her prior interactions with racial minorities had been practically nonexistent, and she began her faculty career with several misconceptions about their aptitude for high achievement in science. But working closely with one black male student on his senior thesis began to disrupt stereotypical views she had long held. Likewise, having a Native American senior work with her as a teaching assistant the following year also helped this faculty member become more comfortable interacting productively with people from different racial backgrounds.

Administrators in the meeting described how increasing minority student engagement had benefitted the institution. For example, the dean of enrollment management noted drastic improvements in first-to-second-year
persistence and four-year graduation rates. That is, as persistence and graduation rates escalated for minority students, the overall rates for the college increased. Another administrator quickly acknowledged how these higher rates boosted the college’s upward movement in the most recent U.S. News & World Report ranking of liberal arts colleges. Moreover, the director of career services added that companies seeking to hire a diverse workforce were finally starting to recruit from the college because minority students were graduating with portfolios of experiences that set them apart from their counterparts at other institutions. And the president praised her colleagues for helping the college overcome its longstanding reputation as an alienating environment for students of color; as a result, racial minorities were applying and enrolling in record numbers. More importantly, the institution was finally starting to make good on its promise to offer an inclusive living-learning environment for all students, the president added. She also shared data on the increase in donations from young alumni of color, as well as a roster of recent alumni of color who were enrolled in highly selective graduate and professional degree programs at major universities across the country.

Again, this story indicates what is possible when educators and administrators take seriously the responsibility of engaging diverse student populations in educationally purposeful ways. Indeed, everyone in the meeting recognized the mutual benefits conferred to the institution, the faculty, and the students of color as a result of race-conscious engagement practices. Although the story is fictitious, the benefits described are quite attainable.

Conclusion
In our 2009 book, Student Engagement in Higher Education: Theoretical Perspectives and Practical Approaches for Diverse Populations, Stephen John Quaye and I declared that “weak institutions are those that expect students to engage themselves. . . . A clear signal of institutional deficiency is when there are few ramifications for those who either blatantly refuse or unintentionally neglect to enact the practices known to produce rich outcomes for students” (6). Similarly, I argue here that an additional demonstration of institutional weakness is the mishandling of effective educational practices that could help close racialized gaps in engagement and student outcomes. For institutions that publicly espouse commitments to diversity, the inequitable distribution of enriching educational experiences ought to be shameful. Race consciousness in practice offers promising rewards for minority students, white faculty, and the institution overall. The outcomes achieved through high-impact educational activities are too powerful for us to continue to allow some students to accrue them while disadvantaged others passively observe.

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aaau.org, with the author’s name on the subject line.

REFERENCES
MOST AMERICAN STUDENTS enter college at a time when they are still forging their identities and seeking a place in the world. Yet many or most of today’s students are increasingly dependent on their parents and stay more firmly connected to previous support networks via the “electronic tether” than did their predecessors. A recent e-mail from a close friend confirms that even well-intentioned parents are fulfilling their own desire to be needed by enabling dependent behavior. About two weeks after delivering her son to a private liberal arts college, my friend writes that “Biff [not his real name] has yet to say good-bye, but I.M. and cell phones keep us close. I have proofread a few [of his] papers . . . we are not missed.”

While it’s good to know that parents love and care for their kids, it’s also troubling to find that many students rely on their parents for help with papers and lab reports—and it’s disturbing that parents don’t see anything wrong with that. In a recent study (Hofer et al. 2009), 19 percent of students reported that parents proofread their papers and 14 percent admitted that parents edited their papers. Kennedy and Hofer (2007) found that, on average, college students communicate with their parents ten times per week. Recent surveys have also found that students want parents to be hovering and might even welcome additional parental input in student decision making (Hoover 2008). Not surprisingly, Hofer et al. (2009) found that the high frequency of communication is related to increased dependency and parental regulation of both academics and student behavior, and it is correlated with reduced student autonomy.

Many colleges have responded to the issue of “helicopter parents” with parent orientations, newsletters, and new administrative officers—parent coordinators who “manage” parental interactions with the university administration (Coburn 2006; Lum 2006). All of that is fine, but what about the students? We know that the most academically successful students are those who are self-regulating and responsible for their own behavior (Hofer, Yu, and Pintrich 1998). How can we prepare our students to take on the challenges of the twenty-first century, much less become leaders, if we can’t discourage them from relying on Mom and Dad?

We argue that the professoriate needs to be ever more mindful of the most basic goals of a college education and of how those timeless goals intersect with current student environments. More specifically, we suggest that curricula must be designed to move students toward ever-greater intellectual autonomy and self-confidence, obviating by design the need for dependency on previous mentors.

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pedagogies. In our year of discussions, we learned that individualized learning can also occur in thoughtfully structured seminars and courses, even large ones, in which students play a significant role in their own learning. Equally important to individualized learning is an atmosphere that nurtures diverse interests, values initiative, and celebrates accomplishment. It is our view that the emergence of distinct individuals—independent thinkers, leaders, and innovators—depends on a commitment to individualized liberal learning.

Studies show that giving students increasing responsibility for their own learning, even in group settings, builds autonomy. In fact, McGlynn (2005) and others argue that millennial students may best be engaged by cooperative learning exercises and decision making that is part of coursework. Similarly, Hawker (2000) and others argue that individual learning ought not to take place in isolation, and they exhort college professors to design coursework that puts students in close working relationships with both instructors and other students, where students can practice what they are learning.

At Lawrence University, the use of collaborative environments is key. Over the years, Lawrence has moved to a developmental model when thinking of our curricula, both at university and departmental levels. We have infused inquiry-based, active-learning techniques throughout the curriculum, in keeping with research in the fields of education and cognitive science that demonstrates the increased effectiveness of less-traditional pedagogy (e.g., National Research Council 2000). We further argue that our students are well served by the input of a diverse set of peers and mentors, to understand both the breadth of human knowledge and experience and the various possible reactions to that experience. The use of collaborative environments has the added benefit of being less costly than exclusive tutorial instruction, while helping students prepare to jump into more independent learning environments later in their college careers and beyond.

Building autonomy: The transition to critical thinking and analysis

At Lawrence University, students take their first steps toward intellectual autonomy in Freshman Studies, a two-term course that serves as an introduction to liberal learning. Created in 1945 by then President Nathan Pusey, Freshman Studies is a collaborative, multidisciplinary effort, with faculty members from every academic department each working with about fifteen students on texts from a common syllabus drawn from all areas of the liberal arts. Recent syllabi have included works by Stanley Milgram, Elizabeth Bishop, Plato, and John Coltrane.

How can such a course fit into a program of individualized learning? Don’t all the students read the same works at the same time? The answer to those questions begins with the dedication of individual faculty members, who often spend hours working with small groups of students on papers and oral presentations. The point of those sessions is not simply to correct mistakes or clear up the argument; it is instead to help students understand what interests or grabs them about a text—and thus to suggest that, unlike the writing they did in high school, college-level papers and essays must be engaged with meaningful problems and questions. Further, by teaching freshman studies in a seminar setting, we strike a balance between intimidating first-year students with intense individual attention while providing individual challenges and supportive encouragement for students. Typically, a first-year student has begun to read more closely, write more carefully, and indeed to think independently after Freshman Studies. That is, he or she has cast off a familiar identity, that of a passive receiver of knowledge, and begun to take on another, that of an engaged thinker.

Research opportunities at the introductory level: The natural sciences.

Having discussed the multidisciplinary introduction to the liberal arts provided by Freshman Studies, we will now describe ways in which individualized learning is applied within disciplinary areas to help students learn to think and create knowledge.

We begin with the natural sciences, noting that the National Research Council and the National Science Foundation have both called for early exposure to research in science disciplines. Undergraduate research significantly increases students’ understanding of science, their confidence, and their expectations of earning advanced degrees (Russell, Hancock, and McCullough 2007). Research experiences at the introductory level also enhance learning outcomes. Student researchers
not only become more knowledgeable about their research subjects, but they also learn how to ask questions, look for additional information, integrate new facts into an existing framework, and pose new problems productively. In short, they become independent learners (Merkel 2003).

While all the science departments at Lawrence are committed to inquiry-based methods, we focus here on the introductory biology course serving just over one hundred students in two course offerings per year. Each student, in a team with two or three others, works with a faculty mentor to design and implement a five-week research project. Faculty members designate broad topics as appropriate for short projects, such as “insect behavior” or “DNA fingerprinting,” and advertise their general areas of expertise so students who have project ideas of their own can find mentors.

In undertaking these projects, we have several goals for student learning. As part of taking on the role of active scientists, students must narrow a broad topic of interest to an answerable research question, design a well-controlled experiment to address the question, and learn to implement their plans. Faculty mentors guide the scientific process and the preparation of final oral reports, but the projects belong to the students. For most students, this is their first college-level science course, but they are already getting the opportunity to flex their creative muscles and hone their organizational and collaborative skills in ways that parallel the methods of practicing scientists. They gain ownership of their projects, of the spaces in the building, and of their own learning; they are becoming “disciplined” in every sense of the word.

Among the respondents to a voluntary online survey, 80 percent of recent graduates and 87 percent of current students either agreed or strongly agreed that their introductory research project was an important part of their education. Interestingly, recent graduates valued these projects even more highly than did current students. Given the success of research projects at the introductory level, we have included student-directed research projects in intermediate and advanced laboratory
Individualized instruction in a collaborative context: The social sciences

Hands-on learning through research is not limited to the natural sciences. The collaborative, mentoring approach taken by the Lawrence psychology department treats students as creative individuals and budding scholars. Instead of learning about psychology in a passive manner, students engage in collaborative scholarly pursuits, learning perhaps the most important aspects of psychological inquiry: the processes involved in creating new theories and novel research to test meaningful hypotheses about the human condition. Such varied opportunities ensure that each student gains critical-thinking skills, hones his or her creative talents, and gains an understanding of the interplay between theory and research.

Although the psychology major is the second largest in the college, the curriculum ensures that each major will have many opportunities to work closely with faculty mentors on research and theoretical projects. The sophomore research methods sequence is centered on small-group collaborative projects designed by teams of two to three students. Over the course of twenty weeks, students create a research question, do background research, design and execute their studies, analyze results using appropriate statistical tools, write a manuscript using American Psychological Association guidelines, and present their findings in a poster session. The research methods project provides students with a formative learning experience and often leads to independent studies and capstone projects in which they explore their interests in greater depth. These projects have led to twenty conference presentations and publications coauthored by students and faculty since 1990, suggesting that the course motivates students to continue their independent learning and to disseminate their findings.

To provide students with a culminating experience during their senior year, we developed a two-term senior capstone sequence in which small groups of students meet in independent course sections supervised by a faculty mentor. Groups of seven to ten students each form a capstone class based on their interests so that a knowledgeable collaborative environment can be fostered. The sections discuss topical and project-related readings, offer constructive criticism of each other’s work, and provide a sounding board for ideas and problems. Discussions, papers, and presentations are all designed to develop students’ abilities to conceptualize important questions within the context of the discipline, formulate answers to those questions, and present ideas clearly and cogently in both written and oral form. This developmental sequence, anchored by research methods and the senior capstone, not only sharpens skills and builds confidence, but it also nurtures intellectual autonomy.

Intellectual community and individual growth: The humanities

Faculty members in the humanities, particularly in the foreign languages, have been using immersion weekends, technology-based learning tools, and off-campus travel to foster intellectual growth for many years. More recently, other humanities disciplines have incorporated methods courses and student-directed projects into their core curricula. One such example at Lawrence is found in the history department, where the senior capstone course, the Practice of History, entails more of a communal experience—or, if you prefer, a more social-democratic one, whose motto might well be “it takes a village.”

Students arrive at Practice, at least in theory, with a paper topic that has been worked out previously in a seminar, tutorial, or independent study. Each class section of no more than fifteen students is overseen by one professor, whose primary role is to help focus and shape the final product. The students thus become members of a collaborative scholarly community designed to guide each of them toward the composition of a substantial and original piece of historical writing based on primary sources.

The communal nature of this enterprise becomes apparent on the first day of class, a library workshop overseen by one of Lawrence’s fine research librarians, who, as she hears the students describe their projects in class, begins to construct individualized, Web-based research maps for each, highlighting various paths toward relevant sources. For further scholarly support, students may call on a second faculty adviser—typically, the member of the history
department who is most expert on their topic. The same faculty member also serves as second reader of the final paper. The body of the course amounts to an extended group tutorial on historical research and writing. Students are guided through a series of written assignments, from a short primary source exercise through a full rough draft. Here again, the professor plays a shepherding role, pulling and prodding each student toward greater clarity, stronger focus, more effective organization, and better mechanics. But the students also pull and prod one another. Organized by topic into groups of three or four, they read and comment on each other’s work, offering the crucial perspective of an intellectual peer who does not necessarily know, say, who Heraclitus was, or why the Watts riots took place. In sum, the Practice of History creates for each student an academic community to which each is responsible. Students must both give and receive criticism, thoughtful insights, and support as well as learn to argue their points and construct a historical story.

One of our favorite Practice of History success stories is that of a young man who in four years at Lawrence had almost never spoken in class. The student in question, a record-setting wide receiver for Lawrence’s football team, lived for nine weeks in quiet terror of the fifteen-minute presentation of his paper. But by week ten, he had become so immersed in Iowa’s so-called “cow wars” of the 1930s, so conversant with the topic, that he delivered one of the most engaging talks heard since the inception of the course. He spoke with an unforced fluency for twenty minutes and fielded questions with aplomb for another ten. Today, he is a popular history teacher at a local high school.

The success of the Practice of History hinges less on the unique, one-on-one relationship between student and professor than on the student-centric nature of the enterprise. Each student in Practice becomes the focal point of an adjustable scholarly network custom designed to foster his or her intellectual growth and autonomy.

Conclusion

While none of us fully understands the ramifications of the increased electronic tethering of our current students to their families and friends, it is clear that many students are
extending the time period of their emotional and academic dependence. It is our hope that by creating curricula that explicitly address issues of independence of thought and action we can maintain the positive effects of tethering and build upon the collaborative spirit of millennial students, while also fostering the intellectual autonomy that will allow students to reach their full potential.

We have evidence that our concerted curricular initiatives in the area of individualized learning are having a positive impact on student development. While we may not have grounded the “helicopter parents,” we seem to be rerouting the traffic: students beyond the freshman year use parents as editors much less frequently than first-year students; more importantly, they seek out student-driven learning opportunities in very high numbers. Our recent studies have found that enrollments in independent studies and tutorials (student-driven courses of study that go beyond the established curriculum) have been steadily rising. In 2005–6, with a total enrollment of 1,450 students, 477 credit-bearing tutorials and independent studies were offered; 85 percent of these had a one-to-one student-to-faculty ratio. In 2008–9, those number rose to 526 individualized learning courses (84 percent were one-to-one) with a total enrollment of 1,496 students. Since faculty members deem such courses as successful only when the students are the main driving force behind their own learning, and since a survey of faculty opinion revealed that faculty members rate 85 percent of all offerings as successful, we conclude that our students are becoming intellectually curious, autonomous, and willing to direct their own learning in a sustained and deep way.

To make even more explicit to students our goals for the development of student intellectual autonomy, the college will soon begin a program of senior experiences. Further, to reward faculty for their enthusiastic support of highly individualized curricula, we will begin a faculty incentive program linked to additional opportunities for professional development. If Peter Kugel (1993) is correct that a focus on students’ independence is the fifth and final stage in the development of highly proficient teachers, perhaps the faculty development piece is the most important.

In summary, it is our belief that the current professoriate needs to devise new ways to advance the intellectual development of traditional college-age students who are ever more tethered to their parents and high school support networks. We have evidence that curricula rich in individualized learning opportunities succeeds in fostering a culture of intellectual autonomy on campus that nourishes the growth of each student.

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aacu.org, with the authors’ names on the subject line.

REFERENCES


EACH YEAR, the University of the Pacific, where I teach, participates in the Coop-
erative Institutional Research Program Freshman Survey. One item on the survey
asks students to identify their “reasons for going to college”: nine reasons are listed,
students rank “all that apply,” and the results reflect the percentages identifying
each reason as “very important.” In 2005, the year we created
our current freshman seminar sequence, our students’ top three
reasons for going to college were “to get a better job” (78 percent), “to get training
for a specific career” (75 percent), and “to be able to make more money” (70 per-
cent). Fifth on the list was “to gain a general education and appreciation of ideas”
(61 percent); seventh was “to become a more cultured person” (42 percent). Con-
trast this with the four clusters of essential learning outcomes identified by the As-
sociation of American Colleges and Universities (2008): knowledge of human
cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, per-
sonal and social responsibility, and integrative and applied learning.

How do we, as college educators, reconcile these seemingly different goals?
On the one hand, we might appeal to a business model and simply give the “cus-
tomers”—our students—what they say they want. But on the other hand, most
professors realize that we have an obligation to augment our students’ goals and to
tell them what their careerist emphasis lacks. And tell we do, often through fresh-
man seminars. Indeed, the University of the Pacific has an excellent required, first-
semester freshman seminar that confronts students with the question, what is a
good society? Students are instantly transported into the world of liberal education
while honing their critical-thinking skills through interdisciplinary reading, discus-
sion, and writing. And for most students, the seminar successfully creates an ab-
tract intellectual challenge; for only a few, however, is it transformative.

I suggest that we need to do more than tell students how to expand upon their
careerist reasons for going to college; we also need to help them feel the value of
that expansion. I recognize that this is part of the motivation for proposed struc-
tural changes to undergraduate education, such as integrated learning models, but
those structural solutions must also support carefully constructed content that
fosters both emotional engagement and intellectual development. In my experi-
ence, positive feelings—curiosity, empathy, security—are the keys that unlock the
intellect for many students.

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Discussions of strategies for increasing access to higher education for disadvantaged students tend largely to focus—correctly—on socioeconomic factors. Yet by focusing on the ways we differ, we neglect the core unifying principle of our humanity: our feelings. “Emotion,” as Dacher Keltner explains (2009, ix), “is the source of a meaningful life.” And in terms of access to a meaningful life, most students are disadvantaged. I could point to the media and materialism, to latchkey kids and drug use, to overcrowded and underfunded public schools, or to standardized testing and apathetic parents; but, for college professors, one source of the problem hits much closer to home: our own banishment of emotion from the realm of the intellect.

In *How We Think*, John Dewey reminded us that “human beings are not normally divided into two parts, the one emotional, the other coldly intellectual” (1986, 321). But somehow “doing school” has become narrowed to the absorption of facts and, if we’re lucky, the critical (but strictly rational) examination of ideas. Is it any wonder, then, that our students’ reasons for going to college have contracted to the narrowly quantifiable as well? All too often, we give them no alternatives—particularly for first-generation students, who may be less familiar with the cultural traditions of liberal education. Dewey went on to say that “unless there is a fusion of the intellectual and the emotional, . . . problems and questions, which are the only true instigators
of reflective activity, will be more or less externally imposed and only half-heartedly felt and dealt with.” College educators need to recognize emotion as a part of knowing.

The Pursuit of Happiness
For the past three years, I have had the tremendous privilege of designing and teaching a course that accomplishes just this type of fusion. For our second-semester freshman seminar courses, Pacific professors are asked to draw upon and expand a theme from the fall course, What Is a Good Society? I was particularly struck by the fact that after students in our fall course read the Declaration of Independence and encounter the unalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, they turn to a chapter on politics, law, and citizenship that interrogates questions of personal liberty but avoids any explicit discussion of happiness. This is hardly surprising. Culturally, we tend to dismiss happiness as too subjective and relativistic for serious study, believing that abstract but easily measured notions of justice are the more legitimate purview of college courses. However, in my course, called simply the Pursuit of Happiness, we investigate this right to happiness. Our study is intellectually rigorous and, because it requires personal engagement, profoundly transformative.

In the course, we discuss ideas and read widely from ancient and current history, psychology, economics, and literature. Additionally, the students construct a three-part self-analysis project. First, they keep a personal journal for thirty days to document the physical (e.g., how much sleep they get), social (e.g., how much time they spend connecting with other people), and spiritual (e.g., what they are grateful for) components of their sense of well-being. Then, they graph and report their data, looking for trends and interrelationships. Finally, they create individual “future happiness plans” by analyzing their data from the points of view of four of our authors. After completing this assignment, they embark on a final project that bridges the gap between personal happiness and public policy. Students work in research groups either to explore an aspect of society they feel is causing widespread unhappiness and create a plan for correcting the problem, or to identify a positive source of well-being and create a plan to maximize the good.

I know there are those who might dismiss a class on happiness as lightweight or “touchy-feely.” However, I assure you that not only do my students work, but they work in dimensions many of them have never explored before. They become aware—some for the first time—of what it means to be human. Nothing has made me more aware of and sympathetic to our shared human experience than reading my students’ journals. These journals reveal all—from the specific difficulties of abuse, anger, abortion, alcohol use, choosing a major, career angst, conflict with parents, death, sexuality, and stress, to the more abstract questions of purpose, true friendship, love, and meaning. The students are deeply connected
Nothing has made me more aware of and sympathetic to our shared human experience than reading my students’ journals.

Teaching the Pursuit of Happiness course has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my twenty-year career. And judging from the unprecedented number of thank-you cards I receive from students at the end of each semester, the gratification is reciprocal. For example, a thank-you card from an honors student in an accelerated science-based program speaks to the ways she had engaged with the course content, although she still leaned on my authorization to validate her choice: “This class has changed my life. I really appreciate all you have done for me, and I am grateful I was mentored by you. You have taught me so many skills for me to succeed in life, and I thank you for this. In fact, I am ‘slowing down’ in school and studying abroad just so I can be happy and relaxed.” For me, the greater pleasure came nearly two years later, when I received a second card from her overseas posting in Seville. That card showed not only that she had followed through on her resolution, but also that the course had empowered her to develop an experience she could own. She had found her own voice, and she used it to express both her observations and feelings with confidence and clarity. Her closing words were: “I wouldn’t trade this experience for anything.”

How can we, as educators, best facilitate real and lasting learning? William Perry described the need for students to make their own meaning, their need for “powerful learning” (Moore 2009). In response, I propose that educators should recognize the related need for powerful teaching—teaching that blends empathy and intellectual engagement, that empowers students to find rich, diverse, and personally meaningful answers to the question, why did you go to college?

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aacu.org, with the author’s name on the subject line.

REFERENCES
Moore, W. 2009. Using a developmental model to understand and promote powerful learning. Lecture presented at the University of the Pacific, Stockton, CA.
AAC&U gratefully acknowledges the foundations, corporations, government agencies, other organizations, and individuals supporting its programs from July 1, 2008, to June 30, 2009.

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I am very pleased to offer my sincere thanks, and that of AAC&U's board and staff, to the generous institutions and individuals listed below. These donors have provided support for AAC&U’s educational work in liberal education through grants, sponsorships, and gifts, and have made it possible for us to accomplish much more for our members and for the field than would have been possible with membership fees and earned income alone. Especially in these challenging economic times, our donors help us work toward a shared goal of providing the best liberal education for all college students, not just some of them. I am extremely grateful to our contributors for their confidence, generosity, and support.—CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER, PRESIDENT

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The Leadership Fund for Liberal Education establishes a way for individuals to provide leadership for liberal education through dedicated giving each year. Gifts to the Leadership Fund are currently restricted to our major initiative, Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP), and the Fund is a primary source of support for AAC&U’s LEAP campaign. Thanks to the generosity of the individuals and institutions listed below, the Leadership Fund for Liberal Education exceeded its annual goal this past year.

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PKAL and AAC&U gratefully acknowledge the vision of Daniel Sullivan, president emeritus of St. Lawrence University, who has successfully led both the planning and the fundraising for PKAL’s alliance with AAC&U.

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