



VOL. 91, NO. 3 ♦ SUMMER/FALL 2005

# Liberal Education

## **Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility**

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**A Review of the Literature  
Teaching Ethical Excellence**

**Academic Dishonesty and  
Educational Opportunity**

ASSOCIATION OF AMERICAN COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES







SUMMER/FALL  
2005

**EDUCATING  
FOR PERSONAL  
AND SOCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY**

## C O N T E N T S

- 2 STATEMENT OF SUPPORT IN THE  
AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE KATRINA

■ ■ ■

### FEATURED TOPIC

- 6 FOSTERING PERSONAL & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY  
ON COLLEGE & UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES

*By Richard H. Hersh and Carol Geary Schneider*

Higher education must do more to emphasize the development of personal and social responsibility as core outcomes of a liberal education, and robust assessments of these outcomes must be developed. The time is right for a visible national effort to advance these goals.

- 14 EDUCATING FOR PERSONAL & SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY:  
A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

*By Lynn E. Swaner*

In 2004, AAC&U commissioned a review of the relevant literature and research on the development of personal and social responsibility during college. This article is an abridgement of the review.

- 22 TEACHING ETHICAL EXCELLENCE: ARTFUL RESPONSE-ABILITY,  
CREATIVE INTEGRITY, CHARACTER OPUS

*By Bill Puka*

Many of the programs designed to help students develop their moral insight and reasoning skills are too narrowly focused. This look at the various program foci as components of a more inclusive program encourages consideration of how some main themes can be enhanced.

- 26 IT TAKES A VILLAGE: ACADEMIC DISHONESTY  
& EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY

*By Donald L. McCabe*

A liberal education encourages students to accept responsibility for the ethical consequences of their ideas and actions. Thus, the goal is not simply to reduce cheating.

- 32 STUDENT CHEATING: AS SERIOUS AN ACADEMIC INTEGRITY  
PROBLEM AS FACULTY-ADMINISTRATION BUSINESS AS USUAL?

*By Bill Puka*

Issues of academic integrity must be considered within the larger context of campus culture, which is influenced by the ethical practices of faculty and administrators as well as students.

### COVER:

Rensselaer Polytechnic  
Institute



**“Our goal should not simply be to reduce cheating; rather, our goal should be to find innovative and creative ways to use academic integrity as a building block in our efforts to develop more responsible students and, ultimately, more responsible citizens.”**

—Donald L. McCabe

■ ■ ■

## LIBERAL EDUCATION & AMERICA'S PROMISE

### 36 WHAT REALLY MATTERS IN COLLEGE: HOW STUDENTS VIEW & VALUE LIBERAL EDUCATION

*By Debra Humphreys and Abigail Davenport*

The findings from a series of focus groups, held with high school and college students in four locations in different regions of the country, reveal student attitudes toward liberal education.

■ ■ ■

## PERSPECTIVES

### 44 INTEGRATED LEARNING AND RESEARCH ACROSS DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES: ENGAGING STUDENTS

*By Lucia Albino Gilbert, Paige E. Schilt, and Sheldon Ekland-Olson*

The University of Texas at Austin has launched two initiatives to integrate interdisciplinary study and participation in research into the core mission of undergraduate education. Both are rooted in the university's identity as a large and diverse research institution and designed to provide the majority of students with the kinds of unique educational opportunities typically reserved for honors students.

### 50 IS THERE A GLOBAL WARMING TOWARD WOMEN IN ACADEMIA?

*By Christine Hult, Ronda Callister, and Kim Sullivan*

Different types of universities are finding similar sources of dissatisfaction among women faculty in the sciences and engineering. Through participation in the National Science Foundation's ADVANCE Program, Utah State University seeks to analyze and address the "chilly climate" for these women on its campus.

■ ■ ■

## MY VIEW

### 58 SECULARISM & SPIRITUALITY IN TODAY'S ACADEMY: A HEURISTIC MODEL

*By Thomas B. Coburn*

The encounter of spirituality and secularism in liberal education holds high promise for helping the contemporary academy out of its centuries-long overemphasis on the secular.

■ ■ ■

## 1818 R STREET NW

### 4 FROM THE EDITOR

### 5 NEWS AND INFORMATION

### 63 INDEX

*IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE KATRINA, we have all been reminded of our connections to and shared responsibility for our fellow citizens and neighboring communities. Recent events have also raised pressing questions about the role of “public” institutions, including colleges and universities, in advancing the greater good. In the coming weeks and months, AAC&U will provide opportunities to explore these questions in its conferences, publications, and projects.*

*As a first step in the national dialogue about these issues, the Board of Directors of the Association of American Colleges and Universities issued the following statement on September 1, 2005.*

## STATEMENT OF SUPPORT IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANE KATRINA

It is becoming clearer by the hour that the impact of Hurricane Katrina on the Gulf Coast

### BOARD STATEMENT

region is catastrophic and unprecedented. The region continues to face the urgent

challenge of rescuing those in imminent peril and meeting the basic needs of those affected. It also clearly faces years of difficult recovery efforts, the burden of which will be disproportionately borne by the poor and those who now find themselves without homes, jobs, adequate insurance, or any material belongings or resources. On behalf of the entire AAC&U community, we express our profound concern for all those affected and pledge our support for those in need.

The impact of the hurricane on colleges and universities in the region—including thousands of students, faculty, administrators, and staff at local colleges and universities—has also been severe. The status of the coming school year for many students attending schools in the region remains uncertain. Colleges and universities in the region and educational leaders around the country are already playing key roles in meeting the needs of their own campus members and assisting in recovery efforts in their local communities. The staff of our sister organizations, led by the American Council on Education, are also working with state and federal policy makers to do what they can to ensure that students get the financial and bureaucratic assistance they might need to prevent any disruption of their college enrollment or financial aid.



In the midst of the devastation and despair, however, we are heartened by the stories of courage on the part of many local campus leaders, faculty, staff, and students and the outpouring of offers of support and help from so many of AAC&U's member campuses around the country. Many institutions have offered to accommodate displaced students and scores of individuals on campuses around the country are mobilizing to provide relief to the region. It is especially encouraging to see college students from around the country—with an inspiring commitment to public service—contributing to relief efforts and applying what they have learned in the hundreds of service-learning programs developed in recent years.

This mobilization of the academy's resources—human, material, spiritual, and educational—represents the best of American higher education. But we also know that we can always do more. We can learn from past experiences to prepare for future disasters and we can redouble our efforts to prepare students to be responsible citizens and leaders in times both of crisis and relative tranquility. As the immediate crises subside, the academy will also be called upon to provide opportunities for reflection and learning that will surely prove valuable as the nation copes with the immediate catastrophe and as it prepares to lessen the likelihood of future natural disasters.

At the same time, this event also provides a valuable opportunity for the nation—and its colleges and universities—to reflect on the root issues that make many Americans especially vulnerable in times of catastrophe. As David Brooks put it today in the *New York Times*, “Floods wash away the surface of society.... They expose the underlying power structures ... and the unacknowledged inequalities.” The academy continues to have a civic obligation not only to provide expertise to prepare for and respond to disasters, but also to help the nation redress the causes of the inequality and disenfranchisement made all too clear in the wake of such a disaster. We must teach students about these issues and inspire them to respond with reasoned inquiry, creative problem solving, compassionate concern, and a strong sense of social and civic responsibility for the long-term health of the democracy in which they live. AAC&U will do all it can to assist colleges and universities across the country as they rise to this civic challenge.

What do phrases like “moral education” mean within the context of both secular and religious universities, and whose morality ought to guide or influence the education of today’s students? Which duties to self and society are to be cultivated, and how? Does the academy have a legitimate role to play here? These sorts of questions have been explored along many different lines of thought—lines tending more toward intersection than convergence. In this issue, we adopt the phrase “educating for personal and social responsibility” as a useful, if still imperfect, way to mark their intersection within the context of a liberal education.

A liberally educated person is committed to intellectual honesty, accepts responsibility for the moral health of society and for social justice, and participates actively in the civic life of our

## FROM THE EDITOR

democracy. Bringing about that result is a vital but nonetheless difficult and un-

certain task. There’s the problem of language, for one thing. “Morality,” “spirituality,” “character,” and the like are heavily freighted terms, and many in the academy are uncomfortable with them for a variety of reasons. And even if colleges actually can significantly influence ethical or moral or civic development—and, in her review of the literature in this issue, Lynn Swaner suggests they can—it must be borne in mind that college is not a totalizing experience. The moral atmosphere within which the individual student operates is formed by many, often competing, influences.

Last fall, in order to identify and assess undergraduate education’s contribution, actual and potential, to students’ ethical and moral development, AAC&U and the John Templeton Foundation convened a national panel of leading educational researchers. The panel concluded that there is a need for greater emphasis on educating for personal and social responsibility as an essential purpose of liberal education, and urged development of robust assessments colleges and universities can use to demonstrate and improve upon their success in this regard. This issue of *Liberal Education*, supported by the Templeton Foundation, is an outgrowth of the panel’s discussions.

While it’s serviceable enough, the phrase “educating for personal and social responsibility” remains a sign of common questions, not common answers. Some of these questions are raised and explored, but by no means exhausted, in the articles in this issue.—DAVID TRITELLI

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AAC&U invites manuscripts that promote liberal learning in a broad sense. For writer’s guidelines and other communications see [www.aacu.org/liberaleducation](http://www.aacu.org/liberaleducation), write to the editor of *Liberal Education* at the above address, or send e-mail to [tritelli@aacu.org](mailto:tritelli@aacu.org).

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### **“Wingspread” Meeting Charts Campaign’s Future**

On July 11–12, at the historic Wingspread conference center, AAC&U and the Johnson Foundation cosponsored a planning meeting for the Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) campaign. Senior AAC&U and campaign leaders as well as Barbara Lawton—the lieutenant governor of Wisconsin, the state where advocacy activities will be piloted—focused on the development of a set of principles of excellence for student learning in college. These principles will provide the framework for the public messages of the campaign and serve as a compass for campuses seeking to align educational goals with the aims and purposes of a twenty-first century liberal education. Follow-up meetings will be held in the fall, and a draft of the principles will be shared for member comment at AAC&U’s 2006 annual meeting.

### **Grant to Support Pilot Effort**

The Carnegie Corporation of New York has awarded AAC&U a grant to support the LEAP pilot effort underway in the state of Wisconsin. Through a partnership between AAC&U and the University of Wisconsin system, the LEAP campaign is coordinated with the Currency of the Liberal Arts and Sciences: Rethinking Liberal Education in Wisconsin, an ongoing initiative of the Wisconsin system. Planned activities include a series of regional campus-community dialogues, focus groups with current college students and recent graduates, and the development of resources to help campuses communicate the value of liberal education and the importance of its key outcomes to current and incoming college students.

### **New Project on Global Learning**

With support from the Henry Luce Foundation, AAC&U has launched a new project designed to create a network of sixteen colleges and universities. Using global issues as an organizing principle for general education, these institutions will develop programs that prepare students for citizenship in a world of global change and interdependence. The project, called Shared Futures: General Education for Global Learning, is part of the AAC&U initiative Shared Futures: Global Learning and Social Responsibility.

### **Student Health and Well-Being**

The Bringing Theory to Practice Project, in partnership with AAC&U and with support from the Charles Engelhard Foundation, has awarded six grants to develop and evaluate new strategies for improving students’ health and civic engagement through deeper engagement with learning. The six recipient institutions will examine the relationships among engaged

forms of student learning, student well-being (including forms of depression and self-abusive behaviors involving alcohol and other substances), and the development of students’ civic responsibility and community engagement. Both qualitative and quantitative analyses measuring student and institutional outcomes and comparison group studies are planned.

### **Upcoming Meetings**

#### **Network for Academic Renewal**

- October 20–22, 2005, **Integrative Learning: Creating Opportunities to Connect**, Denver, CO.
- November 10–12, 2005, **The Civic Engagement Imperative: Student Learning and the Public Good**, Providence, RI.
- March 9–11, 2006, **General Education and Outcomes That Matter in a Changing World**, Phoenix, AZ.
- April 20–22, 2006, **Learning and Technology**, Seattle, WA.

#### **Annual Meeting**

- January 25–28, 2006, **Demanding Excellence: Liberal Education in an Era of Global Competition, Anti-intellectualism, and Disinvestment**, Washington, DC.

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RICHARD H. HERSH ■ CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER

# Fostering Personal & Social Responsibility

## on College & University Campuses

THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY had barely begun before the spirit of promise left in the wake of the Cold War was dispelled by a renewed sense of peril. Hopes for a “new world order” were dashed quickly and violently on September 11, 2001, when it became clear that nothing

less than our way of life is

at stake. There is indeed a new world, but order is not its nature. Moreover, where it exists at all, “order” still includes many of the same old oppressions that rightly offend the moral sensibilities of humankind. The murderous events of the past several years in such places as Bosnia, Rwanda, Sudan, the Middle East, and the United States fully discredit moral relativism. Yet they risk also subverting the essential urge and need to understand and engage each other, especially the foreign and the alien-to-us.

The power of the moment is noteworthy, not because the media tells us so over, and over, and over, but because of the powerful forces, emotions, and fundamental beliefs now in play. This is the moment to revalue the concepts of civilization and what it means to be fully human, to renew our commitment to tolerance and freedom, and to reawaken our awareness of worldwide interdependence and ecological contingency.

Understandably, students come to campuses today in a state of bewilderment about all of this—a mood that matches their transitional time of life and their innate curiosity, awakening, and questioning. Although campuses import much from the larger culture, they also have special problems of their own that contribute to the exigency of the moment. Campuses face the significant problems of cheating, alcohol and other drug abuse, violence, and a sharp rise in diagnosed depression and in self-destructive behaviors such as anorexia, bulimia, and suicide attempts. For institutions that seek to educate the “whole person,” the challenge of educating for personal and social responsibility has taken on new urgency.

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**Educating  
for personal and  
social responsibility  
will take  
nothing less than a  
pervasive  
cultural shift within  
the academy**





• Utah State University



### Responsibility

In an essay entitled “A Moral for an Age of Plenty,” the scientist-philosopher Jacob Bronowski (1978) tells the story of Louis Slotin, a tale that reveals in dramatic form the moral anatomy of the necessary interplay between personal and social responsibility. Slotin was a nuclear physicist who worked in the laboratories at Los Alamos to help develop the atomic bomb. In 1946 he was conducting an experiment in the lab that required assembling pieces of plutonium. He was nudging one piece toward another, by tiny movements, in order to ensure that their total mass would be large enough to make a chain reaction, and he was doing it, as experts are prone to do such things, with a screwdriver. The screwdriver stopped, and the pieces of plutonium came a fraction too close together. Immediately, the instruments everyone was watching registered a great upsurge of neutrons, which was the sign that a chain reaction had begun. Radioactivity was filling the room.

“Slotin moved at once,” Bronowski reports. “He pulled the pieces of plutonium apart with his bare hands. This was virtually an act of suicide, for it exposed him to the largest dose of radioactivity. Then he calmly asked his seven co-workers to mark their precise positions at the time of the accident in order that the degree of exposure of each one to the radioactivity could be fixed” (202). Having done this, and having alerted the medical service, Slotin apologized to his companions and said what turned out to be exactly true: he would die, and they would recover.

In Slotin’s response, we see in heroic proportions what morality is ordinarily made of. We see, first, an uncompromising sense that other people matter, an unconditional concern for preserving individual life and welfare. We see, too, a finely honed ability to size up a situation comprehensively and accurately, a tested capacity for systematic thought. Finally, we witness the courage to act. Slotin did not merely feel compassion and think efficiently; he separated the plutonium.

Morality, as Slotin’s case suggests, depends on the orchestration of humane caring, evaluative thinking, and determined action. Consider what would have happened in that lab if Slotin had expressed only one or two of these three faces of morality. If he had possessed the cool knowledge and quick intelligence of the scientist, but had

felt nothing for his coworkers, how “moral” would his response have been? On the other hand, had he been unable to assess the problem rationally, how effective would his caring have been? And, however magnanimous his motives and logical his reasoning, what would they have amounted to if he had failed to act? Morality is neither good motives nor right reason nor resolute action; it is all three.<sup>1</sup>

The very same characteristics typically associated with “personal responsibility” are inextricably linked to the development of social responsibility as well. Personal responsibility and social responsibility involve the moral obligation to both self and community, and both forms of responsibility rely upon such virtues as honesty, self-discipline, respect, loyalty, and compassion. The formation of these personal and social dispositions is powerfully influenced by the character of the community culture, and the community’s own integrity and vitality depends, in turn, on the values, actions, and contributions of its members.

### Is this our business?

The cultivation of virtues associated with what we label here as “personal and social responsibility” was a guiding principle for the original American liberal arts colleges. Following the framing of the U.S. Constitution, the colleges immediately owned a role in fostering the virtues required to sustain a self-governing republic. Drawing on this tradition, American colleges and universities continue to proclaim their role in fostering high ethical and moral standards. The mission of Duke University, for example, is “to provide a superior liberal education to undergraduate students, attending not only to their intellectual growth but also to their development as adults committed to high ethical standards and full participation as leaders in their communities.” Similarly, the mission of Swarthmore College recognizes that “a liberal education is concerned with the development of moral, spiritual, and aesthetic values as well as analytical abilities.” A recent study of 331 mission statements from top-ranked colleges and universities suggests that one-third of the campuses currently address values, character, ethical challenges, and/or social justice in their mission statements (Meacham and Gaff forthcoming).

Over the course of the twentieth century, however, the academy became increasingly



uncomfortable with the enactment of this role. Notwithstanding the evidence of a vestigial commitment found in mission statements, many educators are reluctant to address moral issues with students. Some fear imposing their own values on students;

others believe that morality is an inherently personal issue, or that teaching and learning should be restricted to subject matter and analytical skills. Although research shows that dimensions of personal and social responsibility do continue to develop in college (see Lynn Swaner's article in this issue), the question of whether institutions of higher education *should* educate for such development is often raised. The view that educating for personal and social responsibility may be

**The view that educating for personal and social responsibility may be “none of our business” is not at all uncommon**

“none of our business” is not at all uncommon.

Yet if, by their very nature as educational institutions, colleges and universities inescapably influence students' values and ethical development, then reflecting on and actively crafting this dimension

of education is appropriate. Along these lines, Berkowitz (1997, 18) has pointed out that “education inevitably affects character, either intentionally or unintentionally.” Similarly, Colby et al. (2003, xi) agree that “moral and civic messages are unavoidable in higher education” and argue that “it is better to pay explicit attention to the content of these messages and how they are conveyed than to leave students' moral and civic socialization to chance.”



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Moving beyond the argument that institutions of higher education provide moral education by default, many view colleges and universities as having an obligation to prepare morally astute individuals who will positively contribute to the communities in which they will participate. *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College*, the national report issued in 2002 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), provides a descriptive picture of how educating “responsible” learners can have an impact beyond the college campus:

Empowered and informed learners are also responsible. Through discussion, critical analysis, and introspection, they come to understand their roles in society and accept active participation. Open-minded and empathetic, responsible learners understand how abstract values relate to decisions in their lives. Responsible learners appreciate others, while also assuming accountability for themselves, their complex identities, and their conduct . . . they help society shape its ethical values, and then live by those values (23).

Developing these capacities likely requires an intentional approach above and beyond the traditional academic endeavors of colleges and universities. Educating for academic skills alone is not sufficient to prepare graduates with moral and civic commitment. Although many institutions espouse the goal of producing morally responsible as well as intellectually competent graduates in their mission statements, colleges and universities—in practice—do not generally educate for morality as intentionally or proficiently as they do for intellectual skills.

We know we can teach students organic chemistry; we know we can teach them Keynesian economics and the history of the Italian Renaissance. But if that is all we do, then we have failed them. If, in the process, we don’t also teach students about passion and the relationship between passion and responsible action, then we leave them dulled. Our students will have all the knowledge and skills they need to act, but they will lack the focus or the motivation or the profound caring to direct the use of their skills. For that, our students will need passion with a conscience, passion imbued with a keen sense of responsibility.

### Reengaging core commitments

In November 2004, AAC&U joined with the Templeton Foundation to convene a national panel of leading education researchers in the fields of character and moral development. The purpose was to assess the efficacy of undergraduate education’s contribution to student ethical and moral development. The panel reached two related conclusions: first, higher education must be far more explicit and expansive in emphasizing the development of personal and social responsibility as core outcomes of liberal education; second, robust assessments of these outcomes can and should be developed.

The panel was especially concerned about the inadequate attention colleges and universities give to the purposeful development of students’ personal and social responsibility at a time in their lives when their identities are undergoing formative development. George Kuh (2005), for example, reports a decrease over the past decade in the percentage of students at all types of colleges and universities who say they have made significant progress in developing their values and ethical standards while at college. “A silent tragedy may be in the making in American higher education,” Kuh concludes. “Faculty support for educating the whole student has declined and so have student gains in areas related to character development.”

On most campuses, ethics, values, and social responsibility have become, at best, tacit concerns in the explicit college curriculum. Faculty members receive no preparation to address such issues in their teaching, and they often shy away from helping students connect the values implications of their course topics and themes with students’ own lives. Recent data collected on nearly twenty thousand faculty indicate that fully half of them see students’ development of a code of ethics or values as a low or nonexistent priority for their own teaching, while 87 percent view students’ development of a deepened sense of “spirituality” as a low or nonexistent priority (Faculty Survey 2004).

As many leaders from residential campuses concede, the so-called “hidden curriculum” taught by campus culture works directly against the academy’s espoused goal of preparing students for personal and social responsibility. Certainly there are many students on



any campus who exhibit all the qualities of personal integrity and social responsibility one might wish—and many programs that support them. Nonetheless, the evidence is abundant that students typically spend only a small fraction of their campus time on actual study; cheating is common; the party culture is at cross-purposes with both ethical and academic values; the de facto disconnect between student learning and student life tacitly invites students to keep their studies scrupulously separate from the personal exploration that inevitably occurs in college; and because of this disconnect, students frequently are left to their own devices in addressing the spiritual, ethical, and interpersonal challenges they encounter in college.

Many have expressed concern about these aspects of campus culture, but none so eloquently as Bill Damon (1997, 3):

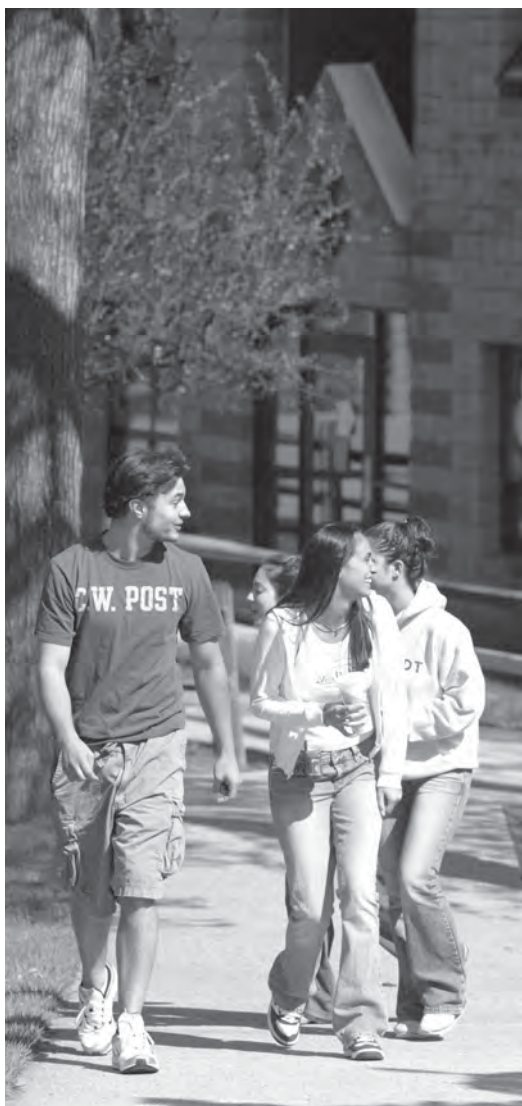
The future of any society depends upon the character and competence of its young. In order to develop character and competence, young people need guidance to provide them with direction and a sense of purpose. They need relationships that embody and communicate high standards. They need to experience activities that are challenging, inspiring, and educative. Many of the conditions for the development of character and competence in the young have deteriorated in recent years . . . young people often encounter inattention, low expectations, cynicism, or community conflict. . . . All of these conditions must be changed if we are to create a society where youngsters can attain their full potential.

The future of our society depends upon it. Damon's succinct call for a "charter" change to more purposefully educate for character and



Rutgers University

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competence is every bit as applicable to the college years as it is to early childhood and adolescence. In this spirit, the panel convened by AAC&U and Templeton articulated five specific aims of liberal education that are integral dimensions of personal and social responsibility:

1. **Striving for excellence**; developing a strong work ethic and consciously doing one's very best in all aspects of college
2. Acting on a sense of **personal and academic integrity**, ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with an academic honors code
3. Recognizing and acting on the responsibility to **contribute to a larger community**, both the educational community (classroom, campus life, etc.) and the wider community
4. Recognizing and acting on the obligation to **take seriously the perspectives of others**

in forming one's own judgments; engaging the perspectives of others as a resource for learning, for citizenship, and for work

5. Developing competence in **ethical and moral reasoning**, and, in ways that incorporate the other five aims, using such reasoning in learning and in life

Of course, it is one thing to articulate such aims or to say that we in higher education commit ourselves to purposefully enriching our teaching and curricula to achieve them. It is quite another thing to actually measure students' moral and ethical development or their acquisition of personal and social responsibility. Thus far, most assessment efforts have been focused primarily on the cognitive dimensions. In this case, however, the life of the mind is hardly sufficient.

#### **It's the culture...**

If education for personal and social responsibility is to occur in college other than by chance, then such an agenda must pervade the institutional culture, and the entire faculty and administration must be committed to it. In arguing for this position, George Kuh (2005) provides six principles:

1. Emphasize character and moral development in the institution's mission.
2. Adopt a holistic approach to talent development—learning takes place in and outside of the classroom.
3. Recruit and socialize new faculty, staff, and students with character and moral development in mind.
4. Make sure certain institutional policies and practices are consistent with the institution's commitment to this agenda.
5. Assess the impact of students' experiences and the institutional environment on character and moral development.
6. It's the culture, stupid.

It is this last principle that embeds the other five. If we were simply to add a required course in ethics, or to designate a number of courses from which students might choose in order to fulfill the personal and social responsibility component of liberal education, we would almost certainly fail. Educating for personal and social responsibility will take nothing less than a pervasive cultural shift within the academy. Faculty are the key to real change, and we must help them integrate responsibility into all courses. This is entirely



compatible with teaching in the social sciences, in the humanities, and in the sciences too. Moreover, student life outside the classroom is rich with opportunities for integration.

### The time is right for an initiative

Several nationally visible institutions—e.g., Harvard, Duke, and Stanford—have already made ethics an integral part of their degree requirements. Their high profile commitments reflect a broader trend, discernible across the academy, toward articulating ethics and values and the cultivation of personal and social responsibility as important outcomes of college education.

This increasing recognition of personal and social responsibility as a goal for college learning was captured in AAC&U's 2004 report *Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree*. This report provides a concise summary of the outcomes considered important for many of the professions (e.g., education, business, engineering, and health) as well as for the higher education community as a whole. Ethics, values, and personal and social responsibility emerge as prominent themes in the professions' goals for student learning in college. Moreover, the *Greater Expectations* report, which has been enthusiastically embraced by the academic community, calls upon higher education to educate "intentional learners" who have a clear understanding of the goals of their education and who include among those goals an explicit commitment to "individual and social responsibility."

A proactive, high-visibility initiative designed to take these goals seriously, to connect them to a vision of educational excellence for all students and for the larger society, and to provide evidence and assessment tools that demonstrate whether they are being met could make a powerful difference on campus values and practices. Moreover, in an era when fully 93 percent of high school students plan to enroll in college, such an initiative could, over time, produce an enormous ripple effect on what Americans consider the important aims of college education. In the coming months, AAC&U will be exploring the possibilities for just such an initiative. □

To respond to this article, e-mail [liberaled@aacu.org](mailto:liberaled@aacu.org), with the authors' names on the subject line.

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### NOTE

1. For this analysis and further elaboration, see Hersh, Miller, and Fielding (1980).

LYNN E. SWANER

# Educating for Personal

## A Review of the Literature

WITH ITS NATIONAL REPORT *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* (2002), the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) highlighted the need for higher education to develop “responsible” learners, whose “sense of social responsibility and ethical judgment” (xii) is marked not only by intellectual honesty, but also by “discernment of . . . ethical consequences” of personal actions and “responsibility for society’s moral health and for social justice” (24). Students’ personal and social responsibility is thus identified as essential to the “learning students need to meet emerging challenges in the workplace, in a diverse

democracy, and in an interconnected world”

(vii). In considering how colleges and universities might answer this specific call, a review of the literature—conducted under the aegis of AAC&U’s Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility project—examines current understandings of personal and social responsibility at the college level, and also identifies unanswered questions that might be explored through systemic inquiry. The findings of this review are discussed here in brief; the full review is available for download from the AAC&U Web site (see [www.aacu.org/templeton](http://www.aacu.org/templeton)).

In *Educating Citizens: Preparing America’s Undergraduates for Lives of Moral and Civic Responsibility*, Colby et al. (2003) assert that “before going further we need to address the question: What do we mean by moral and civic education? What is it that we are calling for?” (11). These questions are not easily answered. There is a lack of consensus in the literature about the meaning of terms like morality, responsibility, and character—let alone how to develop and educate for them. This is not an issue of semantics; rather, these

various terminologies are reflective of distinct moral “languages” (Nash 1997) in the literature, which generally arise from three perspectives of moral development: that of moral cognition, moral affect, and moral behavior. Although limited in number, there are also a few integrative perspectives that attempt to incorporate these and other personality dimensions in a holistic view of the moral self. An overview of the literature on personal and social responsibility, therefore, must address the divergent strands of theory, research, and pedagogy arising from these four perspectives.

### Moral cognition

Theories of moral cognition, which focus on cognitive processes such as reasoning and judging, comprise the predominant conceptual framework in the literature for describing moral development. Representing the foremost theory of this framework, Kohlberg’s (1984) model depicts a progression in moral reasoning from a centeredness in the needs of the self (preconventional reasoning), to a growing awareness of community norms and expectations (conventional reasoning), and then to the development of universal moral principles such as justice (postconventional reasoning). Several other theories of moral cognition have arisen as critiques of Kohlberg’s model. First, Gilligan (1977, 1982), in modifying Kohlberg’s theory to be more descriptive of women’s experiences, views an ethic of care (rather than of justice) as the focus of moral development; thus, moral reasoning attempts to balance the needs of—and avoid harm to—both self and others. Secondly, domain theorists of moral development such as Turiel (2002) differ with Kohlberg and assert that individuals “do not hold global conceptions of social right and wrong, but reason very differently about matters of morality, convention, and personal choice” (Nucci 2001, 6).

These theories of moral reasoning—among the most commonly cited in the literature—were primarily developed with children and

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# & Social Responsibility



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early adolescents. In contrast, Perry's scheme of ethical and intellectual development was among the first examinations of college students' cognition. Through the positions of the Perry scheme, students move from a dualistic world-view that endorses absolute right and wrong, to a recognition of multiple and potentially valid perspectives, and then to a contextually relative approach to judging the adequacy of moral stances. The developmental path described by Perry is echoed in the work of Belenky et al. (1997), who describe women's development of increasingly complex ways of knowing and views of self, and King and Kitchener's (1994) reflective judgment model, which details development in students' justifications of their beliefs about ill-structured problems.

The majority of empirical evidence for moral development during college arises from the moral cognition perspective and from these theories in particular. In their meta-analysis of research on the effects of college attendance, and with specific reference to the prolific research on Kohlberg's model, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) state that increasing complexity in moral reasoning is "a major (if not the major) change that takes place during college" (343). Research on the Perry scheme also shows that students generally develop more complex ways of thinking and valuing during college (Mentkowski, Moeser, and Strait 1983), and King and Kitchener (1994) also report development in reflective judgment during the college years.

Educating for personal and social responsibility, from the perspective of moral cognition, involves promoting students' cognitive development. The literature suggests several approaches as successful in promoting cognitive development. Though Kohlberg views this development as primarily facilitated by dialogue with individuals in more advanced stages of moral reasoning, Berkowitz (1984) found that such discussions—termed “socio-moral discourse”—are particularly effective if students are required to analyze, extend, or logically critique the arguments of others. Additionally, Kohlberg's “just-community model” (though designed for secondary school settings) involves students in democratic self-governance as a means of “promoting individual development through building a group-based moral atmosphere” (Reimer, Paolitto, and Hersh 1983, 237). Finally, Knefelkamp and Widick (Knefelkamp 1999) describe four “Developmental Instruction Variables”—providing structure, experiential learning, diversity, and personalism (collaboration and application of learning), in both course process and content—that can be used in crafting educational contexts facilitative of development along the Perry scheme. Each of these approaches suggests that the primary cognitive task of college is not simple content mastery (the traditional focus of most courses) but, rather, meaningful engagement with content that facilitates development of complex moral judgments and understanding of self as part of larger social contexts.

### **Moral affect**

Affective theorists view emotions—rather than cognition—as the building blocks of moral development. Many critique the relative absence of affect from other theories of moral development, and from Kohlberg's theory in particular, for which “cognitive competence has been the core concept . . . and affective processes have only been dealt with as cognitive arguments” (Villenave-Cremer and Eckensberger 1985, 192). Hoffman (2000) argues that empathy is the primary moral emotion, and that empathic capacities—“psychological processes that make a person have feelings that are more congruent with another's situation than with his own” (30)—are the focus of developmental change. Hoffman portrays empathy development during

late adolescence as culminating in the ability for long-term perspective taking, or understanding that individuals and groups have histories of suffering beyond the present situation. Although they provide a broader psychosocial theory of college student development, Chickering and Reisser (1993) posit that, during college, empathy develops through the formation of mature interpersonal relationships, and they describe the college years as a time of learning to manage and balance emotions, moral and otherwise.

Not much is known empirically, however, about the development of moral affect in college. In their analysis of thirty years of higher education research, Pascarella and Terenzini (2005) do not identify any studies related to the development of moral affect or empathy. Yet, there is some promising evidence that it is possible to educate for empathy during the college years. Specifically, Hatcher et al. (1994) report significant gains in empathy scores (as measured by the Interpersonal Reactivity Index) among behavioral psychology students also enrolled in a peer-facilitated curriculum to promote the development of empathy-related skills.

Along these lines, the literature is far more extensive in the area of how to educate for moral affect. Noddings (2002) proposes that moral emotions can be developed through the act of caring for others. Because Noddings (1992) claims that caring “is a way of being in relation, not a set of specific behaviors” (17), she views educating for moral development as fostering morally healthy relationships with others who care about the individual. Through the processes of “modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation” (148), authorities and peers provide students with important moral lessons regarding community membership. This is particularly true for formal and informal conversations, both of which “are part of moral education because when they are properly conducted, we learn through them how to meet and treat one another” (146).

The notion of caring as a basis for moral education is applicable to higher education in a number of ways. Many residence halls and other student-life forums already seek to provide caring environments for students as well as personal connections with the campus community. And the number of academic and residential learning communities on campuses is growing steadily, consistent with Noddings's



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(1992) assertion that relational continuity is critical for moral development. Although faculty traditionally shy away from addressing emotional content, Noddings's recommendations for both structured and informal conversation can potentially help promote a sense of care and empathy in the classroom. And on a broader level, the affective perspective suggests that a caring campus environment helps students develop not only their own empathic capacities, but also the ability to care for themselves and others.

**Moral behavior**

A third dimension of personal and social responsibility, moral behavior, attracts the most concern and attention in higher education. A wide range of student behaviors in college are troubling. Wechsler and Wuethrich (2002) report that over 70 percent of traditional-age college students binge drink, and approximately 1,400 students die each year from alcohol-related injuries. Levine and Cureton (1998) provide a menu of other behavioral problems, including a rise over the past two decades in eating disorders (by 58 percent), classroom disruption (by 44 percent), drug abuse (by 42 percent), gambling (by 25 percent), and suicide attempts (by 23 percent). Beyond statistics, Schrader (1999) reports that college students often fail to engage in decisive behavior when facing moral dilemmas involving drugs, cheating, stealing, infidelity, disobeying authority, or peer pressure; in Schrader's research, most students "resolved [such] dilemmas by letting the issue drop, by doing nothing, by going along with the situation or with others in it, and by letting the problem resolve itself somehow" (48).

While there is almost universal concern about these behaviors, it bears mentioning that there is substantial disagreement as to whether and how they may be defined as moral issues. This is true not only for theorists but also for individual students, who often differ on whether they view a given behavior as a moral issue or as a matter of personal choice. For example, Levine and Cureton describe the issue of safe sex—which, they report, 51 percent of sexually active students fail to practice—as one for which students evidenced an "ambiguity

about the dividing line between health risks and issues of morality" (113). Similarly, Berkowitz (2000) found that a majority of adolescents view self-harm and substance abuse as personal, rather than moral, issues. (Most interestingly, Berkowitz reports that these adolescents tend to use

substances more frequently than teens who consider such use a moral issue.)

Regardless of whether a particular behavior is viewed as moral or amoral, social learning theory is the principal framework offered in the literature for understanding how behavior develops. Bandura (1977), who holds that all behaviors are learned through the observation of others, views adults as teaching, modeling, and reinforcing desirable moral behaviors for children. Sieber (1980) extends this development into adolescence, where adults shape behavior (by rewarding behaviors that approximate those desired) and substitute behaviors (by demonstrating how to exchange prosocial for antisocial behaviors). As young adults then move into new settings like college, the environment and peer groups continue to provide reinforcement for previously learned behaviors.

Research on college student behavior generally provides support for this social learning perspective of moral development, as evident in Astin's (1993) findings that peer groups are "the single most potent source of influence on growth and development during the undergraduate years" and that "students' values, beliefs, and aspirations tend to change in the direction of the dominant values, beliefs, and aspirations of the peer group" (398). Extensive research on academic dishonesty provides further confirmation; McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield report that the perception of peer behavior is the most powerful influence on cheating and identify social learning theory as the "most important" means of explaining this relationship (359).

When considered from a social learning perspective, educating for personal and social responsibility primarily involves shaping a moral campus environment. McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield suggest that, "From a social learning standpoint . . . [colleges] should do more to ensure that their students have suitable peer role models," because "if students see

their peers engaging in prosocial behaviors” (373) they themselves may be less likely to engage in negative behaviors like cheating. Since faculty also serve as powerful models of moral behavior, faculty selection, training, and support are critical. There is also positive evidence that institutional policies like honor codes and student conduct codes can reinforce morally desirable behavior, as McCabe, Treviño, and Butterfield found that “the level of academic dishonesty is highest at colleges that do not have honor codes . . . and is lowest at schools with traditional honor codes” (368). Through these kinds of efforts, institutions can create communities that model, teach, and reinforce personally and socially responsible behavior.

### **Integrative perspectives**

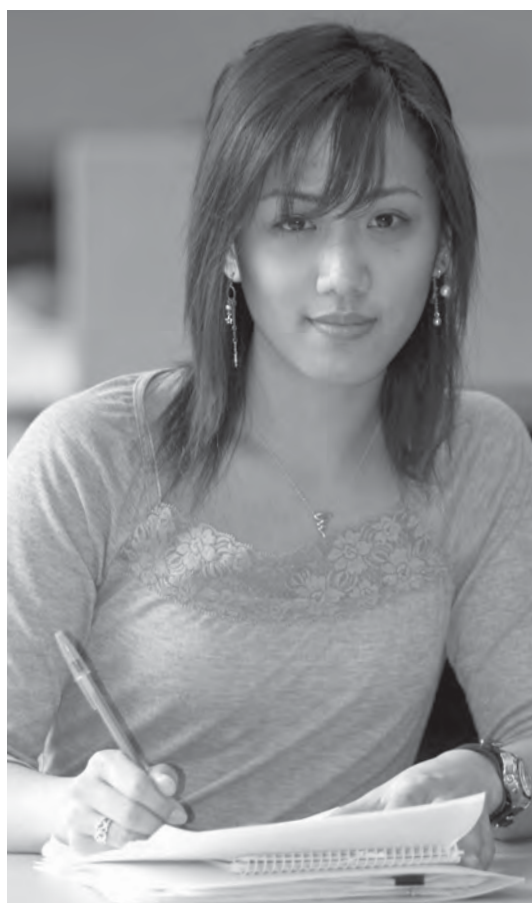
In the literature, there is a growing discussion of the inadequacy of current theory for describing the complexities of moral development; Rest (1984) suggests that the tendency to “divide the field into behavior, affect, and cognition . . . is deficient for many reasons,” principally that it “leave[s] us dangling about how behavior, affect, and cognition are related” (25). There are a few perspectives in the literature that attempt to integrate these domains. For example, Lickona (1991) proposes a tripartite model of moral development that integrates the “habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action . . . [as] all three are necessary for leading a moral life” (51).

Rest et al. (1999), in acknowledging that “morality is a multiplicity of processes” (100), propose a four-component model that adds moral sensitivity, motivation, and character to moral cognition. Moral sensitivity entails both interpreting a situation for its moral content and understanding how one’s actions in the situation will affect others, while moral motivation involves the “degree of commitment to taking the moral course of action . . . and taking personal responsibility for moral outcomes” (101). Moral character, a function of ego strength and locus of control, is developed by “persisting in a moral task, having courage, overcoming fatigue and temptations, and implementing subroutines that serve a moral goal” (101). Since individuals have strengths and weaknesses in these four areas, Rest (1984) posits that “the production of moral behavior involves all four component processes and

that deficiencies in any component can result in failure to behave morally” (35–3).

To the triumvirate of moral reason, moral emotion, and moral behavior, Berkowitz (1997) adds moral character, moral values, moral identity, and meta-moral characteristics, for a total of seven components comprising the “moral anatomy,” or the “psychological components that make up the complete moral person” (Berkowitz 2002, 48). Berkowitz (2002) explains that moral character refers to an individual’s moral “personality . . . the unique and enduring tendency of an individual to act in certain ways” (15). Moral values are “affectively laden beliefs concerning the rightness and wrongness of behaviors or end states” (18), though individuals may differ on whether they view a given value as moral. For individuals who have a mature moral identity, “being moral is critical to their sense of self” (21), and they strive to behave in ways that are consistent with their self-concept (Blasi 1984). Finally, meta-moral characteristics are elements of personality that “are not intrinsically moral but may serve moral ends” (23), such as self-discipline, which is equally necessary for engaging in moral action (e.g., academic honesty) as in immoral behavior (e.g., criminal activity).

There is evidence of developmental change along some of these dimensions. In terms of Rest’s integrative model, Bebeau and Brabeck (1989) have empirically established moral sensitivity as a distinct construct. And while there is a lack of consensus regarding the meaning and constitution of “moral values,” a component of Berkowitz’s moral anatomy, Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) cite research indicating “relatively modest” shifts during college toward “greater altruism, humanitarianism, and sense of civic responsibility and social conscience” (277) as well as “social, racial, ethnic, and political tolerance and greater support for the rights of individuals” (279)—though the underlying causes for these shifts are unclear. The developmental trajectories of the remaining dimensions identified by Rest and Berkowitz are not as well documented in the literature and, therefore, remain largely theoretical. Furthermore, both Rest and Berkowitz concede that very little is actually known about relationships between the various dimensions of morality they identify. Clearly, these are generative areas for future research.



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established “moral and civic development [as] a high priority and have created a wealth of curricular and extracurricular programs to stimulate and support that development” (9). In addition to overall approaches that are “intentional, holistic, and designed to reach all of their students” (277), three basic principles were evident across the twelve institutions’ efforts, in that they all targeted multiple dimensions of the moral self, including understanding, skills, and behavior; utilized multiple sites for education across the campus, as well as diverse pedagogical approaches (e.g., experiential learning and group work); and integrated moral and civic development as a priority throughout the campus culture, in elements like “physical symbols, iconic stories, [and] socialization practices” (282).

Finally, Berkowitz and Fekula (1999), who describe character education as the purposeful development of all elements of the moral self, make several recommendations for character education at the college level. In order to establish “a pervasive, multifaceted, institutional endeavor based on a clear vision of the moral person and core values” (18), institutions can teach about character by addressing ethics across the curriculum and providing special programs or publications related to character issues. In line with social learning theory, institutions can display character through the modeling of behavior by adults and peer leaders, demand character by setting and enforcing standards through honor and student conduct codes, and offer opportunities to practice character through democratic governance, service learning, and experiential learning. Students can reflect on character through mentoring relationships, service learning, journals, and academic discussions. Additionally, Berkowitz and Fekula recommend that institutions establish interdisciplinary centers for character development and conduct an “ethics audit” (22) to study campus impact on students’ character development.

### **Future directions**

Given the complexity of human personality, experience, and behavior, an adequate conceptualization of personal and social responsibility involves a convergence of multiple dimensions of the self. While extant literature falls short of this view, the integrative frameworks discussed are promising starting points

Examples of pedagogical approaches that use an integrative perspective are likewise few. One actual model in practice is the Sierra Project, a curriculum intervention and longitudinal research study initiated at the University of California–Irvine in the 1970s. Whiteley and Yokota (1988) describe the project’s integrative goal of developing “ethical sensitivity and awareness, an increased regard for equity in human relationships, and the ability to translate this enhanced capacity and regard into a higher standard of fairness and concern for the common good” (12). As part of a freshman living-learning community, Sierra Project students resided together and attended a course on community building, conflict resolution, empathy and social perspective taking, race and gender issues, and experiential community service. Significant gains in moral reasoning and a greater sense of community among program students, along with closer relationships with faculty and higher graduation rates, are reported by Whiteley and Yokota, leading them to conclude that the project made “a moderate contribution toward furthering character development in college freshmen” (26).

More recently, Colby et al. (2003) describe a set of best practices arising from their study of twelve exemplar institutions, all of which



for a more capacious description of personal and social responsibility. Even these frameworks, however, do not move beyond cataloging moral dimensions to provide understanding of how these dimensions are interrelated, nor do they describe how these dimensions interact with larger moral environments in which the self is situated. Such understandings are likely essential to answering critical questions about how moral outcomes are produced and, in turn, can be enhanced through education.

This divided theoretical landscape has significant implications for research in the field. As Schrader (1999) explains, current “research enterprises stem from different paradigms and speak different languages” and will do so “until we as moral researchers can construct a new way of examining the field that transcends our current perspective on it” (52). Nowhere is this more evident than instrumentation, the bulk of which is univariate and based on Kohlberg’s model of moral reasoning, with few instruments capable of examining dimensions like moral affect, behavior, character, values, and identity among college populations. Thus, although personal and social responsibility is decidedly a multivariate construct, there currently exists the capacity to systematically examine only a single dimension or variable—that of moral cognition. As a potential solution, Colby et al. (2003) identify the “need for a shareable toolkit that includes a wide array of valid measures of important dimensions of moral and civic development” (271). Such a toolkit would be most generative if implemented in a robust research design, accompanied by in-depth (qualitative) measures providing insight into underlying relationships between variables, and administered longitudinally to observe change in students with particular constellations of moral dimensions.

Finally, given the current state of theory and research related to personal and social responsibility, there is clear deficiency in the knowledge base necessary for informed educational design, as Morrill (1980) explains: “When we understand more fully what it means for the unified human person—not a mind in a body, or an organism in an environment—to be the subject of education, *then* the full possibilities of moral and values education will be manifest” (54–55, emphasis added). Integrative perspectives can provide starting

points for this understanding, as well as for future institutional efforts at implementing broad-based pedagogical efforts in the area of personal and social responsibility. It is imperative that such efforts build in evaluative and research mechanisms, so that much needed data is generated about how personal and social responsibility develops within, and is shaped by, educational environments.

While the literature on personal and social responsibility in college has remained largely fragmented over the past three decades, there is an emerging consensus that personal and social responsibility can no longer be viewed as a simplistic, one-dimensional, or discrete construct. As Schrader (1999) explains, “we must begin to look at morality as a kaleidoscope in which the various issues, norms, elements, considerations, voices, or perspectives can be seen working together, ever changing, complementing each other, and providing a more complete view of the thoughts and actions of people as they struggle with moral issues in all their complexity” (45).

Those who will design future efforts for enhancing personal and social responsibility are themselves responsible for recognizing and embracing this complexity, as well as its full implications for theory, research, and practice in higher education. □

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BILL PUKA

# Teaching Ethical Excellence

## Artful Response-Ability, Creative Integrity, Character Opus

**Ethics is “majoring” in one’s life as a whole, not just one’s studies or career**

MOST UNIVERSITY ADMINISTRATORS acknowledge the need to engender social responsibility, at least among students. College mission statements feature this goal front and center.

Whether or not dishonesty or irresponsibility is common on campus, students must develop their moral insight and reasoning skills simply to assume adult roles and the more complex responsibilities that go along with them. To its credit, higher education is trying to address this challenge through both ethics courses (theory) and service programs (practice). Still, most programs focus on a narrow, pet area of the ethical network: character and virtue; ethical problem solving or reasoning; value awareness, self-responsibility and discipline; ethical role requirements within complex institutions; ethical codes of conduct; community service learning; ethical mentors, coaches, and role models; civic and citizenship education. And this has led to competition among camps—a competition of inadequacy.

A few programs offer more inclusive alternatives (see Colby et al. 2003), but they are not being adopted more widely due to the academic ethos of unique originality. Each school seems to feel it must reinvent the wheel. Looking at the various program foci, instead, as components of a more inclusive program, let us consider how some main themes can be enhanced.

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### Responsibility focus

A great contribution to ethics is the feminist distinction between responsibility and “response-ability.” A standard responsibility is a felt requirement, a debt owed, usually a burdensome duty that restricts our individual(istic) freedom. It requires us to sacrifice self-interests for the interests of others, usually against the pull of our wills. This not only makes ethics a hard sell motivationally, but it also reflects the moralistic, child-like view of ethics as imposed taskmaster rather than as expressive tool. A nonstandard sense of responsibility accords our role in relationships more due and allows us to see responsibility as the ability to respond to others—to respond well and self-gratifyingly. This transforms the restrictive drawbacks of responsible compliance into attractive opportunities to shine.

A “response-ability” viewpoint makes better sense of our responsibilities toward ourselves as well, including our growth or development and our personal integrity. The standard picture of self-responsibility, where we force ourselves to do things, cannot represent the self-discipline or self-determination involved as true freedom—except through sleight of hand abetted by self-delusion. And ethics must be free; it must organize voluntary cooperation, not cooperation-or-else. By contrast, self-response-ability focuses us on our own worth and the value of our talents or potentials. It enhances our self-appreciation and rests on our predictable response to what we really are and can become.





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Compare this ethics of response and inspiration with “doing the right thing for its own sake.” The latter is often held up as the only proper moral motivation, or as morality’s noblest motivational ideal. But it’s an ideal that conflicts with human nature and the laws of psychology. Even when we can twist our nature somehow to generate such motives, they tend to bring out the worst in us—sheepishness, conformity, and masochism. They leave us defenseless in the face of raw power, aggressive competition, and everyday exploitation by the self-interested. Long experience with being taken advantage of reveals the futility of this orientation. It thus pushes us toward personal hypocrisy, toward the use of ethics as window dressing to hide pragmatism, and toward the relegation of ethics to the dustbin of idealism or utopian dreaming. In everyday life, these problems render our ethical behavior begrudging, not self-affirming or fulfilling. If these are the categories students will use to organize their ethics education, the task is futile and possibly counterproductive. Thus, moving to nonstandard themes and approaches is a must.

### Integrity focus

A second valuable distinction in ethics comes from moral exemplar literature (see Oliner and Oliner 1988; Colby and Damon 1992; Puka 1993). Gandhi distinguished sharply between honesty and integrity, as did Aristotle in his *Ethics*. For Gandhi, integrity meant living one’s life as an open book. It meant conducting a long series of experiments in better living that others could analyze, learn from, and criticize. To our limited moral imaginations, this lifestyle seems difficult. So we brand it as “ideal” and

“beyond the call of duty”—the stuff of superhuman effort and humanity. We need not feel expected, therefore, to give it a whirl. But such integrity is not a difficult pursuit: our character isn’t at stake if we fail. The ethical pressure is off. All we can expect of ourselves here is to try, and try something new, not to exert ourselves overly on tasks we already dread.

Experiments often fail and are expected to do so. Thus success is not demanded, as it is by standard ethical obligation. When we fail, we cannot really be blamed. After all, we are dedicating our whole lives to our betterment in dealing with others. What more can be expected of us? Failure is automatically followed by trying again, and trying better by design and routine. Where someone is hurt in the process, I simply try to compensate. I apologize, but have little to apologize for since my experiments show unusual care to avoid such consequences. The next attempt routinely takes greater precautions. Acquiring greater virtues—becoming someone better—is the continual aim and likely consequence here, not preserving my ego or its precious moral character. Contrast this ongoing routine of full-life integrity with mere honesty—with the struggle of not telling lies or with being a “man of my word.”

### Character focus

In distinguishing honesty, ethical consistency, and integrity, Aristotle saw the last as character itself. Character is the full integration of our admirable traits and abilities into an admirably functioning virtue system. It includes the habituation of these abilities, their motivational supports, and their expression. It includes the

good judgment that must retool the manner of their expression in unusual or especially difficult social contexts, and it includes the developing artfulness of social interaction. Aristotle's two essays on ethics, which have defined the very term itself in western culture, pose integrity as the spring of excellence in living. They put the art in living, in relating to others, and in being an exemplary type of person. The more we adopt Aristotle's encompassing definition of ethics as living well and flourishing, the more and better ethics integrates with our daily lives.

To be ethical is to be practical also. It is to work well at one's job and pursue a diligent career. It is to balance work artfully with family, exemplary parenting, and community involvement. In the liberal arts college especially, students are urged to nurture excellence in a major concentration of study and to nurture some lesser competence in a minor area. The rest is relegated to "literacy"—be it math literacy or literature—the ability to understand from outside what's going on in some area and to converse with those focusing on it. For Aristotle, ethics is "majoring" in one's life as a whole, not just one's studies or career. It is majoring in oneself and one's relationships to make them artful, to make them the best they can be. Ethics is making one's contribution to society and to humanity.

Students are already convinced of the need for competence in their education and for excellence in developing the skills that will help them land a good job. They also understand that there's a good deal more than this to successful living, which also involves doing something that is meaningful, finding love, and belonging. Students understand that, even outside what society normally would term ethics. They know that some values are superficial and fleeting, while others are deep and lasting. Thus, Aristotelian ethics does not have to come out of left field and make the case for not doing what we wish to do or what works. Education itself is ethics, and so too are social life, home life, and citizenship. Scientific research is ethics, as is writing. The key is to achieve balance and proportion. This shows integrity. This is integrity.

From this vantage point, calling for special courses or programs in collegiate ethics seems odd. So do attempts to integrate ethics across the curriculum. It's already there. It must merely be found, highlighted, and developed further.

Ethics is know-how developed in pursuits that are worth doing. It is know-how in distinguishing better and worse values or goals, especially through practice and experience, reflection and discussion with others. (This is why know-how in lying, manipulating, thieving, and the like are not ethical; they are inferior uses of great skills, employed for inferior ends.)

Ethics is personal entrepreneurship and interpersonal management at their excellent extremes. It is good business in the business of life. By contrast, look at what currently passes for management in business and even in some business courses. Arbitrary authority hierarchies dominate, dispensing childlike incentives to employees—from intimidation and threats to perquisites and bonuses. Burgeoning adults are reduced to children here.

The same can be said for standard parenting. We expect even our youngest children to negotiate their interactions reasonably and their conflicts fairly, not by threatening or hitting each other, but by "using their words" and "playing nice." Yet parents wouldn't dream of holding themselves to such standards even when dealing with their outmatched toddlers. Well prior to so-called spanking (assault and battery), parents resort to every small-minded form of deception, manipulation, intimidation, and authoritarianism in the book: "because it's time to go"; "because you have to"; "I'll count to ten, and then you'll be sorry"; "because I'm the mommy, that's why." In an Aristotelian ethics curriculum, parent training would be prominent, along with childhood training (especially toward aging parents). So too would the arts of loving relationship generally. After all, what is more important or valuable? □

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# It Takes a Village Academic Dishonesty

DONALD L. MCCABE

FOR THE LAST FIFTEEN YEARS, I have researched questions of academic integrity. My initial interest in these questions was driven by my own experience as an undergraduate at Princeton University in the mid-1960s. Graduating from a high school where cheating was common, I was particularly intrigued by one item I received among the blizzard of forms and papers Princeton sent me as I prepared to matriculate: information about the Princeton honor code. I was informed that exams would be unproctored; that, on every exam, I would have to affirm that I had not cheated or seen anyone else cheat by signing a pledge (which I can still recite verbatim almost forty years after my graduation); and that all alleged violations of

the code would be addressed by a student

honor committee. Although somewhat skeptical in light of my high school experience, I headed off to Princeton confident I would do my part to uphold this seventy-year-old tradition. Apparently, the overwhelming majority of my classmates felt the same way. During my four years at Princeton, I never observed, suspected, or heard of anyone cheating, although surely there were at least some minor transgressions of the code.

When I returned to academia after more than twenty years in the corporate world, where I witnessed at firsthand the continuous erosion in the ethical values of recent college graduates, I was intrigued by the opportunity to conduct meaningful research on academic integrity. I was particularly curious to see whether campus honor codes were still a viable strategy and to explore the impact they were having on a new generation of students. While I remain a strong advocate of honor codes, my thinking about academic integrity has evolved over the last fifteen years—often in surprising ways.

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## The problem

In the fall of 1990, I surveyed students at thirty-one of the country's most competitive colleges and universities (McCabe and Trevino 1993). Fourteen institutions had traditional academic honor codes, and seventeen did not, having chosen instead to “control” student dishonesty through such strategies as the careful proctoring of exams. From the more than six thousand students who responded, I learned several important lessons.

The incidence of cheating was higher than I expected, and many students were quite willing to admit their transgressions. For example, 47 percent of students attending a school with no honor code reported one or more serious incidents of test or exam cheating during the past year, as did 24 percent of students at schools with honor codes. While such comparisons would seem to support the power of honor codes, it was not the code itself that was the most critical factor. Rather, the student culture that existed on campus concerning the question of academic integrity was more important. The existence of a code did not always result in lower levels of cheating. More importantly, the converse was also true: some campuses achieved high levels of integrity without an honor code. While these campuses were doing many of the same things as campuses with codes—e.g., making academic integrity a clear campus priority and placing much of the responsibility for student integrity on the students themselves—they did not use a pledge and they did not mandate unproctored exams. What was important was the culture of academic integrity to which incoming students were exposed.

Many of the students I surveyed were troubled by the failure of their institution, and often its faculty, to address the issue of cheating. Because they believed that weak institutional policies and unobservant or unconcerned faculty were “allowing” others to cheat and, thereby, to gain an unfair advantage, students viewed cheating as a way to level the playing field. This was a particular problem on large

**If we truly believe  
in our role  
as educators,  
we would do better  
to view most  
instances of  
cheating as  
educational  
opportunities**

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campuses and in courses with large enrollments—environments where, arguably, it is harder to establish a strong, positive community culture.

In 1993 (McCabe and Trevino 1996), I surveyed nine medium to large universities that, thirty years earlier, had participated in the landmark study of college cheating conducted by William Bowers (1964). Bowers's project surveyed over five thousand students on ninety-nine campuses across the country and provided considerable insight on how often students were cheating and why. Two outcomes of my 1993 project are particularly noteworthy in comparison to Bowers's results. First, there were substantial increases in self-reported test and exam cheating at these nine

schools. For example, 39 percent of students completing the 1963 survey acknowledged one or more incidents of serious test or exam cheating; by 1993, this had grown to 64 percent. Based on student responses to the 1993 survey, however, it was difficult to tell how much of this change represented an actual increase in cheating, and how much was simply a reflection of changing student attitudes about cheating. In 1993, many students simply did not see cheating as a big deal, so it was easier to acknowledge—especially in an anonymous survey.

Second, there was no change in the incidence of serious cheating on written work; 65 percent of students in 1963 acknowledged such behavior, and 66 percent did so in 1993.

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However, student comments in the 1993 survey suggested that this younger generation of students was more lenient in defining what constitutes plagiarism. Although survey questions were worded to ask students about a specific behavior, without labeling it as cheating, more than a trivial number of students in 1993 said they had not engaged in a particular behavior, while providing an explanation of why the instances in which they actually had done so were not cheating. The ethics of cheating is very situational for many students.

Just as technology has enabled new forms of cheating that are becoming popular with students, that same technology has made it easier to reach large numbers of students in surveys. Since 2001, I have been conducting Web-based surveys that make it possible to reach an entire campus population with relative ease. However, many students are concerned that it is easier to identify the source of electronically submitted surveys, so they elect either not to participate or to do so while being cautious about what they say. While it is hard to get people to be honest about their dishonesty in any circumstances, it is even harder to get them to do so when they are concerned about the anonymity of their responses. This is reflected in notably lower rates of self-reported cheating in Web surveys and lower levels of participation (as low as 10–15 percent on average compared to 25–35 percent for written surveys in this project).

Nonetheless, in these Web surveys of over forty thousand undergraduates on sixty-eight campuses in the United States and Canada, conducted over the last two academic years, 21 percent of respondents have acknowledged at least one incident of serious test or exam cheating, and 51 percent have acknowledged at least one incident of serious cheating on written work. Although most had engaged in other cheating behaviors as well, four out of every five students who reported they had cheated on a written assignment acknowledged that they had engaged in some form of Internet-related cheating—either cut-and-paste plagiarism from Internet sources or submitting a paper downloaded or purchased from a term-paper mill or Web site. Although the self-reported rates of cheating found in these Web surveys are lower than in earlier surveys, they clearly are still of concern. In addition, the difference may relate more to research methodology than to any real change.

### Of concern to whom?

Each campus constituency tends to shift the “blame” for cheating elsewhere. This is a major problem. Many students argue, with some justification, that campus integrity policies are ill-defined, outdated, biased against students, and rarely discussed by faculty. They also fault faculty who look the other way in the face of obvious cheating. They are even more critical of faculty who, taking “the law” into their own hands when they suspect cheating, punish students without affording them their “rights” under the campus integrity policy. Many faculty believe that these campus policies are overly bureaucratic and legalistic and that they often find “guilty” students innocent. Some faculty argue that they are paid to be teachers, not police, and that, if students have not learned the difference between right and wrong by the time they get to college, it’s not their job to teach them—especially in a publish-or-perish world. Although the evidence suggests otherwise, many also believe it’s too late to change student behavior at this point.

Faculty also complain about administrators who fail to support them in the face of what they perceive as obvious cases of cheating. They complain about administrators who, at least in the minds of some faculty, are more concerned with whether the student is a star athlete, the child of a major donor, or has achieved some other favored status. Of course, many administrators can detail a litany of the ways in which they think faculty shirk their responsibilities in the area of academic integrity. Still others complain that students are only concerned with grades; how they obtain those grades is less important for many.

The most appropriate response to student cheating depends in large part on the goals of the institution. If the primary goal is simply to reduce cheating, then there are a variety of strategies to consider, including increased proctoring, encouraging faculty to use multiple versions of exams and not to recycle old tests and exams, aggressively using plagiarism detection software, and employing stronger sanctions to punish offenders. But while such strategies are likely to reduce cheating, I can’t imagine many people would want to learn in such an environment. As educators, we owe our students more than this, especially when cheating may reflect cynicism about what they perceive as eroding moral standards in the academy and in society.



## The ethics of cheating is very situational for many students

Today's students seem to be less concerned with what administrators and/or faculty consider appropriate behavior and much more concerned with the views and behavior of their peers. Students do expect to hear the president, the provost, a dean, or some other official tell them during orientation how they are about to become academic "adults," adults who respect the learning process and who, among other things, don't cheat. And many students want to hear this message. But it's clear from student comments in my surveys that the real "proof" for students is in the behavior of their peers and the faculty. Regardless of the campus integrity policy, if students see others cheating, and faculty who fail to see it or choose to ignore it, they are likely to conclude that cheating is necessary to remain competitive. Many students ask, "if faculty members aren't concerned about cheating, why should I be?"

### It takes a village

I have always been intrigued by the African tribal maxim that it takes a village to raise a child. In a similar sense, I would argue it takes the whole campus community—students, faculty, and administrators—to effectively educate a student. If our only goal is to reduce cheating, there are far simpler strategies we can employ, as I have suggested earlier. But if we have the courage to set our sights higher, and strive to achieve the goals of a liberal education, the challenge is much greater. Among other things, it is a challenge to develop students who accept responsibility for the ethical consequences of their ideas and actions. Our goal should not simply be to reduce cheating; rather, our goal should be to find innovative and creative ways to use academic integrity as a building block in our efforts to develop more responsible students and, ultimately, more responsible citizens. Our campuses must become places where the entire "village"—the community of students, faculty, and administrators—actively works together to achieve this goal. As Ernest Boyer observed almost two decades ago (Boyer 1987, 184), "integrity cannot be divided. If high standards of conduct are expected of students, colleges must have impeccable integrity themselves. Otherwise the lessons of the 'hidden curriculum' will shape the undergraduate experience. Colleges teach

values to students by the standards they set for themselves."

In setting standards, faculty have a particularly important role to play; students look to

them for guidance in academic matters—not just to their peers. In particular, to help students appropriately orient themselves and develop an appropriate mental framework as they try to make sense of their college experience, faculty must recognize and affirm academic integrity as a core institutional value. Without such guidance, cheating makes sense for many students as they fall back on strategies they used in high school to negotiate heavy work loads and to achieve good grades.

One of the most important ways faculty can help is by clarifying their expectations for appropriate behavior in their courses. Although faculty certainly have the primary responsibility here, they should share this responsibility with students. Not only does such "consultation" result in policies in which students feel a greater degree of ownership and responsibility, but it also helps to convince students they truly are partners in their own education. Nonetheless, faculty do have a unique and primary role to play in the classroom, and it is incumbent upon them not only to minimize opportunities to engage in academic dishonesty (even if only out of fairness to honest students) but also to respond in some way when cheating is suspected. While some may argue over the most appropriate response, it is essential that there be *some* response. As noted earlier, students suggest that faculty who do nothing about what appears to be obvious cheating simply invite more of the same from an ever-increasing number of students who feel they are being "cheated" by such faculty reluctance.

While faculty can do much to improve the climate of academic integrity in their campus "villages," they should not be expected to shoulder this burden alone. University administrators need to look more carefully at the role they play. The Center for Academic Integrity at Duke has encouraged, and helped, many campuses to examine their academic integrity policies, yet there are still many schools that have not reviewed their policies in decades. Instead of reacting to an increasing number of faculty complaints about Internet plagiarism by simply subscribing to a plagiarism detection service, for example,

perhaps these schools should take a more comprehensive look at their integrity policies. While some may decide that plagiarism detection software is an appropriate component of their integrity policy, I trust many more will conclude that it's time to abandon their almost exclusive reliance on deterrence and punishment and to look at the issue of academic dishonesty as an educational opportunity as well.

Over the last fifteen years, I have become convinced that a primary reliance on deterrence is unreasonable and that, if we truly believe in our role as educators, we would do better to view most instances of cheating as educational opportunities. While strong sanctions clearly are appropriate for more serious forms of cheating, it's also clear that most student cheating is far less egregious. What, for example, is an appropriate sanction for a student who cuts and pastes a few sentences from a Web site on the Internet without citation? In some cases, this behavior occurs out of ignorance of the rules of citation or is motivated by a student's failure to properly budget his or her time. In a last minute effort to complete the two papers s/he has due that week, as well as study for a test on Friday, s/he panics. If the student is a first-time "offender," what's the educational value of a strong sanction?

Having decided that sanctions do little more than to permanently mar a student's record, an increasing number of schools are taking a more educational approach to academic dishonesty. They are striving to implement strategies that will help offending students understand the ethical consequences of their behavior. These strategies seem often to be win-win situations. Faculty are more willing to report suspected cheating, or to address it themselves, when they understand that educational rather than punitive sanctions are likely to result. A common choice now is to do nothing or to punish the student privately, which makes it almost impossible to identify repeat offenders. On a growing number of campuses, however, faculty are being encouraged to address issues of cheating directly with students. As long as the student acknowledges the cheating and accepts the faculty member's proposed remedy, the faculty member simply sends a notation to a designated party and never gets involved with what many consider the unnecessary bureaucracy and legalisms of campus judicial systems.

When more faculty take such actions, students who cheat sense they are more likely to be caught, and the overall level of cheating on campus is likely to decline. Administrators, especially student and judicial affairs personnel, can then devote more of their time and resources to proactive strategies. For example, several schools have developed mini-courses that are commonly part of the sanction given to first-time violators of campus integrity policies; others have devoted resources to promoting integrity on campus, rather than investing further in detection and punishment strategies. A common outcome on campuses implementing such strategies is a greater willingness on the part of faculty to report suspected cheating. They view sanctions as more reasonable, designed to change behavior in positive ways, demonstrating to students that inappropriate behavior does have ethical consequences. As students quickly learn that second offenses will be dealt with much more strongly, increased reporting also serves as an effective deterrent to continued cheating.

Of course, the most effective solution to student cheating is likely to vary from campus to campus, depending on the unique campus culture that has developed over the course of a school's history. Indeed, no campus is likely to reach the ideal state where the proactive strategies I have described are sufficient in and of themselves. Rather, some balance of punishment and proactive strategies will be optimal on each campus and, although that optimum will vary from campus to campus, punishment will always have some role. The stakes are high for most college students today, who think their entire future—their chances of gaining admission to professional school, getting job interviews with the best companies recruiting on campus, etc.—depends on a few key grades. It is, therefore, unrealistic to think that none will succumb to the temptation to cheat.

Students, even the most ethical, want to know that offenders will be punished so that other students will be deterred from engaging in similar behaviors. In fact, I am often surprised by the comments many students offer in my surveys calling for *stronger* punishments for students who engage in serious cheating. While they are willing to look the other way when someone engages in more trivial forms of cheating to manage a heavy workload, for

example, they are far less forgiving of students who cheat in more explicit ways on major tests or assignments. The difficult task for every school is to find the appropriate balance between punishment and proactive strategies that deters students who would otherwise cheat when the opportunity arises yet that also works to build a community of trust among students and between students and faculty, a campus community that values ethical behavior and where academic integrity is the norm.

The need to achieve some balance between punishment and proactive strategies was well summarized for me this spring when I made a presentation at the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. A second classman who was listening to my emphasis on proactive strategies suggested that, since students see so much cheating in high school and in the larger society, deterrence probably plays an important role in reducing cheating in college. In his own case, he suggested that during his first two years at the academy the biggest factor in his decision not to cheat was fear of the strong sanctions that existed and were often used. But during those two years, he was also exposed to many proactive messages about why integrity matters, especially in an occupation where the lives of so many may depend on doing one's job with integrity. He observed that he has now reached the point where he wouldn't think of cheating—no longer for fear of punishment, but because he understands the importance of integrity. However, for him, and perhaps for many other students, those strong rules helped him learn behaviors that he could later understand and value for more idealistic reasons. No campus may ever reach a truly ideal combination, but deterrence and proactive strategies both should play an important role in any academic integrity policy.

### Do something

It is impossible to know whether such proposals will work on every campus. But to those campuses that have doubts about the effectiveness of such strategies, I offer the same advice I give students when they express concern about reporting peers they suspect of cheating because of the fear of reprisal or because they believe sanctions on their campus are too severe. Do something! While I'm sure there are some campuses where the modest



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suggestions offered here may not work as well as other possible choices, I'm even more convinced that any campus that has not reviewed its integrity policies for some time is derelict in its responsibilities to its students and likely has a degree of discontent among its faculty. Perhaps even more important, it is depriving its students of an important learning opportunity in the true liberal arts tradition. □

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BILL PUKA

# Student Cheating

IN SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE, the ethical problems of college life are small. One billion of our six billion fellow humans are apparently ill or dying in pain of unnecessary deprivation at this moment. We live with a democratic government that pays mostly lip service to democracy. College students cause smaller problems. Typically, they do not form violent street gangs or crime syndicates that threaten the life, health, or safety of others; they rarely engage in wholesale fraud or embezzlement.

Date rape is likely the most serious campus ethics problem; it stands alone as a perennial capital crime. But, fortunately, there is little left to debate here ethically—date rape is rape, and rape is horribly wrong for readily statable reasons. Colleges are “on the case” here, focusing now on the attitude change needed to prevent the offense, with effective programs for undermining its mindset. After date rape, perhaps, come racism, homophobia, and sexism on the campus list of shame. Next comes reckless drug use (from cocaine to alcohol and tobacco), then suicide and serious theft and vandalism in the dorms, where some violence also is reported. Academic dishonesty—student cheating and plagiarism—may come even farther down the list, though some would order matters differently.

Most faculty and administrators, however, rate academic dishonesty a high crime, fatal to education. Obviously cheating is wrong: an affront to learning and self-integrity. But even where cheating is widespread, seeming to threaten the educational mission of a university, its touted harms do not stand scrutiny. Cheating need not decrease overall learning at college. Largely this is because learning and test-achievement do not correlate well; tests are not very good measures of the learning process. Thus, to cheat on tests also is not

automatically to cheat oneself as a learner. Only rarely does cheating undermine the trust required by teaching-learning relationships—a trust that, in most cases, was long eroded by the authoritarian qualities of pre-college education. Such trust is required less for learning than for grading anyway, as government intelligence agents, and especially double-agents, have shown in spades.

Cheating is not especially unfair to other students, but for the questionably comparative grading curves that some faculty employ in courses. The “stealing others’ ideas” that occurs in plagiarizing typical classroom assignments visits no harms on their supposed victims, who, along with their descendants, are usually long dead. Only a single professor or teaching assistant reads the course paper involved anyway, which is not made public.

What cheating shows that merits strong opposition is a student’s pride in deceptively “getting over” on professors and “the system,” even where both are recognized as fair. This affection for injustice and casual disregard for honest dealings must be trained out of students along with the jaded immaturity involved. Accompanying rationalizations must also be confronted—rationalizations that mask to the cheater how pathetic, embarrassing, childish, sleazy, and incompetent it is to steal others’ answers because one couldn’t even think up one’s own. That’s kindergarten.

By contrast, there are important situations where cheating or plagiarism is not only justified, but de facto obligatory. If I had to cite a single regret of my own student history, it would be failing to cheat when I was being victimized by unfair testing and grading, not to mention abusive teaching overall. In submitting to this treatment, I showed undue conventionalism and acquiescence in petty tyranny, both of which are toxic to ethical integrity. True, I often protested such unfair treatment. But this invariably worked to my detriment and that of my peers. (No de facto,

**Ethicists who are incensed by student cheating show no similar concern for the rampant disrespect shown students**

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## As Serious an Academic Integrity Problem as Faculty-Administration Business as Usual?



due-process option is available for winning such protests.) Worse, my protest was viewed as courageous, as properly standing up for principle. The courage I really needed to learn was that of dirtying one's hands a bit, adjusting my general principles to the specific context of unjust treatment. I needed the distinctive moral courage to besmirch my personal virtue in hopes of subverting injustice and its harms.

One comes to learn that those willing to sully their purity to fight wrongs show a level of moral commitment that rises well above nobility. After all, nobility normally requires conspiring, if not purposely, in the oppressive practices of others. In the present case, it means failing to expose poor teaching and its misrepresentation as students' failure to learn. Adult

morality demands "principled" flexibility, not personal consistency masquerading as character. At the college level especially, ethics education can cleave toward the adult, though it presently does not, transcending childhood devices like codes of conduct or "do-and-don't" rules.

### **Faculty ethics**

Some faculty actually boast about their bad teaching behavior, and they are admired for it by their colleagues. They proudly depict themselves as "hard-nosed graders" who give "killer exams," which many fail and almost all do poorly on. This is a self-indicting outrage. A competent teacher makes course material sing and partners with students in skill development. If students do not do top-notch work, then

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either they are not functioning primarily as students in the course or the teaching approach taken needs radical change.

With a little thought and effort, most faculty can make it well-nigh impossible for students to cheat or plagiarize. One way is by not giving the same exams repeatedly. Another is by not using multiple-choice or other mechanical examination formats. A third is by asking students to do several drafts of a paper, illustrating the developing process of their work on each task, and integrating progressive drafts incrementally. (One searches the Web in vain for papers satisfying these requirements.) Add an oral, face-to-face component to the drafting process and the learning involved simply can't be faked or simulated.

Such "progressive" measures can take more faculty effort and time than do standard tests. But isn't that what "hard-headed teachers and graders" expect of their students? Why not of themselves also? Measurement batteries that get at the full variety of student learning and effort have long been available. Why then do faculty cling to the long outmoded and discredited in their course practices? (Unfortunately, this rhetorical question has an all-too-pragmatic answer: college faculty must decrease teaching and grading time relative to research and grant-making activities. This response is ethically self-indicting as well—for faculty and administrators.)

Isn't such negligent or disingenuous teaching more ethically problematic than student cheating? What of its compounding with institutional evaluation criteria that rate faculty publications and grant dollars over teaching competence? Doesn't another whole set of more serious problems emanate from the professionalization and corporatization of academe? This, after all, pressures faculty into compliance with these evaluation measures. And how rates the timid and cowardly submission of faculty to these measures?

#### **Administrator ethics**

College administrators routinely tout their faculty's dedication to personalized teaching, especially in official materials sent to applicants and their parents. Simultaneously, they push reward structures that punish such dedication. Official publications reinterpret the array of college assets and foci so that they appear to match student interests. The aim here is to

meet admissions quotas, not to model truth in advertising. And advertising is the name of the game, after all; "information technology" is the ad slogan of the moment. How does orienting to the student pool as market shares, or enticing applicants through false advertising, size up as an academic integrity issue? Is there a single college ethics initiative that addresses it?

One looks in vain through college brochures or catalogs for even the slightest hint that most professors receive zero teaching instruction before going to the head of the classroom. Nor do most colleges train professors during their teaching careers. This news would surprise prospective students, I'd bet, not to mention their check-toting parents. But paradoxically, it might improve student course evaluations: "for someone who never took a course in teaching, the professor isn't that bad."

It has become a common practice for faculty to comb calls for grant proposals, see what topics granting agencies want researched, and then skew their research direction accordingly. Often, faculty do not take this direction because they believe it is worthwhile or because they feel qualified in the area. Rather, they do it to bring in the funding with overhead their administrative "overlords" demand. What level of fraudulence and deception does such collusion reach? Never have I heard faculty even hush their tones when discussing research "opportunities" of this sort, nor have I heard administrators caution against such chicanery.

#### **The academic integrity movement**

I cite these examples in "honor" of the growing academic integrity movement, which somehow sees the ethical splinters in students' eyes without seeing the beam in its own. Consider the following succinct summary of the movement's aims taken from one of its leading Web sites. "Academic Integrity is a fundamental value of teaching, learning, and scholarship. Yet, there is growing evidence that students cheat and plagiarize. Assess your climate of learning. Evaluate current academic programs and policies by purchasing the Academic Integrity Assessment Guide." While "teaching, learning, and scholarship" are all mentioned here, only the learning or student-cheating focus is followed up. No mention is



**Rensselaer  
Polytechnic  
Institute**


made of cheating, plagiarizing, and other forms of academic dishonesty by faculty-scholars. And when “learning climate” is noted, nothing untoward about college administration or institutional structure is so much as hinted at.

It is puzzling that the faculty involved in the academic integrity movement equate dishonesty with lack of integrity, or pose dishonesty as the negative pole on a continuum with positive integrity. The former involves a trait or vice—dishonesty and principled inconsistency; the latter concerns overall character and life orientation.

Ethicists who are incensed by student cheating show no similar concern for the rampant disrespect shown students, nor for the extreme anxiety caused them when inflexible deadlines are mandated for class assignments or when faculty assign exams and papers that are all due at the same time. A complete lack of coordination is clear here among faculty in different courses and departments, with a lack of concern even to try. Students suffer prolonged and painful loneliness at college, especially at first, and periods of isolating alienation from peers. They anguish alone with crises of identity and the loss of spiritual orientation, personal meaning, and self-worth. Conflicts with parents and the breakup of love relationships often rob them of interest and motivation, sapping the power to concentrate on studies. The real harm, the real suffering involved here often gets recorded as poor classroom achievement. Were institutions actually fostering the kind of community and the sense of belonging they advertise, along with the social skills mentioned in descriptions of campus “leadership” programs, these evils could be mitigated. Yet instead of addressing such institutional failings openly and responsibly, the blame is shifted to the emotional problems of particular students. And these problems are treated confidentially through individual counseling outside the curriculum.

A last puzzler: at most universities, students are banished from their learning community for cheating and plagiarism. The unwitting ethical lesson taught here is that enlightened and reflective communities handle internal messes by sweeping them outside. They handle rule violations and significant faults in their members by changing the locks on the doors. If the student offense is small, expulsion is replaced by “hard labor,” usually in the form

of assigned research on academic honesty. Here the ideals of inquiry are portrayed as a form of punishment, and student suspicions about the real nature of “school work” are affirmed.

Notwithstanding the above tally, some colleges and universities show that higher education can get serious about ethics education. All can do so, potentially, by putting their own houses in order as an example to their students. Coming full circle, we also must recognize that, in social context, even the worst ethical offenses just attributed to academe are small potatoes. Even the ethics codes aspired to in business and most other professions are themselves more ethically problematic than the misbehavior of faculty. Most college professors approach teaching as a mission, conscientiously dedicating their lives to the highest benefit of others’ children, with little external reward. □

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# What Really Matters in College



On the occasion of its ninetieth anniversary in 2005, the Association of American Colleges and Universities launched Liberal Education and America's Promise: Excellence for Everyone as a Nation Goes to College (LEAP), a ten-year national campaign to champion the value of a liberal education.

For additional information about the LEAP campaign and how to get involved, see [www.aacu.org/advocacy](http://www.aacu.org/advocacy).

lege educators on the key outcomes of a quality undergraduate education. This consensus underlines the importance of an engaged and practical liberal education for all students, regardless of their chosen institution or field of study.

Given this focus on key outcomes, these greater expectations for student learning and achievement, and the importance of inten-

AAC&U also commissioned a series of student focus groups in four locations in different regions of the country. In each location, one discussion was held with public high school seniors or rising seniors who plan to pursue a baccalaureate degree, and a second discussion was held with advanced college students at both public and private colleges and universities. The eight focus groups explored the students' own hopes, concerns, expectations, and goals regarding college. We sought to understand their attitudes about and perceptions of liberal education, as well as the degree to which they recognize the value to their own futures of a liberal education and its key outcomes. The findings of these focus groups reveal that the learning outcomes business, civic, and academic leaders consider the most important either are not understood by, or are low priorities for, today's students.

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# How Students View & Value Liberal Education



Utah State  
University



Professional success was identified by the participants in all eight focus group as the primary reason for pursuing a college degree which students recognize as a basic requirement for success in today's competitive job marketplace. They understand, further, that college is important not only for obtaining a first job, but also for career advancement and success down the line. The current competitive and troubling economic environment seems to be driving students to focus only on narrow job categories and majors, however, rather than on the knowledge, skills, and capacities they actually will need in their working lives and in their lives as citizens, family members, and fulfilled human beings.

In fact, when asked whether the degree is simply a “piece of paper” or credential, or if it represents significant achievement that will enable long-term success and fulfillment, the students were not in agreement. Some saw the degree as simply a “piece of paper”; others saw it as evidence of the attainment of knowledge,

Students are receiving these messages from their parents, but also from high school teachers and guidance counselors, and from the society at large. What they are not receiving is *specific* information about the challenges they will face in college or the specific outcomes of college that employers identify as essential. At least some students are getting lots of information about requirements for gaining admittance to college and guidance on how and when to apply, but they are not told what or how they will be expected to study once they get to college—or how they can best prepare to succeed there. The message about preparation seems to be simply “work hard, since college learning is difficult”—not a very helpful message to guide one’s actual choices and actions.



**Some outcomes that AAC&U members and many members of the business community value very highly are not considered important goals for college learning by today's students**

for the demands of some college classes despite having taken AP classes in those fields of study.

Given the messages these students are receiving, it is not surprising that we found high school students largely uninformed about the college curriculum and quite uncertain about its demands. The resources available to guide their preparation for college life are clearly very limited. Students do not regard high school guidance counselors or colleges themselves as trusted sources of information. Operating in this vacuum and in a general climate of skepticism about the advice they are receiving, students have little understanding of the kinds of learning either their future employers or faculty members believe are most important, and they don't even know that this gap in their knowledge is important.

**Important outcomes**

While some regard the college degree as little more than a "piece of paper," most students believe that something important goes on during the college years. The problem is they don't have a clear sense of what that "something" is or ought to be. They are in no position to be intentional about working on precisely those outcomes most important to their future success and to the future success of our society.

How, then, do students view the specific learning objectives they will be pursuing in college?

It was extremely difficult for the students in our focus groups to name specific outcomes of college that are important to them. In generating their own lists of important outcomes, they tended to describe very general aptitudes



Utah State  
University

and dispositions. They placed the greatest priority on gaining a sense of maturity, time-management skills, strong work habits, self-discipline, and teamwork skills. With the exception of teamwork skills, however, the students did not recognize these skills as being direct outcomes of the college curriculum as much as they viewed them as products of their own ability to handle the greater independence, freedom, and responsibility gained at college.

In addition to generating their own lists of important outcomes, the focus group participants were asked to identify the five most critical and the two least critical outcomes of college from a list of about sixteen different choices. Table 1 shows how the students generally ranked the various outcomes that both the academic and business communities value most. As one can see from these student rankings,

some outcomes that AAC&U members and many members of the business community value very highly—e.g., global understanding, civic engagement, a sense of values and ethics, intercultural skills and knowledge—are not considered important goals for college learning by today's students.

We discovered that some students do believe these low priority outcomes *are* important, but they either think that one develops enough skills in these areas in high school, or they simply feel that the outcomes fall outside the purview of what is appropriate in a *college* education. For instance, nearly all the students who participated in our focus groups reported that they already possess sophisticated computer skills and believed themselves to be capable of updating these skills as needed throughout their lives.

**Table 1**

## Student Rankings

### Most Important Outcomes

1. A sense of maturity and how to succeed on your own
2. Time-management skills
3. Strong work habits
4. Self-discipline
5. Teamwork skills and the ability to get along with and work with people different from yourself

### Mid-Tier Outcomes

6. Tangible business skills, and a specific expertise and knowledge in your field of focus
7. Independent and critical thinking/reasoning skills
8. Strong writing and oral/speaking skills
9. Improved ability to solve problems and think analytically
10. Exposure to the business world
11. Leadership skills

### Least-Valued Outcomes

12. Sense of values, principles, and ethics
13. Tolerance and respect for people of other backgrounds, races, ethnicities, and lifestyles
14. Competency in computer skills and software
15. Expanded cultural and global awareness and sensitivity
16. Appreciation of your role as a citizen and an orientation toward public service





**Nearly all the students we interviewed regarded civic engagement as something that might be important to some individuals, but not as something that a college education should address**

Nearly all the students we interviewed regarded civic engagement as something that might be important to some individuals, but not as something that a college education should address. Some of the students went so far as to suggest that activities like service learning might distract from the more important work of their own *individual* self-development—the primary reason they gave for attending college.

It is very important to note that the priorities of the advanced college students differed very little from those of the high school students and that these findings about priorities are highly consistent in all four regions of the country where the focus groups were held. It seems that their time in college had not really changed these students' views of the most important outcomes of college.

Finally, while most of the focus groups were conducted in the summer of 2004, two were held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in March 2005. In these groups, we changed some of the language we used to describe certain outcomes, and we added a few outcomes to the list. Nonetheless, the lists of priorities generated by these students are still quite similar to the listing shown in Table 1. They ranked the three newly added outcomes—expanded knowledge of cultures and societies outside the United States, expanded knowledge of American culture and history, and expanded understanding of science and its relevance to other areas of study—at the very bottom of their lists of priorities. Overall, expanded understanding of science was ranked as the very least important outcome in the two focus groups where that topic was addressed. These students also told us that, as they already have studied American culture and history in high school, there is no need to continue to study those subjects in college.

As readers of this journal are no doubt aware, a good liberal education comprises many of the outcomes on these lists. And few in the academy believe that a well-educated

person needs, for instance, little science or history education beyond high school to function effectively in today's society. It is clear from our discussions with these students that there is a serious disconnect between what students value and the vision of liberal education championed by the AAC&U community.

**Liberal education**

We also used the focus groups to explore students' familiarity with the term "liberal education" itself as well as their impressions of the current practices that define it. Most of the high school and college students we interviewed had not heard the term liberal education. To the extent that a few participants discerned some of the key values and principles of the concept, they associated it only with liberal arts colleges. When asked to define what liberal education means to them, most of the participants, high school and college students alike, were unable to provide an accurate definition. And even those few who did have some sense of it had not actually heard of liberal education; instead, they deduced a definition based on a variety of associations. As one Portland high school student put it, "I associate it [liberal education] with a broad education and openness to different things. It's an education that will prepare me for what I need to know either at the present time in my life or for my future. It's a good point that you take what you can from it."

Some in the groups associated a liberal education with relevant values and qualities such as being "well-rounded" or getting an educational "foundation" or "breadth of focus." Some said that a liberal education "encourages critical thinking" or "promotes individualism." Some also linked it directly to the arts and humanities, but not to the sciences. Nearly all the college students associated it with general education elements of the curriculum rather than the whole of the educational experience.

Other students stated that a liberal education is an education politically skewed to the

**Naropa University**



Liberal education is a philosophy of education that empowers individuals, liberates the mind from ignorance, and cultivates social responsibility. A liberal education comprises a curriculum that includes general

While many of the high school students who participated in the sessions were positively disposed toward a liberal education, those high school and college students who were the most career focused and who had the clearest sense of vocational direction were also the least likely to embrace liberal education as appropriate for them. As one Milwaukee, Wisconsin, high school student put it, "I know exactly what I want to do. . . . I basically



**There is a serious disconnect  
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championed by the AAC&U community**

have the next four years of my life planned completely out, and if I had to sit in classes that were meant to expand my horizons, I would be very upset because that's not my focus. . . . I feel that would be wasting my time." Another Wisconsin high school student suggested that liberal education is "a dumb idea, because I kind of know basically what I want to do, and this will probably throw a bunch of stuff in there that has nothing to do with it."

Opinions about the value of liberal education were much more sharply divided among the college students we interviewed—each of whom had at least some experience with elements of it. Many liked the definition of liberal education they were given—at least in principle. However, several of the college students felt that their own experience of liberal education fell short of this ideal.

The most significant point of difference in the reactions of high school and college students relates to general education requirements. The view that these requirements detract from a students' major, rather than enhance it, surfaced repeatedly among the college students.

Moreover, many of the college students felt that their general education courses were completely disconnected from their majors, and they were dissatisfied with the limited options their colleges offer for fulfilling these requirements. Some other students felt that their general education classes taught them nothing they hadn't already learned in high school. For example, one college student in Indianapolis remarked that he "had all the broad general education [in] high school. I expected something more from college," he said. "When I got there, I felt like I was repeating the same things that I had learned in high school. Not a whole lot was tailored to what I want to do with my life. It was kind of disappointing."

### Conclusion

What does this all mean for these students' futures, for the future of higher education, and for our shared future? Business leaders in a

wide array of sectors are proclaiming the new importance to our economy of analytical, contextual, integrative, scientific, and creative thinking. With increasing urgency, employers are calling for graduates who are skilled communicators, adept at quantitative reasoning, oriented to innovation, sophisticated about diversity, and grounded in cross-cultural and global learning. Civic leaders are expressing concern about declining rates of civic knowledge and political participation among the young and about what this trend might mean for the future of our democracy.

In today's knowledge-fueled world, the quality of student learning is our key to the future. It is no longer enough for students merely to complete the right number of courses. The breadth and sophistication of their learning in college actually matters to success—to individual success, economic success, and the success of our democracy. We know that there is much more work to be done within the academy to ensure that all students reach this breadth and sophistication in their learning. But surely the first step is to help students, prospective students, and their parents understand not only that it is important to attend and graduate from college, but also what really matters in college. □

*To respond to this article, e-mail [liberaled@aacu.org](mailto:liberaled@aacu.org), with the authors' names on the subject line.*

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## Integrated Learning and Research Across Disciplinary Boundaries

# Engaging Students

LUCIA ALBINO GILBERT,  
PAIGE E. SCHILT,  
AND SHELDON EKLAND-OLSON

AS CAMPUSES ACROSS THE COUNTRY explore ways to strengthen interdisciplinary studies and involve undergraduates in research, questions emerge about how best to integrate existing course offerings and majors, develop curricular rigor and agility, and strengthen administrative coordination. The structural obstacles to crossing disciplinary boundaries and integrating the

curriculum are real, but they often cloud

the larger conceptual task or vision that must come first. In *Integrative Learning: Mapping the Terrain*, Mary Taylor Huber and Pat Hutchings (2004, 1) note that while “many colleges and universities are creating opportunities for more integrative, connected learning,” often such innovations “exist in isolation, disconnected from other parts of the curriculum and from other reform efforts.” In addition, the programs that are implemented typically have their own faculty and staff advocates who act independently of the university’s central priorities for undergraduate education (Schoem 2002).

In this article, we discuss two successful initiatives to integrate interdisciplinary study and participation in research into the core mission of undergraduate education at the University of Texas (UT) at Austin. The first of these, the Forum Seminars, introduces students to specific cross-disciplinary topics and faculty in these areas. The second, the Bridging Disciplines Programs (BDP), takes students a step further by using the forum seminar as a foundation

course for an eighteen-to twenty-four hour interdisciplinary certificate program that complements the student’s major and is built around general education requirements, electives, and research.

The vision for these initiatives emanates from the university’s identity as a large and diverse research institution and its desire to provide the majority of its students with the kinds of unique educational opportunities that have typically been reserved for honors students. Our goals were two-tiered: first, we wanted to develop programs that weave research and cross-disciplinary perspectives into the fabric of students’ undergraduate education, and second, in doing so, we wanted to ensure the sustainability and effectiveness of these programs by building on the existing faculty research strengths and course offerings. Before describing these programs in more detail, we first identify the key factors or guiding principles that we believe are central to the success of the initiatives.

**Build on existing resources.** UT Austin serves the largest undergraduate student body in the nation, with baccalaureate degrees in eleven schools and colleges and more than 130 majors. With ten thousand courses offered each semester, UT Austin provides immense resources for learning, and particularly learning across disciplines. It also has a large and diverse faculty involved in a broad array of research endeavors and interdisciplinary collaborations. However, it is this immensity of choice that makes it difficult for students to take full advantage of those resources on their own.

In order to capitalize on the size and scope of the curriculum, UT Austin needed to offer students some navigational tools. Rather than

**The creative and purposeful organization of general education requirements within cross-disciplinary frameworks became central to our vision for developing enduring models of interdisciplinary study**

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**University  
of Texas  
at Austin**

create numerous new courses, we conceptualized a set of roadmaps through UT's already rich curriculum. These routes were designed to help students construct meaningful intellectual narratives for connecting their coursework across disciplines and to research throughout the years of their undergraduate experience.

**Make research and creative innovation central.** Although a small number of students have

traditionally found research placements through informal channels, we recognized the need to create more accessible and transparent paths to undergraduate participation in research. While such paths did not have much precedent at the university, the process of obtaining "buy-in" from the schools and colleges was made easier by the fact that research is so central to the university's identity. Moreover,

many of the innovations we designed to facilitate the two initiatives also benefited different constituencies across the university.

For example, a highly visible, university-wide searchable database of faculty research interests was developed with both undergraduate student users and faculty in mind ([www.utexas.edu/research/eureka](http://www.utexas.edu/research/eureka)). Interdisciplinary in its design, the database allows students and faculty to learn about research inside and outside their home departments. In this way, it integrates efforts to involve undergraduates in research and efforts to break down barriers to cross-disciplinary study and collaboration. Similarly, the addition of undergraduate research courses to the course catalog enabled students to get credit for research participation with faculty in departments across campus and offered the schools and colleges a visible credit-based way to communicate involvement in faculty research as an option for their students.

**Focus on general education requirements.**

Across all of the university's colleges/schools and majors, students may choose from a rich array of humanities, social science, and natural science courses to fulfill general education requirements. While general education requirements theoretically provide the opportunity to achieve a cross-disciplinary perspective that complements the specialization of the major, in practice these requirements often function as unconnected fragments. As the authors of the *Greater Expectations* report suggest, "the student assembles an assortment of courses, each carrying a defined number of credits and assuming a standard time in class. . . . There is little internal coherence in curricula or programs, and even less a plan for connected learning" (AAC&U 2002, 16). Thus, the creative and purposeful organization of general education requirements within cross-disciplinary frameworks became central to our vision for developing enduring models of interdisciplinary study.

**Engage a diverse group of motivated students.** A central question concerned which students we wanted to attract to the BDPs and whether we needed to establish GPA or other requirements in order to select students who would successfully complete the programs. The clear consensus was to move away from a GPA or other requirement and instead to develop an application process in which students are invited to begin to articulate their own visions for their undergraduate education. As part of

the required application process, students meet with the BDP coordinator and the academic adviser for the BDP program. These individuals provide guidance and feedback throughout the application process, which includes an essay describing the motivations for completing a BDP and a proposal for coursework and research experiences.

Because degree requirements vary with majors, it was also necessary to create a flexible set of programs that enables students to engage in different ways, depending on their interest and the flexibility of their degree plan. While some students may choose to create an interdisciplinary concentration that includes participation in research, other students, particularly those in preprofessional programs with extensive degree requirements, may only be able to participate by enrolling in a one-hour cross-disciplinary seminar or receiving assistance from the research coordinator in using our searchable research database to become involved in research opportunities.

**Provide a series of experiences that build upon each other.** One of the greatest advantages of undergraduate participation in faculty research is its potential to increase the student's awareness of academic opportunities and resources, including faculty, courses, scholarships, conferences, and summer programs. Clearly this awareness will be most beneficial if it is not reserved for the senior year. Similarly, students who begin participating in internships early in their undergraduate education will have more room for thoughtful reflection on potential careers and more opportunities to take advantage of career advising and coursework that can supplement that reflection. At a time when higher education was trending toward "capstone" experiences, we wanted to create programs that would allow students to integrate the benefits of participation in research and internships into all four years of an undergraduate education.

**Establish close relations with the colleges and departments and their faculty.** The guiding vision for both initiatives was developed by a cross-college committee of highly regarded members of the faculty working closely with the provost and the vice provost. That committee designed the forum seminars to involve a range of faculty from different fields and endorsed the concept of bridging disciplines programs in cutting-edge interdisciplinary areas that would be governed



by cross-disciplinary faculty panels. Making these programs a reality required closely collaborating with the colleges and departments and involving their top faculty who, through their participation, could communicate the importance of this initiative for the university.

Research is central to our vision for cross-disciplinary programs, and conveying interest in faculty research was central to working with colleges and departments in recruiting faculty to the BDP panels. For each BDP area identified, the vice provost contacted deans and department chairs to inquire about particular senior and junior faculty who could serve on the faculty panel and to determine which other members of their faculty might be a good fit by virtue of their teaching interests and scholarship. Invitations were then sent to the faculty indicating why they were selected and the relevance of their teaching and research interests, describing the significance of the program to the university, and explaining that they would be part of a cross-university faculty panel guiding the BDP area and the students who enrolled.

To date, the Forum Seminars and BDPs have successfully involved more than 120 faculty from across the campus. Not one faculty member has declined an invitation to participate in a BDP panel. These faculty members are highly important for the overall success of the program because they extend the excitement of cross-disciplinary learning and research not just to undergraduate students but also to their own colleagues. Faculty who teach a forum seminar or who chair a BDP panel receive a modest research stipend. Faculty who serve on the BDP panels are listed in the program brochures and on the Web site. In addition, each spring the provost recognizes the contributions of participating faculty with a reception honoring them and their BDP students. Deans and department chairs are also invited, and more importantly, many of them come.

**Acknowledge the fundamental role of faculty.** In visioning and then creating these initiatives, it was clear that successfully engaging the faculty was essential and that any programs we developed needed to have the expertise of

**By modeling significant connections between disciplines, the forum seminars encourage students to identify general education courses and electives that complement their interests and their majors**

faculty at its core. In implementing the initiatives, we strive to both honor faculty expertise and use faculty time judiciously.

The development of a professional staff has been crucial to the respectful use of faculty resources. Both the Forum Seminars and the BDP are part of Connexus,<sup>1</sup> an overall effort to draw together elements of UT's vast undergraduate curricula and to position stu-

dents for an education that would better reflect the opportunities of a large research university. A small professional and support staff is in place to coordinate, administer, and evaluate all Connexus programs and to provide academic advising to students. The BDP coordinator works closely with the faculty panels, the forum seminars, the academic advisors, and the students.

In the planning stages, the BDP faculty panels and Connexus staff met several times per semester to hammer out conceptual issues and practical details. After the initial planning stages, Connexus staff took on more responsibility for the day-to-day operation of the program. Faculty panels now meet once per semester to discuss student applications and progress, consider changes to the curriculum, and plan events for BDP students. Faculty time is used only for issues that require faculty input. Faculty members join the BDP panels for three-year terms, with the option to renew at the end of their term. The use of limited terms allows us to involve a greater number of faculty in the mission of the BDPs and to avoid "burn out" for panel members.

### **The Forum Seminars program**

Forum seminars are one-hour courses designed to introduce first- and second-year students to a range of disciplinary perspectives and to the value of cross-disciplinary study and research. By modeling significant connections between disciplines, the forum seminars encourage students to identify general education courses and electives that complement their interests and their majors.

The forum seminars use an innovative course design involving interactive presentations by two or three faculty from different disciplines

who present together each week. Students have the opportunity to interact with the faculty in classroom discussion and via weekly response papers. The faculty member who organizes the seminar course helps students identify recurring issues and concepts and begin to integrate the perspectives of the various disciplines. The variety of faculty members who participate in the forum seminars helps students explore a wide range of disciplines, while the thematic organization provides a rubric for understanding connections between disciplines and a context for choosing required general education courses and getting involved in research.

For example, the Science of Environmental Change, a popular forum seminar, encourages students to think about such questions as climate change, water resources, and sustainability. Journalism students taking this course are stimulated to begin thinking about scientific method, government students about the importance of biodiversity, philosophy students about the allocation of natural resources, and biology students about the politics of the Environmental Protection Agency. Ideally, all of these students are prompted to think about the interrelated roles of science, politics, and economic interests in complex environmental problems by participating faculty from the geological sciences, integrative biology, law, business, and marine sciences.

Students from all the schools and colleges have enrolled in forum seminars, which are limited to fifty students each. The first two forum seminars were piloted in spring 2001. Since then, faculty from across campus have participated in seminars on a variety of topics related to the BDPs. We first offered five forum seminars in the same semester in spring 2004; our plan is to continue to offer five per semester.

Each forum seminar has a faculty member who is the instructor of record. This person decides the curriculum and works closely with the relevant BDP panels in inviting faculty from different disciplines to participate. A detailed forum seminar handbook guides this process.

For many students, a heightened interdisciplinary awareness and knowledge of faculty across campus may be the main outcome of the forum seminar. However, for others, the forum seminar captures their imagination and interest and motivates them to use it as a foundation for participation in a BDP.

### **The Bridging Disciplines Programs**

The BDPs help students think through and organize a significant component of their undergraduate experience. The programs are designed to complement and enrich a student's major field of study through the creative use of general education requirements, electives, research, and community-based experiences. Each BDP has three components: (1) a forum seminar, (2) an individualized cluster of general education requirements and electives organized around an interdisciplinary theme, and (3) a series of research or community-based experiences connecting the course cluster to a student's major.<sup>2</sup>

To date, BDPs have been developed along six broad interdisciplinary themes: Children and Society; Environment; Ethics and Leadership; Digital Arts and Media; Population and Public Policy; and Cultures and Identities. The BDP themes and strands reflect areas of abundant course offerings, innovative faculty research, and fertile traditions of cross-disciplinary collaboration on our campus.

Each BDP is governed by a cross-disciplinary faculty panel, which sets the academic policy for the BDP and is involved in selecting students, monitoring their progress, and recommending relevant research and internship opportunities. Every semester, the faculty panel and the BDP staff plan one community-building activity that will help students in the BDPs make better connections with BDP faculty, support staff, and other students. Each BDP has its own Connexus academic adviser, who works individually with students to develop an interdisciplinary focus for their degrees. While most advisers work with students from the perspective of a single college or department, the Connexus advisers must keep abreast of opportunities and resources from across campus. To this end, the advisers as well as the Connexus research coordinator are integrated into the faculty panels, which affords them a unique opportunity to learn about cross-disciplinary collaborations and undergraduate research opportunities in the various departments and research units.

The BDPs also model an integrated approach to involvement in research, internships, and study abroad. Resources related to each of these activities have long existed on our campus; however, the BDP framework encourages students to conceptualize research

and cocurricular activities as integral elements of their formal curriculum. In fact, we refer to research and internship experiences as “Connecting Experiences” in order to emphasize that a well-chosen experience will help connect the thematic focus of the BDP to skills and concepts learned in the student’s major discipline. Students in the BDPs are encouraged to begin seeking research and cocurricular experiences early in their academic careers, with the goal of creating a coherent series of “milestone” experiences that complement and build on one another. For all of these reasons, students are required to complete a minimum of two (and ideally three) Connecting Experiences in the course of their four years at UT Austin.

### Indicators of success

For the Forum Seminar Program, our goal was to attract a broad range of students from across the schools and colleges. From spring 2001, when we piloted two forum seminars, to spring 2005, when we offered five forum seminars, approximately 1,500 students representative of the colleges on our campus have been enrolled. We also saw the forum seminars as providing valuable paths for students who were unsure of how they wanted to focus their academic study at the university and hoped to attract students who had entered their colleges as undeclared majors. Students who are undeclared constitute 38 percent of those enrolled. Other indicators of success are the growth in the number of forum seminars from two to five per semester and their appeal to students, as indicated by their full enrollment.

For the BDPs, our goal was again to attract a broad range of students, especially those not served by traditional honors programs, and to encourage these students to complete a certificate program involving research. We take as an indicator of success that the percentages of current BDP students roughly reflect the proportion of students in the various colleges. Moreover, of the 256 students who have participated in the BDPs, very few have also been enrolled in the university honors program.

In addition to our impact on individual students, these two initiatives are having an impact on the culture of our university. By involving a subset of faculty from all of the schools and colleges, they are being looked to as an example of how to accomplish

cross-disciplinary study, foster a campus-wide openness to undergraduate participation in research, and provide a site where research, curriculum, and cocurricular initiatives can finally interact.

We believe that the very factors that have shaped the character of these initiatives to strengthen undergraduate education are also the factors that provide it stability and endurance. First, the chief academic officer of the university believes in the fundamental wisdom of the initiatives and provides strong conceptual support and leadership. Second, few resources are available at our university, or at public universities in general, to provide financial support for the kinds of programs we envisioned. This reality helped us stay focused on using existing resources creatively and effectively. Finally, placing faculty and their research and creative innovation at the core not only attracts and engages faculty but also keeps the forum seminars and BDP areas current and able to evolve as fields and research agendas change and new faculty come to campus. □

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### NOTES

1. Connexus: Connections in Undergraduate Studies, an initiative of the executive vice president and provost and directed by the vice provost for undergraduate studies, provides a diverse set of academic programs and resources that traverse boundaries between colleges and disciplines and enhance the quality of undergraduate education. Additional information about this initiative can be found online at [www.utexas.edu/students/connexus](http://www.utexas.edu/students/connexus).
2. For specific examples, see [www.utexas.edu/student/connexus/bdp/index.htm](http://www.utexas.edu/student/connexus/bdp/index.htm).



CHRISTINE HULT ■  
RONDA CALLISTER ■ KIM SULLIVAN

# Is There a Global Warming Toward Women in Academia?

P E R S P E C T I V E S

**Substantially different types of universities are finding similar sources of dissatisfaction among their women faculty in the sciences and engineering**

WHILE GLOBAL WARMING toward women in academia (in this case a desirable trend) may be occurring in some academic departments or institutions—most notably in community colleges—the same cannot be said for many colleges of Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET colleges). There, the climate for women is very chilly indeed. As Cathy Ann Trower reports in *Science* magazine (2001), 42 percent of full professors in two-year colleges are women; however, women comprise only 17 percent of the full professor ranks at doctoral-granting institutions. For SET colleges, the figures are even lower. “In 4-year colleges and universities,” Trower reports, “women SET (science, engineering and technology) faculty hold fewer high-ranking posts than men, are less likely to be full professors, and are more likely to be assistant professors” (1).

Even though there are increasing numbers of women graduates in the pipeline, the statistics for women’s representation at the higher ranks and in the SET colleges have been largely

unchanged for the past twenty years. The situation is no better in Europe. “Although women constitute more than half of the student population across Europe, they hold fewer than 10% of the top positions in the academic system” (Dwandre 2002, 278).

In the 1970s, Rosabeth Moss Kanter (1977) wrote about the adverse effects that can occur when women or minorities are tokens in their departments. Many subsequent studies also have found that when women represent less than 15–20 percent of a department they are more likely to feel the effects of gender stereotyping. More recently, Virginia Valian (1998) has developed cognitive analyses to explain the persistent inequalities in academia. She claims that both men and women operate under certain stereotypical gender schemas that affect our expectations of men’s and women’s roles. For example, Valian cites research showing that, after reviewing identical curricula vitae but with different names attached, men and women academics both consistently rate the women as less competent for an academic position than the men. Gender schemas go a long way toward explaining the subtle dynamics at work during recruitment and promotion on university campuses.

Other analyses have revealed additional aspects of chilly campus climates that help to account for women’s failure to thrive in academia (see Etzkowitz, Kemelgor, and Uzzi 2000). One of these is the “death by a thousand paper cuts”

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**On our campus,  
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the slowest there**

phenomenon. Ingrained assumptions, practices, and behaviors, often based on gendered stereotypes, tend to chip away at women. In a Princeton study of women in science, for example, “nearly a quarter of the women said their colleagues engaged occasionally or frequently in ‘unprofessional’ behavior and excluded women from professional activities” (Lawler 2003, 33).

**High pressure and low pressure systems**

Gender schema as well as ingrained organizational assumptions, inappropriate behaviors, and stereotypes, often hidden in organizations, have long been part of the historic separation of spheres—the masculine sphere of paid work and the feminine sphere of domestic life. Gendered assumptions are most likely to affect the quality of work life and success for women faculty during interactions within their departments, particularly with colleagues but also with administrators. In today’s politically correct work environment blatant discrimination is not common, but gendered assumptions and stereotypes are often buried below the surface. For example, a male department chairperson deciding on merit raises may unconsciously

privilege a male colleague who is his family’s sole source of financial support.

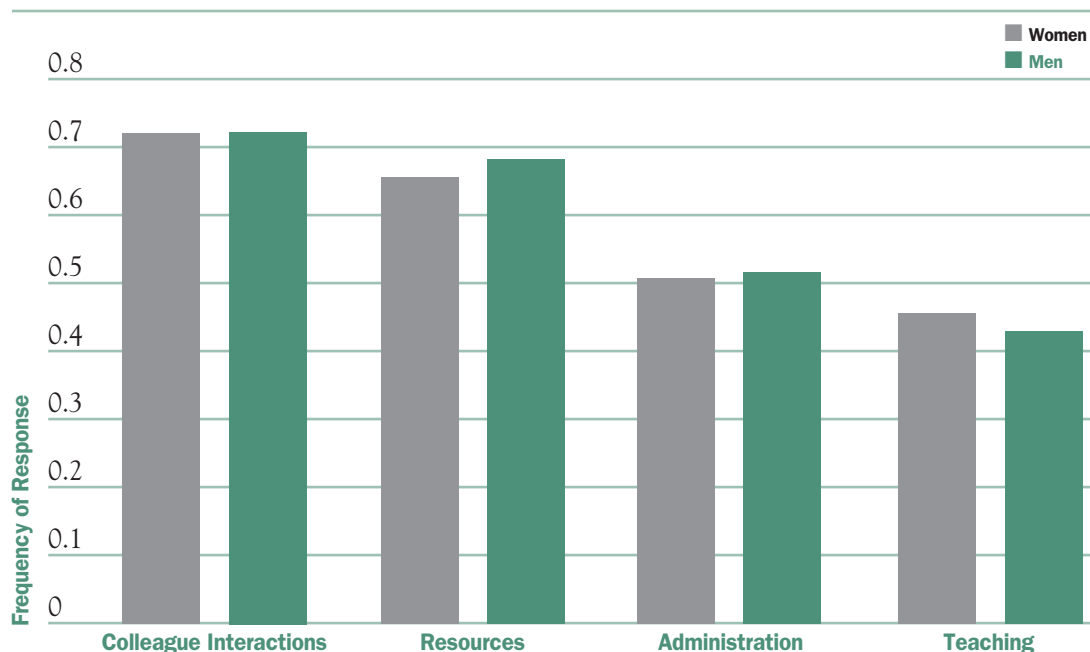
Entrenched beliefs influencing work practices are particularly hard to change because the possibility of change challenges the importance of work in people’s lives. Systematic

change requires a collective opportunity to reflect on work practices, to discern and discuss the intended and unintended consequences of the status quo, and to develop a shared desire to change.

**A split jet stream**

As Howard Altman recently noted (2004, 50), “even the best faculty development programs tend to ignore job satisfaction and focus exclusively on job effectiveness. Both are important.” There is a pressing need within academia to learn more about faculty satisfaction with their jobs and with their work environments. In the late nineties, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) undertook a comprehensive survey of the women faculty in its school of science in order to gain insights into their job satisfaction (Committee on Women Faculty 1999). In 2002 and 2003, we conducted a similar survey at Utah State University (USU). On

**Figure 1 Sources of Success and Satisfaction**





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our campus, we chose to focus on the SET colleges because the warming toward women faculty appears to be the slowest there.

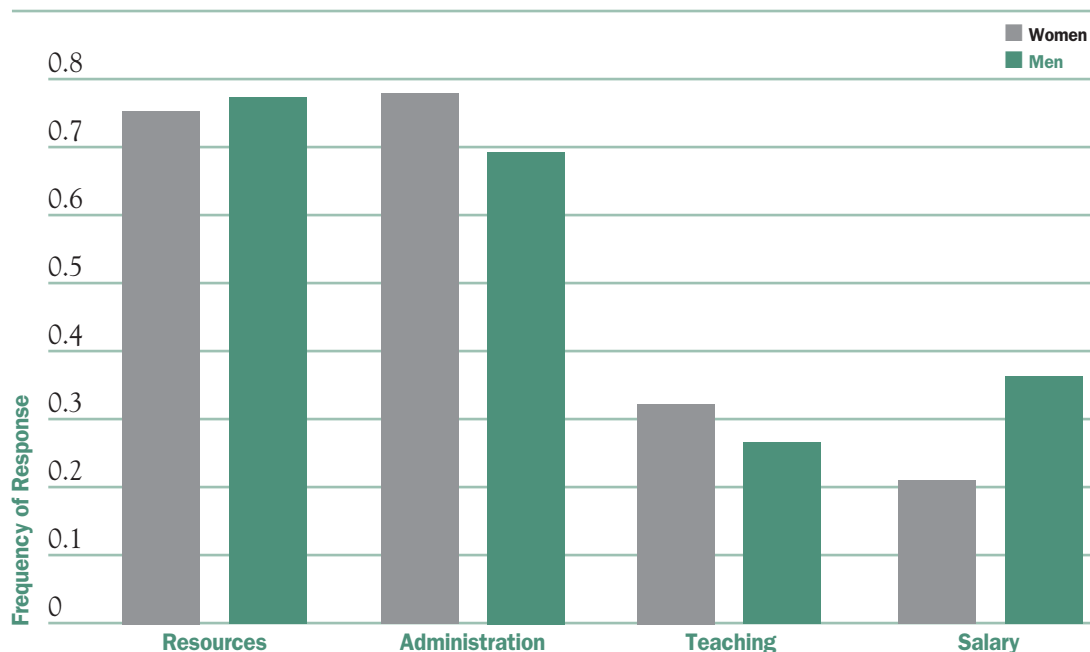
We interviewed forty-two current and former women faculty members in our SET colleges (Agriculture, Engineering, Natural Resources, and Science) about their job satisfaction. In order to discover whether the attitudes of the men differed from those of the women, we followed up with interviews of a matched set of forty current male faculty members from the same SET colleges. We asked each faculty member three questions: What factors at USU contributed to your career success and job satisfaction? What factors at USU were obstacles to success or sources of job dissatisfaction? What changes would you like to see at USU to improve the recruitment and retention of faculty? Our findings allow for a comparison between male and female faculty members regarding their sources of job satisfaction, dissatisfaction, and obstacles to success.<sup>1</sup>

We found no significant differences between men and women faculty in sources of career success and job satisfaction at USU (see figure 1). As listed by our respondents, the top four sources of success and satisfaction were positive interactions with colleagues, access to campus resources, support of administrators, and positive teaching experiences. The responses of



men and women faculty were also similar for many of the categories of obstacles to career success and job satisfaction (see figure 2). The most frequently reported obstacles that were the same for men and women were lack of

**Figure 2** Obstacles to Success and Sources of Dissatisfaction



resources on campus, negative interactions with administrators, negative teaching experiences, and low salary.

There were, however, significant gender differences in four categories of obstacles to success and sources of dissatisfaction (see figure 3). Women faculty members were more likely to report negative interactions with colleagues; negative experiences with the process of evaluation, promotion, and tenure; difficulty balancing work and family life; and overwhelming workloads. These factors are interrelated in that women faculty typically advise more students and serve on more committees; neither of these activities is valued highly for promotion and tenure. Women faculty reported being left out of collaborations and informal networks and receiving little mentoring; all of these factors may negatively impact promotion and tenure as well.

We found that, while untenured women are generally more satisfied with their academic careers, tenured women in the SET fields are more discouraged. The findings from Utah State University parallel the results found in studies done at both MIT and Princeton (Committee on Women Faculty 1999; Lawler 2003). Overall, these data suggest the pervasiveness of the

**Our vision  
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problem; substantially different types of universities are finding similar sources of dissatisfaction among their women faculty in the sciences and engineering.

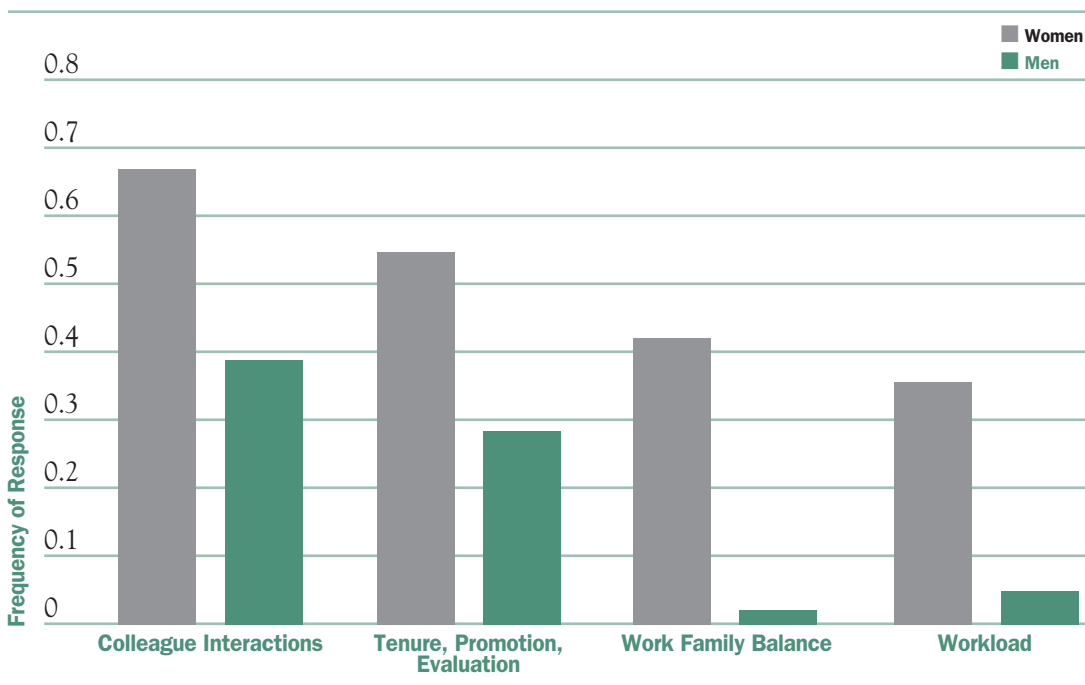
**What's in the forecast?**

Can anything be done about this chilly climate phenomenon? To answer this question,

the National Science Foundation created the NSF-ADVANCE program. The goal of the program is "to increase the participation of women in the scientific and engineering workforce through the increased representation and advancement of women in academic science and engineering careers" (see [www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/advance](http://www.nsf.gov/home/crssprgm/advance)). Utah State University is one of the nineteen schools that have received NSF-ADVANCE Institutional Transformation Awards for developing plans to pursue new organizational strategies to make access by women faculty to senior and leadership roles a priority.

Conducting the job satisfaction surveys discussed above was the Utah State ADVANCE team's first attempt to more clearly define the problem on our campus. We learned from these interviews that the women on our campus—a large, public, land-grant university in the rural

**Figure 3 Gender Differences in Obstacles to Success and Sources of Dissatisfaction**



West—face very similar problems to women on other campuses, such as MIT and Princeton—large, private universities in the urban East—as well as globally (e.g., women scientists in the European Union). We also learned that the experiences of men and women differ significantly with regard to their job satisfaction, with women experiencing a great deal more difficulty than men in balancing their work lives and their personal lives. Our initial research goes a long way toward defining the chilly climate problem.

### Nothing but blue skies

We know from organizational change research that change is always incremental, often with three steps forward and two steps back. As Leo Higdon points out (2003, 68), we need to “learn new and better ways” to manage change while “preserving the best of the tradition and culture on which our institutions are based.”

Our vision for the future is of a university where all faculty members, regardless of their gender or ethnicity, succeed to their fullest potential. Our overall goals for the ADVANCE-Utah State project are to

- transform departmental climates by using an organizational change model from the business arena called “Dual-Agenda” (Rapoport et al. 2002);

- transform university policies and procedures that are currently barriers for recruiting and retaining women;
- transform faculty support infrastructure, including the construction of a new on-campus child development center.

To accomplish these goals, we are working together with various groups on our campus, including the president and the provost, the vice president for research, the Office of Development, the Office of Sponsored Programs, the Office of Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity, the Council of Academic Deans, Student Support Services, and the Tri-Council for Women and Gender Programs.

### Warming things up on your campus

Based on our research, the following recommendations may help to improve the climate for women on your campus.

#### Recognize the “local” weather phenomenon.

What happens in departments is what really affects faculty the most directly (just like the weather: when the blizzard is headed toward your town, that’s when you really should pay attention). Identify departments that have poor climates. Provide support or training for department chairs so that they can address problems within their departments. Occasionally, outside intervention may be necessary. Increase



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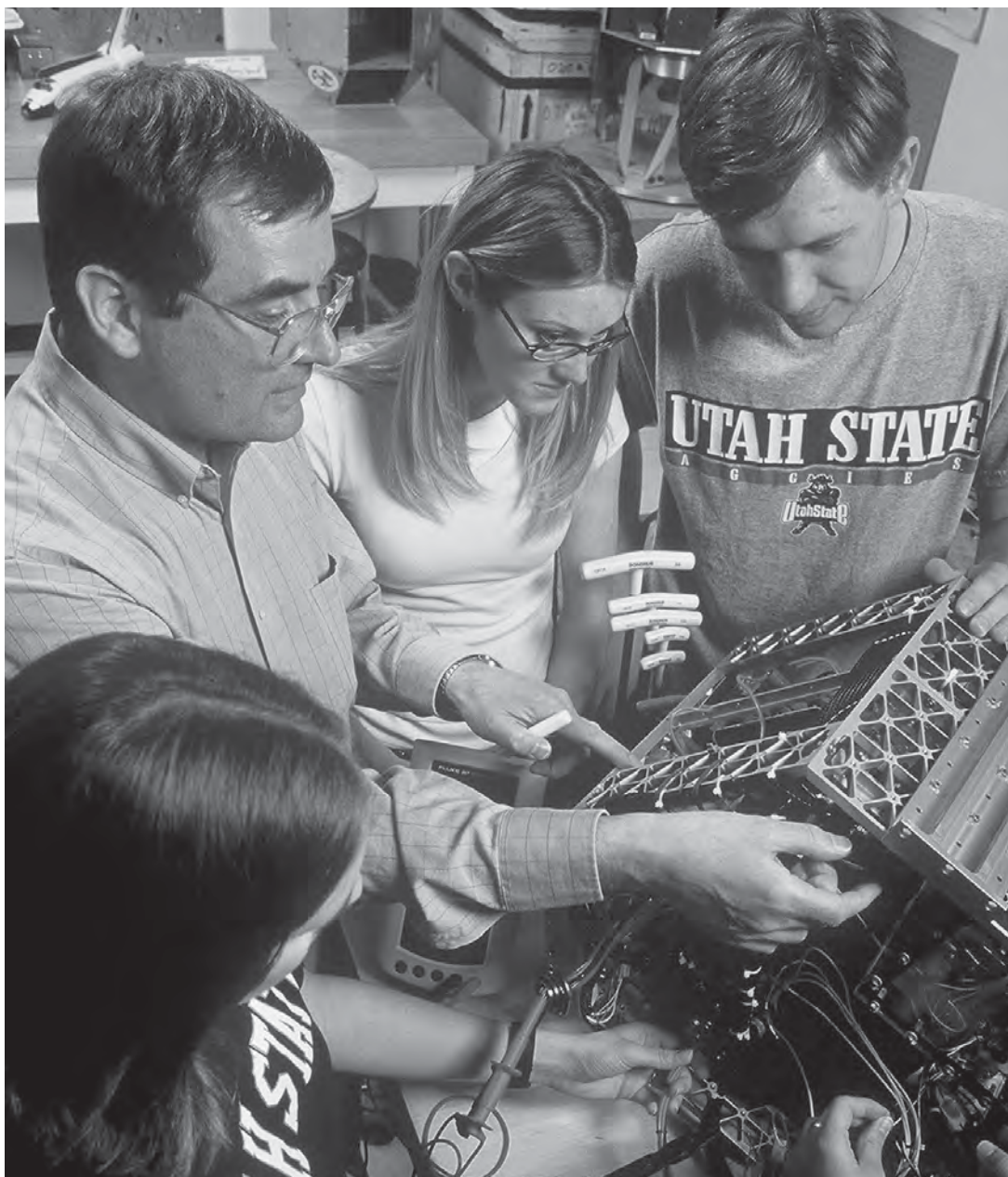
awareness of gender schemas for faculty serving on promotion and tenure committees and on faculty search committees.

**Increase the transparency of processes.** This is critical in breaking down the “us-versus-them” phenomenon wherein faculty see the administration as their enemy. When decision processes such as resource allocation or promotion are unclear or hidden, distrust increases. Trust can be regained by increasing transparency.

**Make improvements in work-life issues.** Work-life policies seem to be especially important for women, but male faculty members—particularly those who are untenured—have reported

struggling with issues such as child care as well. Policies that can improve work-life issues for faculty include paid maternity leave, on-site child care, tenure extensions and/or transitional support to maintain or restart research following major life events, and part-time or job-sharing options for tenure-track faculty.

**Evaluate committee appointments.** Feeling overloaded with work and committee assignments is a common source of dissatisfaction for women faculty. Committee appointments often disproportionately affect women. Avoid the token-woman syndrome of having a woman on every committee and neglecting to notice that



Utah State  
University

some women—especially those from under-represented fields—are overutilized and that their careers are being adversely affected. Consider using a spreadsheet that shows all committee appointments to see which faculty members are already serving more than they should.

**Create and publicize dual-career policies.** Of those universities that have policies to assist dual-career couples with placement, only a minority post the information on their Web sites so that it can easily be found by those looking for positions. Having such policies in place and making this information readily available will improve placement in academia of women faculty with PhD/scientist partners.

**Improve research collaborations.** Women at MIT and Utah State both reported feeling isolated and pointed to the challenges of finding colleagues to work with on research projects. Furthermore, our data suggest that women do not realize that resources are obtained in many cases through networking with colleagues. Efforts to emphasize teamwork and to create opportunities for collaboration on research can improve the job satisfaction as well as the productivity of faculty.

### Is there a global warming toward women in academia?

Unfortunately, not much warming has occurred in those regions of campus where women are still underrepresented. Retaining more women in academic science, engineering, and technology careers is critical if the United States is to reduce its reliance on foreign-born scientists. It is also critical for the development of a technology-based economy. One of the major obstacles to increasing the proportion of women in the scientific workforce is the lack of role models in colleges and universities where most scientific training occurs. According to the NSF's biannual survey of the scientific and engineering workforce, the proportion of women full professors in science and engineering fields has not increased in twenty years. This lack of senior women faculty is often attributed to the "chilly climate" for women scientists and engineers on college campuses across the country.

Utah State University is one of several major institutions currently conducting climate surveys and revising policies that are inadvertently biased against women faculty. As the president of MIT has pointed out (Committee

on Women Faculty 1999), however, that's the easy part. The hard part is changing departmental climates. Many institutions and national organizations, including Utah State, also are searching for successful models of organizational change in an attempt to warm up the weather, particularly for women scientists and engineers who, all too often, are left out in the cold. □

To respond to this article, e-mail [liberaled@aacu.org](mailto:liberaled@aacu.org), with the authors' names on the subject line.

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### NOTE

1. Data from this survey are also summarized in the *Academic Leader* newsletter for academic deans and department chairs (April 2005, Volume 21, Number 4).

THOMAS B. COBURN

# Secularism & Spirituality in Today's Academy

## A Heuristic Model

**In affirming that spirituality has a place in our institutions, we are actually reaffirming a part of our heritage that has been in remission since the Enlightenment**

ALEXANDER ASTIN'S RECENT ESSAY (2004), "Why Spirituality Deserves a Central Place in Liberal Education," makes a powerful argument for rethinking some of our common assumptions about higher education. The case he makes is hard to ignore when one considers the data about current student interests, about faculty malaise, about the nature of creativity, about current trends in higher education that have the potential to open out onto a spiritual horizon, and about the rising visibility of religious and spiritual issues worldwide. I myself am persuaded by his argument. It was just this kind of thinking that prompted me recently to move from a conventional liberal arts college to one whose focus is "contemplative education," in search of fresh leverage on the liberal arts tradition.

But most academics I have known over the past three decades, regardless of their own religious or spiritual inclinations, would be profoundly uneasy about drawing spiritual issues into the classroom. This is not surprising, given the debt of the academy to the Enlightenment, with its prizing of the cognitive mind and of objectivity, and its definition of a public sphere that is intentionally free of religious influence. A great deal of intellectual and institutional momentum has been generated over the past three hundred years, creating the attitudes and structures

that currently shape academia, and it will not be quickly redirected. So while I believe Astin's call is prophetic in discerning needed directions in higher education, I know these will not be easily accomplished. It is indeed a huge task that lies ahead, if we are to bring secularism and spirituality into happy coexistence within the academy.

En route to that goal, it is useful to turn to history and to note two things. One is that when the Enlightenment set out to understand the external world in objective terms, apart from the inner life of the knower, it took a tack away from the holistic education that had previously characterized the Western academy and the classical traditions of learning throughout the Middle East and Asia, an education that aspired to nurture both the inner and the outer person. The challenge of incorporating spirituality into liberal education today is therefore an effort to recapture a balance of inner and outer in our vision of education.

The second recognition is that, ever since the Enlightenment, there has been a dialectic within the academy between two alternative ways of engaging with or

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construing the world. Such a dialectic lies at the heart of what W. B. Carnochan calls “the battle of the books” in the latter part of the nineteenth century. That battle pitted the defenders of the then-fixed curricula (“the ancients”) in classical learning and science against the free elective system propounded by Harvard’s president Charles Elliott (“the moderns”). The roots of this struggle were far older, for, as Carnochan notes (1993, 22), “‘Ancients’ and ‘moderns’ take their names originally from the ‘battle of the books’ fought in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries between defenders of ancient literature and learning and defenders of, among other things, the new science.”

This struggle continued on into the late twentieth century, in the so-called “culture wars,” on which Carnochan commented from their midst: “There have always [or at least for the last three centuries] been ancients and moderns, and lines of allegiance may be generational as much as intellectual. If Western philosophy is a series of footnotes to Plato, the pedagogical debate of the past few years has been a series of footnotes to the several battles of the books that began with Bacon’s proposals for the ‘advancement of learning,’ his program for overturning Scholasticism and for an empirical conquest of the natural world” (22). To put this another way, the tradition of liberal education that we inherit developed in two phases, one emphasizing “the personal-cultural, knowledge as understanding,” the other emphasizing “the object-objective, knowledge as information,” and these two phases have “never [been] quite integrated” (Smith 1975, 4).

Today’s effort to bring secularism and spirituality into happy coexistence in the academy should, I suggest, be seen as the most recent iteration of a long-standing search

**The move from circular to elliptical thinking once revolutionized our understanding of the universe, and I suggest that the time is ripe for making a similar move in the way we think about liberal education**

for a fully adequate understanding of what it means to be human and, therefore, of what it means to be educated, with a balance of inner and outer knowledge.

**Elliptical thinking**

As we take up this task, let me also suggest we are in need of a new model for thinking about this dual heritage of the liberal arts tradition, one that thinks about the dynamism that has

characterized our institutions for the last three centuries in language that is less bellicose than that of “battles” and “wars.” I am not the first to suggest that it is time for the academy, and the culture in which we are embedded, to move beyond “the culture of argument” (see Tannen 1999). The demands of the twenty-first century require such a move.

I believe that, in fact, a new model is at hand, and that the heat generated in the culture wars over “decentering” the curriculum points us in a constructive direction. The assumption in those wars, of course, was that there was, or should be, a single center to the curriculum. But suppose there has never been a single center to liberal education. Suppose we recognize the dual heritage of liberal education over the past many centuries and seek a model that does justice to the dialectic between its two strands.

Suppose it is not the circle but the ellipse that should guide our thinking about liberal education, past and present, secular and spiritual.

The difference between a circle and an ellipse is simple, something most of us have known since high school. A circle is the pattern that a point traces when it revolves around one other point—the circle’s center—so that it is always equidistant from that point. An ellipse is the pattern that one point traces when it revolves around two other points—the ellipse’s foci—so that the sum of the distances from those two points remains constant.



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The two foci are critical to the definition of the overall elliptical shape, and there is a dynamic tension between them.

The move from circular to elliptical thinking once revolutionized our understanding of the universe, and I suggest that the time is ripe for making a similar move in the way we think about liberal education. Plato believed that the circle was the perfect shape, since every point on its circumference was equidistant from the center, wonderfully symmetrical. He challenged the mathematicians of his day to find a way to account for the motion of the planets in terms of circular motion with uniform speed. It is, in fact, possible to describe planetary motion in these terms, but only by generating equations of daunting complexity. And yet this model of the solar system persisted for nearly two thousand years. It was only then that, inspired by Kepler, astronomers found they could account for planetary motion much more simply, and more elegantly, by assuming that planets move in elliptical orbits with varying speeds. Our understanding of ourselves, and of the universe, has never been the same.

So too, I suggest, will our understanding of our liberal arts heritage become both simpler and more elegant if we think of it as having two foci, dialectically in relationship, both of which are critical to the definition of our enterprise. The encounter of secularism and spirituality is only the most recent instance of the dynamism that lies at the heart of liberal learning, a dynamism that is graphically captured by the image of the ellipse. In affirming that spirituality has a place in our institutions, we are actually reaffirming a part of our heritage that has been in remission since the Enlightenment. What the encounter of spirituality and secularism in liberal education promises is therefore a fresh instance of the vitality that has animated our heritage for a very long time. It holds high promise for helping the contemporary academy out of its centuries-long overemphasis on the secular, thereby coming to a more apt understanding of the contemporary world, in which the secular and the spiritual intertwine and complement each other in complex and wonderful ways.

As for the heuristic utility of the ellipse, there is much more that could be said. Its two foci, for example, can be seen as representing the dialectic between teaching and research,

or between curricular and cocurricular life; between content and skills; between academic affairs and student affairs; or between general education and the major. But exploration of this broader promise of thinking elliptically must wait for another day.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, thinking of secularism and spirituality as the two foci of the elliptical life of liberal learning can ease us into an exciting new chapter of our dynamic history. □

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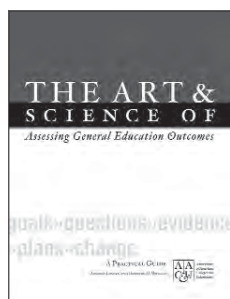
#### NOTE

1. I have done some preliminary exploration of this line of thinking (see Coburn 2000). I am particularly indebted to two sources for stimulating it. One is Elizabeth Blake (1996). The other is the following passage from a book by Diana Eck (1981, 17): "Even Westerners who consider themselves secular participate in the myth of monotheism: that in matters of ultimate importance, there is only One—one God, one Book, one Son, one Church, one Seal of the Prophets, one Nation under God. The psychologist James Hillman speaks of a 'monotheism of consciousness,' which has shaped our very habits of thinking, so that the autonomous, univocal, and independent personality is considered healthy; single-minded decision-making is considered a strength; and the concept of the independent ego as 'number one' is considered normal."





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**THE ART & SCIENCE OF  
ASSESSING GENERAL  
EDUCATION OUTCOMES:  
A Practical Guide**

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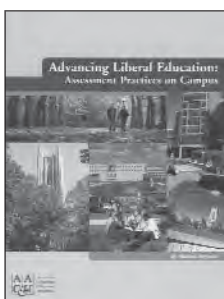
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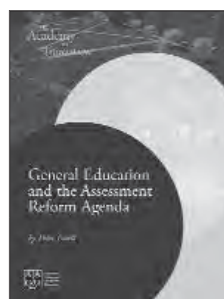


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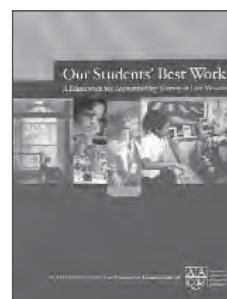


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# INDEX TO VOLUME 91 (2005)

## ISSUE THEMES

- No. 1 (Winter): The Future of Diversity  
No. 2 (Spring): 2005 Annual Meeting:  
Liberal Education and the New  
Academy  
No. 3 (Summer/Fall): Educating for  
Personal and Social Responsibility

## AUTHORS

- Chang, Mitchell J.* Reconsidering the  
Diversity Rationale—1, 6  
*Coburn, Thomas B.* Secularism and  
Spirituality in Today's Academy: A  
Heuristic Model—3, 58  
*Fong, Bobby.* The Economics of Higher  
Education—1, 42  
*Gilbert, Lucia Albino, Paige E. Schilt, and  
Sheldon Ekland-Olson.* Integrated  
Learning and Research Across  
Disciplinary Boundaries: Engaging  
Students—3/4, XX  
*Gregory, Marshall.* Why Are Liberal  
Education's Friends of So Little  
Help?—2, 56  
*Guinier, Lani.* The Miner's Canary:  
Enlisting Race, Resisting Power, and  
Transforming Democracy—2, 26  
*Gummer, Natalie.* A Profound Unknowing:  
The Challenge of Religion in the  
Liberal Education of World Citizens—  
2, 44  
*Hersh, Richard H., and Carol Geary  
Schneider.* Fostering Personal and Social  
Responsibility on College and  
University Campuses—3, 6  
*Higdon, Leo I. Jr.* Liberal Education and  
the Entrepreneurial Mindset:  
A Twenty-First-Century Approach—  
1, 34

- Hult, Christine, Ronda Callister, and Kim  
Sullivan.* Is There a Global Warming  
Toward Women in Academia?—3, 50  
*Humphreys, Debra, and Abigail Davenport.*  
What Really Matters in College: How  
Students View and Value Liberal  
Education—3, 36  
*Jones, Roberts T.* Liberal Education for  
the Twenty-first Century: Business  
Expectations—2, 32  
*Kuh, George D., and Paul D. Umbach.*  
Experiencing Diversity: What Can  
We Learn from Liberal Arts Colleges?  
—1, 14  
*Lindsay, John V.* Liberal Learning and the  
Social Revolution [1969]—1, 28  
*Marshall, Max S.* The Annual Meeting  
[1968]—2, 38  
*McCabe, Donald L.* It Takes a Village:  
Academic Dishonesty and Educational  
Opportunity—3, 26  
*Puka, Bill.* Student Cheating: As Serious  
an Academic Integrity Problem as  
Faculty-Administration Business as  
Usual?—3, 32  
\_\_\_\_. Teaching Ethical Excellence: Artful  
Response-Ability, Creative Integrity,  
Character Opus—3, 22  
*Sajé, Natasha.* Teaching for Tips—1, 48  
*Saltmarsh, John.* The Civic Promise of  
Service Learning—2, 50  
*Schneider, Carol Geary.* Making Excellence  
Inclusive: Liberal Education and  
America's Promise—2, 6  
*Shulman, Lee S.* Pedagogies of  
Uncertainty—2, 18  
*Swaner, Lynn E.* Educating for Personal  
and Social Responsibility: A Review  
of the Literature—3, 14  
*White, Judith S.* Pipeline to Pathways:  
New Directions for Improving the  
Status of Women on Campus—1, 22

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