Making the Most of Mission Statements page 6
Developing Leadership Among Women Students page 22
Leading through a Perfect Storm page 28

ALSO INSIDE:
Liberal Education, Competitive Advantage page 34
Does Spirituality Enhance or Detract from Liberal Learning? page 40
Students’ Perceptions of the Disciplines page 48
One would expect an educational institution to have a mission statement that embraces a sense of its educational vision, particularly what it expects its students to learn and how that learning can be used to benefit the social order.

—Jack Meacham and Jerry G. Gaff

### President’s Message
#### Diversity, Democracy, and Goals for Student Learning
By Carol Geary Schneider
The issues and challenges that we have clustered together as “diversity” ought to be addressed through multiple lenses, across the curriculum.

### From the Editor

### News and Information

### FEATURED TOPIC
#### Learning Goals in Mission Statements: Implications for Educational Leadership
By Jack Meacham and Jerry G. Gaff
Institutional leaders are missing an opportunity to convey to students especially, but also to other constituencies, what their institutions stand for by failing to adopt more educationally robust mission statements.

### On the Challenge of Becoming the Good College
By Richard Guarasci
The resurrection of Wagner College came from within, and the essential ingredients were remarkable vision, commitment, and leadership shared by faculty and administrators alike.

### Educating Women Leaders for the Twenty-first Century
By Mary K. Trigg
The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program at Rutgers University is an intellectually rigorous program that draws on the rich scholarship in gender studies to reimagine leadership, to accelerate young women to leadership, and to prepare them as educated citizens who will make a difference in the world.

### Leading through a Perfect Storm
By Andrea Leskes
Achieving the Greater Expectations vision is a long-term endeavor that will require changed practices throughout the higher education enterprise, practices that are more intentional in aligning actions with desired outcomes. What will institutional leadership for this New Academy entail?
34 Liberal Education & the Specialist-Rich Workplace
By Lee Dudka
If liberal education is to remain the nation’s premier educational approach, we need a twist of the thinking cap—among administration, faculty, alumni, and “risk-averse” employers who, when solving workforce needs, hire “specialist” graduates without attention to the broader skills a liberal education provides.

40 Spirituality, Liberal Learning, and College Student Engagement
By George D. Kuh and Robert M. Gonyea
In order to learn more about how participating in spirituality-enhancing activities relates to other aspects of the college experience, the authors examine students’ responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement.

48 Do Students Understand Liberal Arts Disciplines?
By Donald E. Elmore, Julia C. Prentice, and Carol Trosset
The authors present the results of a study that sought to measure students’ perceptions of the various liberal arts disciplines and to determine whether those perceptions changed during the four years of college.

56 The Forests, Not the Tree(s): The Plight of the Generalist
By William A. Reinsmith
More than anything else, students need to see connections between different branches of learning. Who better than the resident generalist to open such a perspective for them?
Diversity, Democracy, and Goals for Student Learning

This issue of Liberal Education raises far-reaching questions about mission statements and about presidential and trustee leadership for the most important aims of a college education. I was especially struck by Meacham and Gaff’s finding that only one-third of the universities listed in the Princeton Review’s “best colleges” have made engagement with diversity a significant part of their mission-level vision for student learning. Surely, if the Grutter v. Bollinger decision told us anything, it is that diversity must be addressed as an educational priority, not just as an admissions project.

When I visit campuses to talk about curriculum, I often fear that that searching dialogue of the 1990s about diversity and learning has stalled. It is true, of course, that many campuses have changed their general education programs to include the study of cultural diversity as a graduation requirement. Yet, as with much of general education, the options for studying diversity are often so diffuse that the requirements mean far too little. Moreover, when addressed through single stand-alone courses, as is too often the case, diversity requirements risk sending an unintended message: diversity is simply one more general education course to get out of the way as soon as possible.

It is not that, of course. Engaging diversity fosters forms of learning students will need for life. For today’s world, the issues and challenges that we have clustered together as “diversity” ought to be addressed through multiple lenses, across the curriculum. Accordingly, a promising strategy is to articulate clear goals for diversity and learning in both general education and the different departmental majors.

A few years ago, AAC&U’s National Panel on American Commitments: Diversity, Democracy, and Liberal Learning recommended that colleges and universities provide opportunities for students to engage diversity within larger civic and societal contexts. Specifically, following a comprehensive review of the multiple purposes addressed by diversity requirements, the panel proposed joining the study of diversity with the exploration of democratic values, aspirations, and commitments. In the intervening years since the American Commitments panel issued its recommendations, a new movement has grown up to create purposeful connections between college learning and its immediate social contexts. Under the rubric of civic engagement, many students now participate in innovative forms of active learning that help them to prepare for their roles as citizens of our diverse democracy. It is past time to bring these two movements—diversity and civic learning—together.
As campuses address both diversity and civic engagement in ways appropriate to their own missions, histories, curricular patterns, and students, they would do well to revisit the recommendations of the American Commitments panel, which urged that all students be given opportunities to explore at least four broad areas. The first recommendation focuses on experience, identity, and aspiration. In making this recommendation, the American Commitments panel recognized that each student has multiple and intersecting sources of identity and community, and that these can stretch from race, gender, religion, and other “identity categories” to passions and commitments that the student has chosen rather than inherited. The point, however, is to invite students to examine their own assumptions about self and others in a context where their peers are probing similar questions. This could be done in any number of first-year contexts, including expository writing.

The second recommendation, United States pluralism and the pursuits of justice, would enable the substantial and comparative exploration of diverse histories and communities in U.S. society, with significant attention to their differing experiences of U.S. democracy and their several pursuits—sometimes successful, sometimes frustrated—of equal opportunity. The recommendation here is that students ought to study democratic aspirations themselves, as well as diverse struggles for equality and justice. Citizens need this context to better understand the struggle for full equality that still continues, in our democracy and around the world.

The third recommendation, experiences in justice seeking, would provide direct experiences, in the community, with systemic efforts (e.g., by existing community groups) to remove barriers to justice and opportunity and to redress inequities. Different community groups may have sharply conflicting understandings of a good and just society, as today’s struggles in the Supreme Court so richly illustrate. For this reason, field-based learning should also include extensive opportunities for students to compare their experiences and to reflect, with faculty and staff, on the insights gained. These three recommendations might be addressed in a well-designed core curriculum.

Finally, the panel recommended that all students ought to have well-designed opportunities to explore the diversity, equity, and justice issues particular to their major fields of study. To that end, each major field should identify its own challenges in engaging difficult differences, and should provide a course of study that ensures graduates are prepared to meet these challenges. Such preparation should foster collaborative, deliberative, and problem-solving capacities relevant to the field, as well as content knowledge about the diversity, justice, and social responsibility challenges faced by practitioners within that field.

Ultimately, the goal is to graduate college students who are both prepared and inspired to act as responsible stewards of democracy’s core commitments to freedom, dignity, opportunity, and justice. The recommendations of the American Commitments National Panel offer a promising pathway to that mission-level goal.—CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER
Over the past few years, AAC&U has been calling attention to and documenting a growing national consensus about the essential outcomes of a quality undergraduate education. This consensus underlines the value of a liberal education for all college students, regardless of their background or choice of field. Yet even as business, civic, educational, and some public policy leaders are reaching consensus about the kinds of learning Americans need to thrive in a knowledge-intensive economy and a globally engaged democracy, it is becoming increasingly apparent that students and the public at large remain, for the most part, unaware of this consensus or how colleges are responding to it.

One year ago, in an effort to expand student and public understanding of what really matters in college, AAC&U launched Liberal Education & America’s Promise (LEAP), a decade-long initiative to champion the value of a liberal education. As part of that effort, AAC&U has been querying the various constituencies of higher education about the national consensus around outcomes. Through a series of focus groups, for example, students were asked, as Debra Humphreys and Abigail Davenport put it, “whether [they] see liberal education, as we do, as the most valuable form of education for our time.” From Humphreys and Davenport’s report, published in the previous issue of Liberal Education, it seems the answer is, well, not really; no. In fact, “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.”

The first report from the LEAP campaign, Liberal Education Outcomes: A Preliminary Report on Student Achievement in College, further documents the emerging consensus about the essential outcomes of a quality liberal education. It also reveals, however, that little national data is available on how well students are achieving these key outcomes, and what evidence does exist suggests that too few students are achieving them at levels high enough to meet the demands of the twenty-first century.

The challenge of leadership in the New Academy, then, is twofold. First, students’ understanding of the kinds of learning that will empower them to succeed and make a difference in the twenty-first century must be increased; students must join the consensus. Second, colleges and universities must develop, improve, publicize, and institutionalize educational innovations that demonstrably help students achieve key liberal education outcomes.—DAVID TRITELLI

FROM THE EDITOR
New Internet Resource for HIV/AIDS Education
AAC&U’s Program for Health and Higher Education has launched a new Web site, HIVCampusEducation.org, designed to provide students, faculty, and administrators with a variety of resources about HIV/AIDS education. Included are HIV/AIDS related syllabi, campus projects, events, jobs, internships, and research materials.

Andrea Leskes Named New IAU President
At the end of January, Andrea Leskes will leave her position as AAC&U’s vice president for education and quality initiatives to become president of the Institute for American Universities (IAU). Located in France, IAU offers study abroad programs for U.S. undergraduates. Leskes will continue her association with AAC&U as a senior fellow.

Upcoming Meetings

Liberal Education Readership Study

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS
• 85% of readers save their copies of Liberal Education for reference
• 70% share articles with colleagues
• 82% regard the topics covered as timely
• 42% typically spend at least one hour reading each issue
• 40% read articles online
• 90% rank Liberal Education as “valuable” or “very valuable” to their careers
• Approximately 68 percent of readers are administrators (including department chairs), and 16 percent are faculty members

In October 2005, Liberal Education subscribers were invited to participate in a self-response, Web-based readership study that measured reader satisfaction with the journal’s content. We want to thank all who participated; your criticisms, comments, and opinions will help us improve the publication.

AAC&U MEMBERSHIP 2006
more than 1,000 members

- MASTERS 28%
- ASSOC 12%
- BACC 26%
- OTHER* 17%
- DOC 17%

*Specialized schools, state systems and agencies, international affiliates, and organizational affiliates

Visit our Web site
www.aacu.org
“Presidents and deans must . . . with the cooperation of the professors themselves . . . revive the responsibility of the faculty as a whole for the curriculum as a whole,” asserted a national report from the Association of American Colleges, labeling this a matter of Integrity in the College Curriculum (1985, 9). Building on this insight, the report recommended a minimum required curriculum and ways to enhance teaching and learning. These ideas were valuable contributions to educational thought and innovation of the time. Now, two decades later, the survey findings that we will describe suggest that this formulation is insufficient.

The faculty work within organizations, and every organizational policy and practice, many outside the purview of faculty, has at least potential impact, either positive or negative, on the curriculum and the learning of students. If the curriculum is to have integrity, institutional priorities, policies, and resource allocations must all support the most important purposes of undergraduate education. Indeed, integrity in the curriculum requires integrity of the institution. This, in turn, means that educational programs should reflect the institutional mission and enjoy the full and informed support not just of the faculty but also of the board of trustees and the president, the primary stewards of the mission.

Peter Drucker (2005, 3) identifies integrity as the first principle of effective management, saying that “the spirit of an organization is created from the top . . . The proof of the sincerity and seriousness of a management is uncompromising emphasis on integrity of character.” The president (and the administration for which she or he is responsible) and board of trustees must act consistently and repeatedly to assure institutional integrity. They must be certain that their organization does what it says and says what it does.

The fundamental way the president and the board establish integrity is by approving a mission statement and then acting in ways that advance the mission. The mission statement is an institution’s formal, public declaration of its purposes and its vision of excellence. Ideally it contains enough specificity for determining whether alternative educational and institutional practices could advance the mission. Although the mission statement usually is a composite of ideas and recommendations from many constituencies, it is “owned” primarily by the president and the board. The president typically designs and guides the process to secure advice from all constituencies and integrates disparate ideas into a coherent

JACK MEACHAM is SUNY Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University at Buffalo–The State University of New York, and JERRY G. GAFF is a senior scholar at AAC&U.
whole. The board reviews, revises, and endorses the mission statement.

The campus’s mission statement, which in practice can be a single sentence or a lengthy document, is not the same as a mission of an institution, a living sense among individuals in diverse roles of what that institution is and why it is important. But without a statement that reflects widespread agreement and the shared understanding of central priorities among the president, board of trustees, and other constituencies, it is difficult to understand how a lived mission can emerge in practice. The mission statement is the necessary condition for many different individuals to pull together through a myriad of activities to achieve central shared purposes.

One would expect an educational institution to have a mission statement that expresses a sense of its educational vision, particularly what it expects its students to learn and how that learning can be used to benefit the social order. That educational vision should be deeply rooted in the institution’s identity and practices, rather than being discarded when a president, dean, or inspired faculty leader moves on. Of course, the mission statement is merely one of many possible documents describing and supporting an institution’s vision of educational excellence for its students. Yet the mission statement is the most enduring, respected, and public of these documents and, importantly, the one that will be turned to for guidance both when resources are plentiful and new initiatives can be envisioned as well as when resources become scarce and difficult choices must be made.

It is reasonable, therefore, to ask: What do mission statements say about the vision and expectations that our colleges and universities hold for undergraduate education? What do they say about the goals that are held for student learning in contemporary, globalized society?

To answer those questions, we surveyed the mission statements for institutions listed in the Princeton Review’s The Best 331 Colleges. We sought the Internet site that presented the mission statement or, if no mission statement was available, a statement of purpose, vision, goals, philosophy, or aims for undergraduate students. Appropriate statements could be identified for 312 of these institutions. A coding scheme with thirty-nine student learning goals was constructed from several sources, including Schneider and Shoenberg (1998), Cronin (1999), and Integrity in the College Curriculum (1985).

Mission statements provide scant direction for undergraduate education

These “best” American colleges and universities provide little information about goals for undergraduate education in their mission statements. To our surprise, we discovered that eleven of these colleges and universities do not even mention undergraduate education in their mission statements. Furthermore, there is a great range in the number of student learning goals that could be identified: 117 institutions provide from zero to three student learning goals in their mission statements; 105 institutions from four to six; sixty-one institutions from seven to nine; and twenty-nine institutions ten or more. The average number is five.
There is little consensus among this national sample regarding what should be the primary goals of undergraduate education. Aside from liberal education (or liberal arts or liberal learning), found in the mission statements of 157 institutions (about half of the 312), none of the goals was found in as many as half of the mission statements. Contributing to the community appears in 121 of the mission statements, and leadership skills in 101 of the mission statements. Only twelve educational goals were contained in the mission statements of 15 percent (forty-seven) or more of these 312 institutions. In addition to the three already mentioned, they include social responsibility (eighty-nine institutions); personal perspectives, values, and moral character (seventy-seven); ability for critical analysis and logical thinking (seventy-five); appreciating diversity (sixty-seven); imagination and creativity (sixty-seven); capacity for continuing, lifelong learning (sixty-two); building communities that acknowledge and respect difference (fifty-nine); engaged, responsible citizenship in a democratic society (fifty-three); and international and global understanding (fifty-five).

National consensus on student learning goals

The results of this survey of mission statements can be fruitfully compared with the conclusions of a national report, Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree (2004). Drawing from the standards of regional and specialized accreditation agencies, best practices articulated by educational associations, qualities sought by employers, and contributions from faculty and administrators at various colleges and universities, this report describes a “widespread and growing” consensus throughout American higher education regarding the desired learning outcomes of a twenty-first-century undergraduate education (see sidebar). To what extent do campus presidents and boards of trustees share in this national consensus?

Six of the twelve student learning goals found most often in campus mission statements are similar to those identified as central to the national consensus: social responsibility; appreciating diversity; capacity for continuing, lifelong learning; building communities that acknowledge and respect difference; engaged, responsible citizenship in a democratic society; and international and global understanding.

But many of the undergraduate educational goals identified in the national consensus are missing from the mission statements of the 312 colleges and universities that were surveyed. Not only that, many significant student learning goals that are widely discussed and valued among faculty, students, parents, employers, and the general public appear in the mission statements of fewer than 15 percent of these “best” American colleges and universities.

For example, we are impressed by the national consensus that communication skills—including college-level writing and effective oral communication—are essential both as foundation skills for college and university learning and as lifelong skills for citizenship and the professions. Yet writing and public-speaking abilities are rarely included as explicit student learning goals, each appearing in the mission statements of only thirty-eight (12 percent) of these 312 campuses.

The national consensus is that a strong undergraduate education includes breadth of knowledge. However, fewer than 15 percent of these mission statements include, as goals for student learning, knowledge and understanding of science (thirty-two); knowledge and appreciation of the fine and performing arts (twenty-four); knowledge and understanding of historical and social phenomena (fifteen); mathematical reasoning (nine); or environmental understanding and sensitivity (eight).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consensus Goals for Student Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Strong analytic, communication, quantitative, and information skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Deep understanding and hands-on experience with the disciplines that explore the natural, social, and cultural realms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Intercultural knowledge and collaborative problem-solving skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Civic, social, and personal responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Integrative thinking and the ability to transfer knowledge from one setting to another</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Ethics and values are central to the national consensus on student learning goals. On the positive side, expectations for the development of personal perspectives, values, and moral character are found in seventy-seven of the mission statements. Yet the national consensus is broader, moving beyond the personal and individual to include concerns for professional and societal issues. Fewer than 15 percent of the mission statements encourage students to acquire knowledge and appreciation of the ethical dimensions of humankind (twenty-eight); engage with challenging ethical, moral, and human dilemmas (twenty-three); or understand social justice issues (ten).

Curricula not organized to advance highly valued purposes
Three student learning goals appear frequently in campus mission statements but do not stand out in the national consensus on goals for student learning as described in Taking Responsibility for the Quality of the Baccalaureate Degree. These are contributing to the community (121 of 312 mission statements), leadership skills (101), and imagination and creativity (sixty-seven). Certainly the political, economic, and environmental challenges that our students will face in their lifetimes will require attention to community needs, determined and effective leadership, and sustained application of imagination and creativity.

Yet few curricula have been implemented to facilitate the attainment by students of the propensity for contributing to the community and the skills of leadership and imagination that many presidents and trustees foresee that our students will need. Yes, many campuses are developing opportunities for service learning and more educational engagement in the community; others have developed leadership courses and student-life programs emphasizing the development of leadership skills. But these tend to be on the margins of campus life and available to only a few students. And creativity and imagination are seldom drivers of educational programs. One wonders why these learning goals, thought by presidents and trustees to be so important that they appear in mission statements, are often neglected in actual programs of study.

In summary, many of the student learning goals for which there is a strong national consensus—communication skills, breadth of knowledge, ethics and social justice, integrative learning, critical thinking, and working together with others—appear in fewer than 15 percent of the mission statements of these “best” colleges and universities. Our aim is not to suggest that there ought to be uniformity among institutional mission statements. Rather, it is to suggest that institutional leaders are missing an opportunity to convey to students especially, but also to other constituencies, what they stand for by adopting more educationally robust mission statements.

Indeed, it seems essential that the mission statement of any educational institution include a description of the education that is envisioned for its students. The length of the mission statement—whether a single sentence or several paragraphs—is not critical; what is important is that the mission statement should be as long as necessary to articulate the most basic purposes of the institution.

Educational leadership and shared governance
Why is there such a divergence between the national consensus on goals for undergraduate education and the mission statements of these “best” colleges and universities? We fear that at least part of the reason may be a lack of educational leadership among presidents, the senior administrators reporting to them, and members of boards of trustees.

In recent decades, some presidents have been selected more for their management skills, fundraising abilities, and public relations expertise than for their educational views. Similarly, boards have become more focused on providing oversight, raising money, making connections with external groups, and dealing with community issues. Both are highly focused on institutional priorities, perhaps to the neglect of the educational heart of the enterprise, which in practice is delegated to the academic administration and the faculty.

This practice, of course, reflects the widespread adherence to principles of shared governance, as set forth in the landmark document jointly drafted in 1966 and adopted in 1967 by the American Association of University Professors (representing the faculty) and endorsed by the American Council of Education (representing presidents) and the Association of Governing Boards (representing
trustees). The president and board have primary authority over the mission, strategic directions of the institution, and finance, but they are to consult with the faculty about major issues in these areas. Because the faculty possesses disciplinary expertise, they have primary authority over teaching, learning, the curriculum, and related academic matters. Only rarely and for clearly articulated reasons should the administration or board overrule the faculty on academic matters. By and large, this division of authority has worked well.

But over time, administrators and board members have learned that many faculty guard their prerogatives jealously, and so they have been hesitant to exercise leadership for the educational program. Their resulting lack of sophistication about substantive educational issues, or lack of confidence in dealing with them, may be reflected in the limited inclusion of student learning goals in mission statements.

Another problem is that while faculty may be responsible for the educational program, most faculty tend to work primarily in their own disciplines, departments, and narrow specialties, and thus have only a partial view of the institution’s academic programs and the course of student development. In many instances, shared governance has served as a thin cover for faculty to avoid thinking about and discussing together what an education at their institution adds up to for students. It was to correct this dispersion of academic authority and to promote wholeness and integration of learning that the Association of American Colleges issued its call, in 1985, for the faculty as a whole to be responsible for the curriculum as a whole.

Indeed, educational excellence is most often found not when responsibilities are sharply divided but when faculty members and academic administrators, perhaps with the support of an academic policy committee of the board, come together to work on common agendas. It is unfortunate that the original ideas behind shared governance did not include a listing of areas where faculty and administrators have common cause and call for cooperative educational leadership among both faculty and administrators. The success of any academic program requires both faculty leadership and administrative support.

One important area for administrators, trustees, and faculty to work together is in identifying important goals for student learning.

In many instances, shared governance has served as a thin cover for faculty to avoid thinking about and discussing together what an education at their institution adds up to for students.
Faculty, for all the knowledge they possess, cannot claim exclusive authority over which knowledge, skills, and attitudes form an educated person and which will be most important to the lives of students in coming decades. In fact, trustees probably have better perspectives than do faculty because they come from various careers and different parts of the community, whereas many faculty have little experience beyond the academy. Trustees know what qualities they seek in hiring workers, the kinds of impact educated people can make in a community, and the qualities that are valued outside the academy.

In addition to guiding the purposes of undergraduate education and expressing their vision and aspiration in mission statements, presidents and trustees can be helpful in asking hard questions about the campus’s educational programs. Among the questions that might be raised are these: Are the educational goals expressed in the mission statement reflected in the curriculum? How do general education and departmental requirements for students compare with the agreed-upon student learning goals? What is the evidence from objective assessment—not merely in anecdotes—that important learning goals are actually achieved by students? Asking these questions might once have been seen as “interference” in the academic affairs of the faculty. But today, they are precisely the kinds of questions that accrediting agencies are requiring institutions to ask of themselves; they reflect prudent concerns of a president and a board with a legitimate interest in being accredited. In answering these questions, the faculty and administration need to work together to assure that there is an assessment process that provides useful information for making judgments about what and how well students are learning.

Legitimate questions such as these can lead to self-reflection, conversations across the campus, additional cycles of assessment of student learning outcomes, and strengthening of teaching and learning for students. On most campuses forums do not exist for bringing presidents and trustees together with faculty for substantive conversations about the purposes of undergraduate education, explicit goals for student learning, or examination of and reflection on results of assessments of student learning outcomes. If such conversations are to occur, new forums will have to be created that are conducive to honest, constructive, and creative dialogue, not only on our campuses but also regionally and nationally.

Of course, once agreement is reached about the most valued student learning goals and evidence is gathered to indicate how well students are achieving them, it is the faculty who need to design (or redesign) the curriculum and implement it. But even these tasks require the active support of the trustees and administration if resources such as faculty hiring, buildings, and equipment are to be made available for educational programs.

There is empirical evidence that the steps we recommend pay off in terms of effective education for students. George Kuh and his colleagues (2005) have studied “student engagement,” shown by much previous research to be a critical variable in educational achievement, among students at hundreds of colleges and universities. In their project on Documenting Effective Educational Practice, they identified six conditions that are common among those institutions that most effectively engage students in learning: a “living” mission and a “lived” educational philosophy; an unshakeable focus on student learning; environments adapted for educational enrichment; clearly marked pathways to student success; an improvement-oriented campus culture; and shared responsibility for educational quality and student success. All of these conditions start with a clear mission statement that declares what is important in undergraduate education and what students are expected to learn.

Our recommendations for both increased educational leadership and greater collaboration among trustees, presidents, and faculty are not Pollyannish. We recognize that some boards and administrations have acted unilaterally to mandate changes in academic programs without seeking faculty advice or cooperation. In recent years, we have seen the emergence of “activist trustees” in some state systems who politicize academic matters by trying to impose their personal agendas on institutions, usually with destructive results. And some presidents steadfastly refuse to bring faculty members into dialogue with the board of trustees. These examples are not what we are proposing. In fact, they are anathema to the greater collaboration among presidents, trustees, and faculty members that we urge.
Emerging educational leadership
AAC&U has launched a group of initiatives that involve college and university presidents as well as faculty members in educational leadership roles. In the Campaign for the Advancement of Liberal Learning (CALL), presidents were invited to sign a statement about the importance of high-quality contemporary liberal education. Over 525 presidents accepted, including many representing institutions listed in The Best 331 Colleges. The statement they signed includes the following: “As educational leaders and presidents of colleges and universities, large and small, public and private, two-year and four-year, we call on our colleagues around the country to ensure that every college student experiences the full benefits of a twenty-first-century liberal education.” The Presidents' CALL concludes with their commitment to take steps to ensure that their own educational programs address the aims of liberal education, including intellectual and ethical development, knowledge of science, culture, and society, and preparation for all the dimensions of a full life. (To learn more about the Campaign for the Advancement of Liberal Learning, visit www.aacu.org/CALL.)

Another AAC&U initiative is Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP), a public advocacy and campus action initiative designed to promote access to excellence for individuals interested in a college education. This initiative is sparking lively public debate about the kinds of knowledge, skills, and values needed to prepare today’s students—from elementary school through college—for an era of greater expectations in every sphere of life. Presidents commit to work with their campus faculty to stimulate improvements in teaching, learning, and the curriculum and to assess and document learning outcomes. Although this initiative is in its early stages, already presidents of all kinds of colleges and universities are expressing interest in participating. (Additional information regarding Liberal Education and America’s Promise is available at www.aacu.org/advocacy.)

Developing stronger educational leadership, always a work in progress, among presidents, senior administrators, trustees, and faculty can be expected to produce more educationally effective colleges and universities. Of course, the task of defining the education that will be most effective for students and our society in the coming decades can be difficult for an academic community. Yet stronger leadership might well lead to more educationally robust mission statements that are explicit about expectations for the most important goals and outcomes of student learning. It could lead to greater collaboration among presidents, trustees, and faculty for the benefit of students and to more genuine sharing in governance. And educational leadership can contribute not just to integrity in the curriculum but also to integrity in the institution.

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

REFERENCES
On the Challenge of Becoming the Good College

City of Ships!... 
City of the world (for all races are here, 
all the lands of the earth make contributions here;) 
City of the Sea! City of Hurried and Glittering Tides! 
—WALT WHITMAN, “City of Ships”

The waters of New York Harbor tell a story. As you study their “scalloped-edged waves,” you see and hear the legacy of the American democratic experience. Gaze deeply and you will experience the hopes and dreams, the tears of joy, pain, and injustice that call back to you from every ethnic and racial group sailing to America in pursuit of political freedom, religious tolerance, and economic opportunity. One might even say that the waters where the Hudson accepts the sea serve as a mirror of our history, of ourselves, and of the college that overlooks the harbor.

Wagner College struggled mightily to find its way in Whitman’s “meddlesome, mad, extravagant city.” Like so many of our institutions, Wagner began with noble purpose and determined leadership. It started on a financial shoestring and many prayers. By the 1950s, it had gained something of regional prominence but, in midlife crisis, lost its bearings in the 1970s and 1980s and only barely managed to stay afloat. With new fire in its boilers, Wagner is again underway, driven by a talented and focused faculty and administration, a leading-edge curriculum of its own making, and the high and reasonable expectation that it will continue to fill its bunkers with the human and financial resources needed to fuel future success.

The challenge of profound curriculum reform was inescapable for Wagner. Unlike many institutions that tinker with course offerings, we knew that the salvation of our college could come only through dramatic refocusing and revitalization of not just what we teach, but the way we teach. Others—teams of consultants with massive infusions of foundation support—could not do it for us. The resurrection of Wagner College came from within, and the essential ingredients were remarkable vision, commitment, and leadership shared by faculty and administrators alike.

The Wagner Plan
By late 1996, it was apparent to all that Wagner faced serious straits. Enrollment was stagnant, debt was mounting, and alumni support waswaning. Though the college had completed a major redesign of its campus core and added a new sports/recreation facility, the campus ethos was depressed. Our board of trustees and our president fully understood the imperative for change. They knew that the college’s future success was tightly bound to its New York City location; to its dedicated faculty who understood the mutuality among the liberal arts, professional education, and service; and to the need to provide leadership. In that context, I was hired as Wagner’s provost.

The Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts was conceived as part of the provost search process and subsequent conversation in February 1997. It was designed that spring

RICHARD GUARASCI
is president of Wagner College, recipient of the 2005 TIAA-CREF Hesburgh Award for faculty development in support of the college’s first-year program.
and, after two non-voting faculty forums were held in September, it passed overwhelmingly. A miracle for sure. Since Wagner was formerly a Lutheran institution, maybe some historic divine intervention lingered over the place.

In short, the faculty sought an educational signature for Wagner College by linking the classroom with “experiential learning” in New York City and its environs. All students would complete a freshman program including a multidisciplinary learning community (approximately twenty-four to twenty-eight students), a reflective tutorial with thirty hours of experiential learning, and an intensive writing program of multiple assignments. Active learning would be the operative pedagogy. All of this would be taught by teams of two tenured or tenure-track faculty members who also serve as the students’ academic advisors until they declare a major by sophomore year.

In addition, all students would complete a multidisciplinary intermediate learning community before their senior year, emphasizing curricular integration. During their senior year, students would participate in a learning community in their major area that, through a capstone course, would reintegrate the major subfields. The capstone course would be coupled with a major reflective tutorial including at least one hundred hours of related fieldwork and a senior paper (thesis). The college would no longer count credit hours (seat time). Instead, students would be required to successfully complete thirty-six courses, including a general education core drawn across the five major curricular areas, two courses that address domestic and global diversity, at least one history course, and at least one writing-intensive English literature course.

The changes included many other significant variations. The teaching load would now include seven semester courses over two semesters. Previously, it required eight semester courses over two semesters. The teaching schedule changed, although not sufficiently. In the fall of 1998, the freshman program was implemented, planning for the intermediate and senior learning communities continued, the writing center was dramatically enhanced, and the library was reinvigorated. New furniture was purchased for almost every classroom. As one administrator quipped, “we changed everything but the parking spaces.”

Wagner’s commitment to the learning community model pervades the administration as well. We purposefully strive, through observation and reflection, to understand the process of our evolution. In so doing, we become better prepared to address the far more challenging task: sustaining curricular transformation through broadened faculty engagement. Some lessons have become apparent.

**Lesson #1: Fundamental educational reform is, at root, the rediscovery of intellectual integrity and collaborative faculty work.**

The work of meaningful progress in higher education, particularly at midsize and smaller institutions, must focus on identifying and reaffirming the essential elements of the institution’s core mission: the dedication to student learning and intellectual inquiry. And the defining element of this equation rests on the inspiration of faculty members as agents of intellectual inquiry. Virtually every one of them chose higher education because of their passion for inquiry, discovery, and the integration of knowledge. And through that commitment, they inspire others to do the same.

---

**Wagner College**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate Enrollment FTE</td>
<td>~1200</td>
<td>~2000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAT</td>
<td>1000</td>
<td>1130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School GPA</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Faculty</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tenure-Track FTE Faculty</td>
<td>~100</td>
<td>~130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semester Course Load</td>
<td>4 courses per semester</td>
<td>3 courses per semester *</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students/NYC Metro</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students Outside NY</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident Students</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retention to Sophomore</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Endowment</td>
<td>$3m</td>
<td>$27m</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Service/Experiential Hours</td>
<td>~10,000</td>
<td>80,000 annually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Operating Budget</td>
<td>$24m</td>
<td>$65m</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* In 2005, approximately 50 percent of the faculty have the option of a three-course load; the strategic goal of the college is to have all faculty on a three-course load per semester—a 25 percent change in a decade.
of knowledge. All educational change on these types of campuses will more likely succeed when teachers continue to be learners. When faculty members reignite their resource with learning, to paraphrase Alfred North Whitehead (1929), their enthusiasm for the adventure with ideas becomes infectious for the entire campus. The starting point for meaningful reform begins with affirming this key element of the academic workplace. Without it, reform will lay stillborn or, at most, become marginal. By reaffirming the centrality of learning, the reform agenda starts with the restoration of dignity to faculty work and the higher education profession. In this sense, all meaningful curricular and educational change is ultimately about academic integrity.

Often this need not require large—or any—infusions of funding. I realize this may be heretical in some administrative quarters, but truth be told, change begins by sewing together the disparate parts of academic life into one whole fabric—albeit not new, but much improved. Fundamental educational reform, particularly along the lines set forth in the Association of American Colleges and Universities’s Greater Expectations report (2002), rests on the acknowledgement and the idea that college and university faculty members belong to a profession, one dedicated to teaching, scholarship, and service. We are not independent artisans, free from obligations to one another or to our students. Meaningful curricular and educational change begins with this new or rediscovered identity and it moves to honing a “reflective practice” along the lines of what Donald Schon (1983) imagined in his portrait of the reflective practitioner. Through the development of the Wagner Plan, the faculty in fact were creating for themselves (without formal acknowledgement) their own learning community. They were discovering each other’s disciplines and, through the applied fieldwork component, they were engaged in a new process of inquiry and discovery.
Lesson #2: Significant curriculum and institutional change does not require large additional sums of new funding. In fact, external funding may inhibit real change.

In the early years of the Wagner Plan, none of the initial change was funded by external grants. Change was funded first by reorganizing academic work (e.g., substituting the reflective tutorials for English composition, etc.), freeing up resources and redeploying them to this key first-year program and all its cognates in academic support and the library. Notice there was no new technology input and, sadly, no real money for student services. All of this would come in larger quantities as the plan realized success and was extended to the senior year.

Secondly, millions of dollars in net tuition revenue were realized by increasing student retention from freshman to sophomore year from the high 60 percent levels to, ultimately, 90 percent (after 2003). Higher retention grew enrollment without increasing financial aid. As the plan’s notoriety grew (without a proactive marketing plan) and its reputation developed—first by word of mouth, then in the educational associations and press—enrollment grew by nearly 70 percent in eight years. The impact on the balance sheet was dramatic and, in real terms, the net millions gained in the operating budget would have required something on the order of another $40–50 million to the endowment in order to realize equivalent investment earnings.

Over the next eight years, these net funds served to increase the size of the tenure-track faculty by over 25 percent; expand the library staff; significantly fund information technology needs; lower the average teaching load by over 12.5 percent; fund more faculty scholarship support; create a writing center with a permanent staff; and fund an office of experiential learning to avail all faculty members and students with required placements in the freshman and senior programs as well as in the regular internship, practicum, and mentorship programs.

Lesson #3: Real shared governance starts with the enhancement of faculty voice; participation and responsibility; and shared obligations for teaching and learning founded on inquiry, discovery, and creativity in intellectual work.

The faculty of the emerging academy is composed of professionals—scholars, teachers, citizens—who move from the position of independent, non-aligned artisans to a new identity of what William Sullivan (2004) has called “civic professionals.” Individualist professionals seek as much autonomy as possible and no responsibility to their clients, patients, or publics. Civic professionals seek the highest levels of excellence in their work and the greatest sense of obligation and service to their patients, students, and publics. This is where deep educational reform begins, not as such, but through the venues of common work, mutual respect, and the highest standards of intellectual endeavor.

The professional paradigm that higher education has employed—or attempted to identify—is one of Lockean individualism, where faculty members are accelerated and rewarded for separation, individualism, and discipline as property. This work mode is governed somewhat like Washington politics: create as many veto points as possible with the larger governance structure, ensuring as much autonomy as possible at the highest cost for acquiescence. It doesn’t serve the American public very well, and it fails the publics seeking deep learning in higher education. Real educational reform requires more than a system of elementary tenure and other faculty rights and privileges; rather, real reform is rooted in reestablishing the integrity and mutuality of academic work.

Sustaining change
By 2005, Wagner College had repositioned itself within higher education through the success of its educational programs, notably in the first- and senior-year programs, as well as in several key major programs. Admissions and retention grew substantially. The student resident population more than doubled in absolute numbers. SAT scores rose well over one hundred points. The financial aid discount remained virtually flat at 30 percent. The student geographic distribution changed dramatically from one of a New York City metro commuter profile to one of a national residential liberal arts college. The embarrassingly low endowment grew ten-fold. The fiscal integrity of the institution was restored. Faculty salaries approached appropriate national and regional benchmarks. Faculty course workloads were
lightened to allow for a greater scholarly commitment while maintaining the extraordinary personal commitment to individual students. Students were graduating in much greater numbers and in four years. Many more were going on to graduate and professional schools, while others were securing meaningful initial employment—often related to their experiential education and service.

Success brings dangers from three vectors. Creating change and seeing initial success is exciting, but what does one do when the newness fades? In any organization, the number of individuals who are personally willing to invest their energies in creating change is limited. How does one broaden the authorship of change among faculty while sustaining the engagement of the early leaders who have labored hard over several years? Finally, how does one manage heightened expectations for increased resources that come with increasing fiscal stability?

Substantive educational reform goes through a number of stages. While not completely discrete, these stages look something like the following:

- vision/inspiration
- adoption
- implementation and its discontents
- good practices and culture shift
- assessment, reflection, revisions
- founders’ exhaustion/new generational participation/inherited reform
- the new workplace and the new academy sustaining change, continuing innovation
- creating a culture of perspective and responsible participation in place of entitlement and cynicism
- rising expectations: crisis of resources and/or campus culture

And, of course, each of the stages of change listed above maintains its own dynamic. All of this returns us to first principles in addressing and sustaining educational reform and the new academic workplace.

Lesson #4: In an era of serious change marked by the absence of intellectual consensus, faculty members are apt to meet new demands with feelings of exhaustion and growing resentment, if there is not solid institutional consensus supporting the efficacy of transformation, if faculty and staff are not celebrated for their achievements, and if tangible improvements in the quality of their professional lives are not forthcoming.

It might be said that two universal conditions of faculty members are exhaustion and anxiety. No institution is immune. That faculty persevere is testimony to their tremendous dedication to their students. In a real sense, reformers add to the problem by demanding new pedagogies, new disciplines, more exciting but labor-intensive practices, increased participation in campus and community service, infusions of new technologies, and deeper and more rigorous assessments. We add without subtracting. We pride ourselves on greater efficiency, on “doing more with less.” We try to honor too
many goals, too many epochs of intellectual life.

To address these issues, Wagner is engaged in a process that will ultimately reduce faculty workload from seven courses to six. We are creating opportunities for funded continuing professional development. We have created a strategic plan that provides a road map for the college's future. And we engage faculty every step of the way.

**Lesson #5: Intellectual workers—faculty and administrators—need space and time to continue as reflective civic professionals.**

There is no escaping this basic assertion, if we are to continue to structure the academic workplace as we have—tenure, appropriate course loads, scholarly expectations, primary attention to students and student learning. In short, to focus on intellectual integrity as we have practiced it requires innovative means for redefining the new academic workplace and rearranging classroom time, student/mentoring time, and scholarly time.

If we don’t, two alternatives are likely. One is the market approach embedded in the “for-profit” proprietary institutions, where part-time labor and technology are substituted for the full-time, tenured academic professional. The second alternative is the withering away of the profession with only a few mandarins left in the tenure stream and the remainder offering teaching services without any scholarly expectation. The separation of scholarship and teaching will eliminate campus intellectual life as we know it by separating inquiry and discovery within the profession of higher education. Neither of these alternatives will likely enhance student learning in any deep sense, although either may improve learned skills in the most pedestrian forms.

At Wagner, we are attempting to address these issues with some sense of urgency and are instituting the following:

- **Mentoring.** Our new provost has implemented both formal and informal mentoring programs for new and older faculty. They meet often, and she holds “open conversations” at her campus home to discuss issues and dynamics as faculty members learn to operate within the Wagner Plan.

- **Informal meetings of varying faculty groups.** Open conversations are held, usually on Thursdays, for differently identified groups of faculty members—professors, the newly tenured, scientists, etc. The same is done for students.

- **Town meetings.** These are less successful to date. The questions and focus are established by a faculty committee. Sometimes they are gripe sessions, but more recently they have become more substantive on issues—for instance, “defining scholarship.”

- **Professional development semester (PDS).** After teaching three years in the first-year program (FYP), faculty members may take a paid, full-semester leave from teaching to pursue scholarly and/or pedagogical work. Alternatively, freshman-year faculty can forgo the PDS and reduce their ongoing teaching load at the outset of their FYP three-year term by one course per year. As the endowment grows in size, and as the faculty roster increases to specifically identified metrics in the strategic plan, all full-time faculty members will teach a three course per semester load, and all FYP faculty participants will receive their PDS leave in three year intervals. The PDS does not substitute for the regular sabbatical program already in place at the college.

- **Scholarship circles.** Led by the provost, this wonderful web of faculty groups and subgroups supports and promotes scholarly work. Many older faculty members as well as newer colleagues find these very helpful and productive, particularly in linking pedagogical innovations to disciplinary interests through the creation of new scholarship.

- **Integrating academic-student initiatives.** There is increased space for aligning student development, cognitive and affective, with both civic and scholarly work. Students see these connections more clearly and directly than many other campus stakeholders. They find learning—inquiry and discovery—in its unmediated forms, wanting to link living and learning in palpable forms.

- **Center for leadership and public service.** A member of Project Pericles, Wagner is deeply committed to not only the practical liberal arts, but also to public service and social justice. Service-learning courses, public service and volunteerism, learning communities with public service components, and senior projects with civic engagement components abound at Wagner. Donors are supporting the creation of a center for leadership and service as a means to
integrate these separate domains of academic life. In Wagner’s case, this means directly supporting student and faculty scholarship involved in community problems and initiatives; providing leadership training in public service and civic engagement for students, community leaders, and interested faculty members; and hosting external groups from colleges interested in sharing and exploring the scholarship and practice of civic engagement.

Lesson #6: Meaningful educational reform and resulting success exponentially increase campus expectations. Managing rising expectations with rising resources creates equally compelling obstacles to continued success.

Where is my new computer? Why doesn’t the college have more servers in IT? Why does the roof leak in my classroom? What do you mean you don’t have vegan offerings at lunchtime in the student dining hall? Do you really believe the faculty will all get the six-course annual teaching load in my lifetime? How come we don’t have even more funds for faculty research? Why aren’t there more single rooms in the residence halls? Why isn’t the endowment more than $100 million right now? I’ve got a great new idea for a team-taught requirement in my discipline. We need even more diversity. What do you mean you’re giving 8 percent increases to the faculty salary pool? I’m still underpaid. Why can’t students take free extra courses if they want to?

Sound familiar? Those are the sounds of success. While making meaningful educational reform may require little or no new funding, sustaining change requires new and robust resources. To realize new ambitions, most of them healthy ones, new resources are needed for key components of learning from new classroom technologies, better fieldwork support systems, greater scholarly needs, and most certainly to repair leaking roofs.

The challenge for administrative leadership requires the ability to focus on bringing diverse ambitions into common and understandable goals, while including the campus community in their revolution. Stated another way, successful reform requires determined, informed, and sensitive leaders—and a strategically and actively engaged board of trustees—who are skilled in their relationships with ambitious and inspired internal and external constituencies.

REFERENCE
IT WAS Colleen Connolly, a Douglass College senior, who planted the seed in 1996 for a women’s leadership program for undergraduates at Rutgers University. She was an intern at the Institute for Women’s Leadership, a unique collaboration of academic centers and units that came together as a consortium around the shared mission of examining and advancing women’s leadership in education, research, politics, the workplace, and the world. Institute members included Douglass College; the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies; the Center for American Women and Politics; the Institute for Research on Women; the Center for Women’s Global Leadership; and the Center for Women and Work. While the directors of these units had brainstormed about a cluster of shared programs, fittingly it was a student who, after interviewing representatives of all the units about their work, came up with the idea of mining the riches of the institute for student learning. She was particularly struck by the power and potential that internships held for undergraduate education, and envisioned a required internship and practicum as a central component of such a leadership education program.

In recent years, a number of leadership programs have been created for women in business, women who head nonprofit organizations, women in professions like law and medicine, and women students. Although there are over five hundred colleges and universities in the United States (and a growing number around the world) that offer programs on leadership and leadership development, there are far fewer that offer programs specifically on women’s leadership, and that are affiliated with academic departments rather than student life offices. This article describes a women’s leadership development program at Rutgers University that draws on the rich scholarship in gender studies to reimagine leadership, to accelerate young women to leadership, and to prepare them as educated citizens who will make a difference in the world.

The Leadership Scholars Certificate Program reflects the institute’s commitment to and definition of leadership as inclusive and participatory, and linked to an obligation to work for positive social transformation (Hartman 1999). Although feminist leadership is not a commonly used term, the institute’s definition of women’s leadership implies feminism, and has similarities with Leila Rupp’s definition of feminism as “a worldview that ranks gender a primary category of analysis or explanatory factor for understanding the unequal and unjust distribution of power and resources in society” (Rupp 1981, 283).

Developing such a worldview can enable people engaged in leadership development not only to better understand women’s continuing lack of access to power and resources, but may also stimulate them to challenge the lack of access of other social groups as well. With such an approach, gender becomes a category of analysis for seeing and understanding the skewed nature of how positional leaders are selected and rise to power, and how resources are distributed.

Leadership development for women, then, can be a subversive educational tool. It can enlighten corporate women about gender dynamics in organizations that keep women from getting ahead, for example, or attract young college women who might not otherwise consider taking a women’s studies class to come into the discipline through the entry point of leadership. Stark figures about women’s underrepresentation in governance and politics around the world, in officer positions, or as board members in American corporations can stimulate a commitment to the advancement of women’s leadership (see Rhode 2003). Leadership education situated in a women’s studies framework encourages students to question existing social structures, particularly as they are made aware of the paucity of women as decision makers in public office, in institutions of higher education, business, and other social arenas. It also

MARY K. TRIGG is director of leadership programs and research at the Institute for Women’s Leadership at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.
provides a forum for critically investigating women’s historical and contemporary roles as leaders in communities, in the home, in grassroots groups, and in volunteer organizations.

Leadership has not been a key concern in the field of women’s studies, which for the past quarter century has concentrated more on exploring the connections between race, class, and gender, and critiquing the social constructions that have negatively impacted women’s lives. Social change was key to the development of women’s studies, however, which began in American higher education as the academic arm of the women’s movement. A women’s leadership development program can insert leadership as both theory and practice more centrally into the women’s studies curriculum and research agenda, while it promotes liberal learning by making connections between theories about women’s lives and policies and actions that impact their lives.

The Leadership Scholars Program
A two-year, nineteen-credit program for undergraduate women, the Leadership Scholars Certificate Program combines classroom learning, research and policy internships, and independent social action projects to give participants a distinctive learning experience that is at once theoretical and practical. The program seeks to expand students’ understanding of leadership, policy making, and social change and to encourage them to take responsibility for making change. Desired program outcomes are linked to research that suggests women leaders share common traits in the areas of leadership skills, interpersonal skills, problem-solving and decision-making abilities, and personal organization and time management (Aurora and Caliper 2005). Fifteen to eighteen students are chosen in a selective process each year, so that about thirty-five students participate annually in the two-year sequence. Although a small program in a large research university, it is a replicable model for other institutions of higher education and a laboratory for examining what happens when, to use Elizabeth Tidball’s phrase, women are taken seriously. Her philosophy...
about women’s colleges applies as well to this women’s leadership education program:

What works for women resides within the wholeness of the environment, originating from a mission in which women are taken seriously. It has to do with creating a community in which women have a clear sense of ownership, knowing that they make a difference and knowing that they matter and that they truly belong and always will. What is essential is not to be found in quantifiable categories. (Tidball 1999, 140)

The four goals of the program are consistent with the goals of liberal education in their emphasis on high-quality undergraduate education, as well as welfare of the community and questions of the common good. They are (1) to offer students an opportunity to deepen their understanding of leadership and women’s contributions to social change; (2) to enhance students’ leadership abilities through a concentrated academic sequence and extracurricular offerings; (3) to provide an opportunity for students to learn the issues and problems specific to their disciplinary fields and to develop ways to implement a social action project; and (4) to build bridges between the university and the community by connecting women students with community representatives and women leaders and by providing career-building internships in corporations and nonprofit organizations.

Students in the program earn a certificate in women’s leadership from the Department of Women’s and Gender Studies and the Institute for Women’s Leadership that complements their baccalaureate degrees. This kind of education addresses the estrangement of liberal and professional studies by bringing together high-achieving students who share a commitment to both community welfare and women’s leadership for social change with majors as diverse as comparative literature and marketing, history and cell biology, and the visual arts and physics. Using gender as the lens and women’s leadership as the tool, they explore the policy areas that are embedded in their disciplines and that cross disciplines: health, law, poverty, politics, work, human rights, arts/literature/media, and education. Students select one of these “tracks” to follow through the program, and all of their work in the two-year sequence relates to it. This interdisciplinary learning has a strong connection to policy; it might be called applied women’s studies.

Like liberal education, the Leadership Scholars Program aims to be representative of our diverse democracy. Students in the program are racially diverse: over the past seven years, 40 percent of the students enrolled in the program have been women of color. This reflects the rich racial and ethnic diversity of the Rutgers student body, and adds to the multiplicity of perspectives that inform and enrich the program. It could also suggest that leadership training is attractive to minority students, who face the double challenge of bias on the basis of gender and race, and may recognize leadership development as something they need even more than do white students.

**The program structure**

The program includes three main components: coursework, an internship/field site experience, and a social action project. It includes five required women’s studies classes, including a seminar on women and leadership, in which leadership is studied through intensive readings in United States and global women’s history, combined with theoretical and structural studies of gender in society, as well as case studies of women leaders.

The internship seminar, taken in the second semester, focuses on women, work, and community and combines theoretical readings about women in the workplace with a practical experience in a work or field site. It exposes students to issues women face in the workplace, including the wage gap, the challenge of having both families and careers, and the ways that gender schemas often disadvantage working women. The seminar also reinforces the importance of young women’s civic engagement and participation in the political process.

Organizations that sponsor our interns include local nonprofits such as a domestic violence shelter, a health clinic that serves the largely Mexican immigrant community of New Brunswick, New Jersey (where the university is located), and an institute that teaches art to underserved urban high school students. Such internship placements help bridge the gap between university and community, while developing students’ ethical capacities and sense of civic purpose. With the help of a foundation committed to youth civic engagement, the institute is making these community partnerships part of the ongoing structure of the program.
In addition, the program has built up a list of internship sites beyond the local community; this includes national women’s organizations in nearby New York City, progressive corporations, and state government offices. Students intern 140 hours over one semester, learning about the organization’s mission and how it is fulfilled, women’s leadership in organizations, and gaining valuable professional experience and skills development. In some cases they reach across differences as they work with constituencies unlike themselves, further developing themselves as citizens and social actors (Trigg and Balliet 2001). The internship experience encourages students to move from the individual to the structural: this expanding worldview is deepened even further in the social action project experience.

The social action project, conducted during the third semester, provides a “sphere of action” that requires students to practice leadership. In early Greek and Latin, the word leadership is derived from the verb “to act,” and this definition informs the project. As Elizabeth Tidball writes (2000, 30), “even outstanding ability needs to be trained, directed, provided with a sphere of action, and rewarded in order to flourish.” The student-designed projects reflect the variety of their interests and provide concrete examples of the students’ capacity to transform knowledge into action, and to address vexing social issues such as illiteracy, educational disparities in urban schools, or the health of Latina women. Each student is given a $500 stipend to implement her project, for which she is required to write a formal funding proposal, modeled on one that would be given to a foundation.

In exit surveys and interviews conducted with the seven graduating classes, this component of the program has been consistently rated the highest. Notable projects have included the founding of a campus newspaper encouraging unity among diverse Asian groups at the university, the creation of a literacy awareness program at the local health center, a poetry workshop and publication at a Jewish home for the aged, and a one-day leadership workshop for urban high school girls that the institute is now expanding into an after-school program. Leadership projects like these serve the community as they advocate social change to improve the lives of both men and women. Student ambassadors can bridge the gulf between the university and the community, fulfilling Adrienne Rich’s compelling idea of the role a university might play in addressing community-specific problems:

A university responsible to women’s needs would serve the needs of the human, visible community in which it sits—the neighborhood, the city, the rural county, its true environment. . . . [T]he university should address itself to the microcosms of national problems and issues that exist locally, and it should do so with the greatest possible sense that it will not simply be giving, but be receiving, because academe has a great deal to learn from women and from other unprivileged people. (1992, 147)

Leadership projects can teach that “failure” and “success” are not always easy to define, and can lead to the resiliency and perseverance that are demanded of leaders. Such an experience offers women students the unique opportunity to take risks in a supportive environment. One model of leadership development described by Karin Klenke includes three components: challenge, recognition, and support. These are described as follows:

1. The challenge of new situations and difficult goals prompts leaders to learn the lessons that will help them perform at higher levels;
2. Recognition includes acknowledgment of achievements and rewards for accomplishments, along with resources to continue high performance; while
3. Support entails acceptance and understanding, along with the benefits that help a leader incorporate her leadership role into a full and fulfilling life (1996, 248).

The program strives to include challenge, recognition, and support in its model for the leadership project.

Although three-credit, one-semester requirements, these projects can launch long-term commitments to civic engagement. For example, a philosophy major doing her work in the program on poverty interned with the National Congress of Neighborhood Women, a Brooklyn group whose mission is to empower grassroots women’s leadership in their communities. For her project, she began a discussion group among women who lived in a New Brunswick public housing project slated to be torn down through a federal urban revitalization grant program. This student won a Fulbright fellowship the following year to
research grassroots women’s community development organizations in Ecuador, and wrote about the insights that the leadership program’s connection between experiential learning and academic study had given her. “In my research here,” she wrote from Ecuador,

I am learning a great deal about the lives of women in poverty as well as applying some of the theory that I learned at Rutgers to my experiences and observations. . . . I benefited from exploring grassroots women’s issues on a practical level through my experiences in the IWL program. . . . Although it sometimes feels like a world away from New Jersey, I have discovered that discussions with other women on gender equality—whether it be in a remote jungle community, a poor neighborhood in Quito, or a classroom in Hickman Hall—don’t really differ all that much! (Goldenberg 2001, 6)

Now, five years after her graduation, this young woman leader is a staff member of this same advocacy organization where she interned, and recently joined a delegation of grassroots women who spoke to government representatives at the United Nations about global poverty, in the hopes of impacting the Millennium Development Goals.

The importance of women’s leadership development in liberal education

Why does women’s leadership development matter? What is its importance in higher education and in educating women citizens for the twenty-first century? Women’s leadership development is based on the premise that women historically have been excluded from formal leadership positions and continue to be dramatically underrepresented. It recognizes the important roles that women have played in informal positions of leadership, and asks that we examine women’s leadership at the same time that we try to advance it. It suggests the limitations of exclusive leadership as it has (and continues to be) practiced in arenas where far-reaching decisions are made, and it recognizes the issue of gender differences in opportunities for leadership.

There are powerful and compelling arguments for why women’s leadership makes a difference and why we should care about the dearth of women in leadership positions, both in the United States and globally. Women’s leadership can be a vital source of change in an increasingly dangerous world. “The world needs women to take more leadership,” Charlotte Bunch, director of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership, has written. “Women at this moment in history bring new perspectives and values to the table that can revitalize and transform debates and options in a globe that is threatened with self-destruction based on past—predominantly male—leadership” (Institute for Women’s Leadership 2002, 17). The urgency to develop and tap women’s leadership is ever more critical in our post-9/11 world. A number of scholars have argued that women do bring something different to the leadership table, that they make different kinds of leaders than men. A new study of executive women concludes that women’s style of leadership is different from men’s; the authors describe it as inclusive, open, consensus building, collaborative, and collegial (Aurora and Caliper 2005). Using the perspective of politics, Susan Carroll, Rutgers professor at the Center for the American Women and Politics, has suggested that women political leaders feel a responsibility to represent women and their interests. Drawing on interviews done by the Center for American
Women and Politics with women in the 103rd and 104th Congresses, Carroll stated, “Regardless of whether the issue is foreign aid, the budget, or the environment, women public officials frequently examine the issue through a gendered lens, and consequently more often think about the possible impact of the policy on the lives of women and men” (Institute for Women’s Leadership 2002, 24–5).

Young women’s leadership matters as well, not only because young women will be among the next generation of public leaders, but also because society needs their vision, their civic engagement, and their idealism. The development of women leaders on college campuses is also important because undergraduate women continue to face unique challenges. A recent report released by Duke University on the Women’s Initiative, a study of the status of women at the university, showed that undergraduate women at Duke feel intense pressure to conform to “effortless perfection,” an idealized expectation that they will be “smart, accomplished, fit, beautiful, and popular, and that all this would happen without visible effort” (Lipka 2004, A35). The report described a campus culture dominated by fraternities, where “being ‘cute’ trumps being smart for women,” where some female students suffer from “a claustrophobic sense of failure,” and where body image and idealized standards of beauty reign supreme. The ripple this report created through other college communities demonstrates that these pressures are not unique to undergraduate women at Duke. One of the initiatives proposed by the Duke administration in response was to begin the Alice M. Baldwin Scholars program, which Duke’s departing president Nannerl O. Keohane envisioned as a way to “seed the campus” with student leaders who are conscious of women’s issues.

Educating women for leadership should become a priority for higher education in the twenty-first century. A high-quality, intellectually challenging women’s leadership development program can connect experiential learning to academic inquiry, and extend the classroom to the cocurriculum, the community, and the world. Despite thirty years of women’s studies scholarship, feminist activism, challenges to gender inequities in the U.S. courts, and women’s entry and ascension in the professions, American women still face systemic biases and the glass ceiling, and continue to be woefully underrepresented in decision-making positions in many arenas. Particularly at a moment when the existence of women’s colleges like Douglass College is being threatened, the importance of women’s leadership programs within higher education and liberal education should be considered. Renewing liberal education for the twenty-first century must include attention to educating women not only as intellectual and ethical citizens, but as leaders who will contribute their passion, vision, and commitment to improving the welfare of the community and the world.

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

REFERENCES
IN MANY WAYS, “the perfect storm” describes well the situation facing higher education leaders at the turn of this new century. They may well feel tossed, turned, carried along by powerful forces, struggling to keep their ships afloat, overwhelmed, overpowered, engulfed, submerged. The adjectives and metaphors could go on and on. A scan of the external environment reveals some of the “gathering storm clouds,” the climatic conditions producing this perfect storm:

• a larger and more diverse student body that attends college in more chaotic ways
• the new needs of the twenty-first-century workplace
• the rapidly changing information age
• the parallel universe of for-profit and corporate-based educational providers
• increasing competition for public resources
• a stricter regulatory environment at all levels of government

While college is now serving a different role in society—educating all students, not just the elite, for a complex, constantly changing, globally interdependent world—the higher education enterprise has been slow in adapting to the new realities. It is still largely working from an outmoded vision with its many barriers to better achievement by all students. The traditional academy—which, to continue the nautical metaphor, we can call “Old Ironsides”—like the USS Constitution, may be beautiful and have a proud history but be imperfectly suited to contemporary needs. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), in its report Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College (2002), offers a path through the stormy conditions by embracing an education better suited to this new role.

Built on innovative practices discovered at all types of institutions, the Greater Expectations report describes a “New Academy” committed to college access for all those who desire a postsecondary education, especially students from traditionally underrepresented groups.

Access alone is insufficient, however; so this New Academy also is committed to success for all students through proper preparation before college and comprehensive attention to learning in college. With higher expectations aligned across all the levels of learning, students will experience a high-quality college education. To achieve these ambitious commitments, concerted action by the various stakeholder groups will be needed, including across the high school–secondary education boundary.

At the center of the New Academy is a reinvigorated liberal education for all students no matter where they attend college or what they study: reinvigorated by becoming practical and engaged in both its learning outcomes and its learning processes. Such a practical and
Achieving the Greater Expectations vision is a long-term endeavor that will require changed practices throughout the higher education enterprise, practices that become more intentional in aligning actions with desired outcomes. What will institutional leadership for this New Academy entail? How can leaders bring to fruition a collective vision of powerful, relevant education for all college students? What type of leadership will maximize the probability of weathering the perfect storm?

Leaders with clear sight and their eyes on the prize
Piloting a ship safely through turbulent waters demands knowledge of the final destination as well as a plan for reaching it. In a parallel manner, clarity of the desired ends is essential to intentional educational practice. Without it, success becomes difficult to determine and choices relatively random. For a campus community, the educational achievements of its graduating students are an essential (the essential?) manifestation of its goals. Helping a campus community clarify its collective expectations for graduates may be the most important leadership challenge. What do the college years, or 120 credits, add up to? At the end, what should students know and be able to do with their learning? The “growing consensus” and “intentional learner,” both concepts derived from a broad scan of what society believes college students need when they graduate, are useful frameworks for conversation.

However, since the end cannot be reached without wise decisions having been made along the way, leadership for intentional practice would also clarify the expectations of students at entry into college, of individual courses to form a coherent curriculum, and of the faculty in the learning process. In part, such clarification means making these expectations transparent, evident to everyone including prospective students and their parents, high school college counselors, enrolled students, newly hired faculty and staff members, and departments.

At the institutional level, a leader might raise for consideration the following questions:
• Do we have a clear, shared, and widely distributed statement of learning outcomes that is tied to our mission? If so, is the
emphasis and balance among the outcomes distinctive for our institution and its mission?
• Given the growing national consensus on the aims of college, does our statement stress the important learning outcomes all students need for the twenty-first century (i.e., the outcomes of an engaged and practical liberal education identified in the Greater Expectations report)?
• Can students describe what their education adds up to?

Looking within institutions, at the school, department, program, or course level, leaders might ask the community to reflect on the following questions:
• Do individual units have learning outcomes that resonate with our institution-wide list?
• Are programmatic outcomes clear (e.g., the role of general education in the curriculum, the reason for internationalizing the curriculum)?
• How well do faculty members explain to students the objectives for their courses? In what ways do these objectives relate to the broader departmental and institutional outcomes?

Leaders as cultural change agents
Caught in a storm, a ship’s captain needs to sense the shifting waters and adapt nimbly to changing conditions. So too, in contemporary higher education, leaders need a perceptive understanding of the underlying culture as well as an awareness of how that culture may need to change in response to new environments. In its concept of the New Academy, Greater Expectations describes a culture different in a number of important ways from the one that currently characterizes U.S. higher education.

Toward a culture that focuses on learning
Achieving better learning by all students will require a culture that is truly centered on learning. As any student or teacher knows well, learning is not necessarily the same as teaching; even after a brilliant lecture, for example, students can remain confused about the topic. Providing an education focused on learning requires taking the student perspective and asking how well students are achieving the expectations set by the faculty. Successful teaching, therefore, inherently includes finding out where the students are in their learning and leading them all on to the next level. Student achievement serves as a better measure of success than the degrees of the teachers or the content covered; student accomplishment becomes the important outcome rather than courses completed or even graduation rates.

Guiding a college or university toward a focus on learning will involve engaging the faculty in conversations about the following questions, among many others:
• How can we move from an emphasis on credits earned or courses completed toward an understanding of the learning that occurs over time and across courses?
• What mechanisms will encourage student responsibility, under faculty and staff guidance, for planning coherent programs of study and cocurricular learning?
• What actions will help refocus education on the student as learner rather than on the faculty member as teacher?
• How can the institution and all its personnel model lifelong learning?

Toward a culture of evidence
In a culture of evidence, institutions and the people within them want to know how well they are succeeding and how to improve. They apply critical evaluation to their own performance and the performance of their various units (departments, colleges). To combine the focus on learning with a commitment to evaluation, the most important evidence will be how well students are learning. Deep appreciation of assessment as an inherent part of high-quality teaching would ensure the collection of relevant evidence that would feed back into a cycle of continuous improvement. Part of such a culture would be a shift to assessing learning directly through the examination of student work products rather than by relying on indirect measures such as student self-reports or retention.

Leadership to create a culture of evidence will need to ensure a safe environment for sharing assessment findings linked to the expectation of transparency of aggregated results (to find out together how well students as a group are succeeding). The desired end of gathering and evaluating the data is a systemic one: to improve education, not to assign blame or make judgments about individual teachers. Leaders must also provide the resources, ongoing moral support, and appreciation for faculty members as they learn how to assess in
Leaders need to offer ironclad guarantees that assessment of student learning and faculty evaluation for promotion and tenure are completely separate processes.

Questions for conversation include the following:
- How can we assess students’ levels of learning and then help them all advance?
- What is the crucial information we need to gather to show how well students are learning what we identify as important? How can this data be used to improve learning?
- Where in the curriculum could this evidence gathering occur if we consider learning that develops over time and across courses?

Building faculty corporate responsibility for the curriculum

Creating coherence in undergraduate education requires a different mindset about courses. Rather than being seen as distinct from one another and “owned” by the faculty member who teaches them, courses need to be understood as related to one another—from the perspective of student learning. Too often, faculty members fail to draw evident connections for students among courses, especially if the course offerings are not part of formal learning communities. The curriculum in many majors (with the possible exception of disciplines that are inherently more sequential, like mathematics or foreign languages) and in almost all general education programs is little more than a collection of disconnected, individual courses. Often professors lack information about what students have learned previously or what they will study next. For example, have they already been taught to write a research paper at the college level? Have they been taught it five times over?

The cultural shift required is toward faculty corporate responsibility for the entire curriculum. No longer would individual faculty members feel responsible only for the courses they teach; no longer would departments simply care about the major. All faculty members would accept the responsibility for ensuring that students evolve and mature in their learning—general liberal learning as well as disciplinary content.

Leaders need to take a hard look at the reality of what is rewarded and valued and the messages such reality communicates. Are teaching awards given for individual success in the classroom or for linking one’s teaching to a coherent pathway? Questions leaders could use to guide conversations and evaluate the existing culture include the following:
- In what ways does our campus reify the culture of individual ownership of courses? In what ways does it hold departments collectively responsible?
- How might our reward structures, curricular processes, and advising be modified to shift this balance?

Leaders as holistic thinkers

To captain a crew through a perfect storm requires deep knowledge of the ship, of its people, and of how the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts. Leaders for the New Academy also need to be holistic thinkers, seeing both the big picture and how the smaller elements interrelate. On many campuses, while innovative programs have arisen to meet perceived needs, those programs are often isolated from one another and dependent upon a committed individual or small group. Even a rich array of programs can function on the margins of an institution, involve a limited population of students, or be poorly integrated into a campus’s core work. Most disturbingly, this can be the case even when the various programs have strong potential to build on and reinforce one another, thereby enhancing the impact of them all. Leaders will be called upon to think holistically about their institutions, to understand the benefits of synergy, and to facilitate collective approaches in the campus community.

For example, a campus might have a first-year seminar and a writing-across-the-curriculum program that are separate from each other and also unrelated to general education. Or a major may have an excellent senior capstone
experience whose content, assignments, or intellectual skill development fail to link back to the previous courses it is meant to “cap.” Does it make sense to expect students to perceive the connections if faculty and staff, being much more experienced learners, are unable to do so?

One tool available to leaders is the “audit,” whether it is conducted of the curriculum or of existing academic and student support programs. An audit gathers information on what already exists, with the analysis organized around the goals the institution is trying to achieve so as to assure intentional decision making.

A leader can also strive for holistic thinking as a way to help the community maintain focus on its strategic priorities and reform agenda. While it may seem surprising, campuses can undertake major curricular projects such as the renewal of general education that are invisible in their admissions material, absent from their Web sites, or left out of presidential state of the university addresses. Consistently providing the large “umbrella” under which all the initiatives fit, and drawing connections among them, will keep the eyes of the community and all its constituent parts “on the prize,” moving together in concerted action.

The following are some questions for conversation:

- Has our institution audited the programs already in place to see how well they align with our desired outcomes and how effectively they interconnect with one another?
- Do we have a plan for better integrating our various initiatives and programs so they are understood as part of a comprehensive reform agenda?
- Do academic and strategic planning center on our desired learning outcomes?
- How can we assure that our self-study process for accreditation derives from our institution’s goals, learning outcomes, and reform agenda?

Leaders as partners with the public

In times of meteorological crisis, the captain needs to ensure that his ship’s crew effectively interacts with others (including other vessels and the National Weather Service). Similarly, as higher education faces the perfect storm, leaders need to work collaboratively with the public as both “consumers” and “supporters” of education; in other words, the academy cannot remain an ivory tower. Leaders need to express this conviction and model it in their actions.

Partnering with the public can take the form of raising awareness about higher education’s mission or of concerted action. Raising awareness could involve educating the public about:
- how college is now enrolling a different population of students, more diverse and varied in preparation;
- the characteristics of a powerful, engaged, and practical liberal education that will serve both individuals and society well in the contemporary environment;
- learning as a complex process that involves more than simple factual recall;
- the important questions assessment can answer that require more than standardized tests;
- the need for supportive, rather than restrictive, public policies at all levels.

Partnering for action could involve working with various stakeholder groups to improve preparation for college, change public policies, and assure adequate funding. Questions for consideration include the following:
- In what ways do our institution’s leaders, in an ongoing manner, accept responsibility for engaging with policy makers (at the local, state, or national level) about the important outcomes of college, the public good of education, the need to prepare all students for college success, and appropriate demands for accountability?
- In what ongoing ways do we bring external stakeholders (including business leaders) into conversations about learning, the important outcomes of twenty-first-century college study, and the need for lifelong learners?
- In what substantive ways do we work with K–12 to improve student preparation for a challenging liberal education, and are they sufficient?
- Do we individually and collectively as an institution keep abreast of changes in the disciplines and the world of work so our students are well prepared to enter into careers?

How is leadership through the perfect storm already occurring?

Enlightened higher education leaders are already manifesting the kind of leadership needed to weather the storm and achieve the New Academy vision described in Greater Expectations; they are doing so in varied, powerful ways. The New Academy builds on the innovations
these leaders have nurtured on their campuses, and so it is no surprise that many colleges and universities see their best, most creative work reflected in the vision set forth in the Greater Expectations report; they feel a part of the national movement. Yet they also sense and are responding to pressure toward greater effort, toward becoming more intentional, and toward expanding on their successes.

**By stimulating conversation**

AAC&U has encouraged presidents to engage the campus with the external community and discuss the Greater Expectations vision in campus-community dialogues. Many have already done so, sometimes in collaboration with colleagues from nearby colleges and universities. Such dialogues, involving to date over 1,500 people from the higher education community and beyond, provide a venue for discussing the role of college in society and the learning that should result from a high-quality college education. Participants enthusiastically praise the seriousness of the conversations and the value of the experiences that have created a stronger shared commitment to better learning. A number of dialogues already have fostered longer-term collaborative projects.

Leaders have used the Greater Expectations report to frame conversations on campus, too, and across campuses: at faculty retreats, trustee meetings, faculty development workshops. Some ordered the report in bulk and distributed it to the entire faculty, while others downloaded the PDF from www.greaterexpectations.org.

**Through action**

Many leaders have moved their institutions beyond the conversation stage to planning and used the report’s ideas as the basis for academic and strategic plans or to frame accreditation self-studies. In the best of cases, planning produces action, and many campuses have inspirational stories to tell about real change occurring.

From institutional reports, it appears as if action is taking a new shape. Instead of simply focusing on isolated issues (for example, a freshman-year experience), campus leaders are examining their practices more holistically to ensure that the various programs already in place are mutually reinforcing one another to enhance learning. The Greater Expectations report has provided common language and encouraged a less atomized approach to education.

As each individual campus extracts from the report what most resonates with its mission and culture, one would expect to see great variety—variety regarding the area of concentration (e.g., will a campus work on developing a coherent curriculum, on making teaching more effective, on establishing close relationships with K–12?), variety in how implementation proceeds, and variety in the design of the final product. This, indeed, is occurring even within the units of a single institution. Leaders are well aware that local conditions will set the parameters for action.

**Conclusion**

Fearful as the perfect storm may be, clear sight, intentional action, and wise leadership will allow U.S. higher education, which has traditionally been adaptable, to find a way through the turbulent wind and waters. While not quite as beatific and sanguine as “sailing into calm waters,” the New Academy vision suggests that we can both learn to manage in stormy conditions and become stronger for the hardships endured. However, simply battening down the hatches and waiting for the storm to pass over is not the answer. Nimbleness, self-reflection, and a willingness to change with the times are characteristics not just of the students we want to produce, but of the institutions we need to build. Isn’t this what it really means to model the lifelong learning higher education advocates?

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

---

**REFERENCES**


MOST DEBATES on the future of American higher education, and liberal education’s role in it, broach the notion that “education is at a crossroads.” What attracts me, a business consultant working alongside your graduates, is a related puzzle: how do we make liberal learning’s graduates more competitive in today’s workplace?

To answer this question, let’s consider two signals on the road ahead. First, consider the broad “insider’s” critique by Robert Weisbuch (2005), formerly the head of the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation and now president of Drew University. Next, let us look at the preemptive signal from the federal government: the ambitious Commission on the Future of Higher Education charged by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings with developing a comprehensive national strategy for postsecondary education. The first underlines the depth of the issues at stake; the second implies larger forces might reshape liberal (and higher) education. Why these signals surface now is captured in Weisbuch’s gloomy assessment of the health of liberal arts and sciences disciplines: as higher education enrollments have grown over two generations, enrollments in traditional liberal arts colleges have shrunk; meanwhile, liberal arts funders are leaving their traditional roles as supporters, and fewer high school students are choosing liberal arts and sciences programs.

While seemingly harsh, Weisbuch’s ideas are understandable: “The world has not abandoned the liberal arts; the academic liberal arts have abandoned the world” (2005, 93). We understand this if we realize that liberal arts and sciences disciplines reflect an older tradition, while today’s graduates contend with newer workplace challenges.

This gap between old and new environments is highlighted by the vast difference in the computing power leveraged by today’s employers. According to Robert Allen (1999), ex-chairman of AT&T, what in 1970 would represent $7,000 worth of computer power costs just pennies today. Clearly, this vastly changes workforce dynamics, but there’s more here than meets the eye. As many corporate consultants doing my work know, the critical issues unsolvable by technology—team interaction, workflow management, tough persuasion—go begging for the very skills that are developed through a liberal education.

So we can agree with Weisbuch’s gloomy assessment and still hunt for its silver lining. Yes, students will sidestep the traditional liberal arts and sciences disciplines for degree programs with greater job security. Even young writing and history fans pick professional tracks over the provocative demands of a Dickens seminar or a “mol bio” course. But we can challenge this growing trend by mapping new options.

Understanding “risk aversion” among employers

First, let’s rekindle the value of liberal education for these job-focused students and their often risk-averse employers. A generation ago, schools could offer degree programs and ignore the employability of graduates. Today, every college must address students’ work-readiness, even for professional work. Weisbuch urges students to hone “work-ready”
Specialist-Rich Workplace

Hampshire College
skills (my term) and their mentors to deepen conversations with employers. He urges us to focus on “applying academic learning to social challenges” and creating “permanent dialogue” between mentors and employers of students (Weisbuch 2005, 93). Clearly, faculty engaging employers is a good first step.

Such dialogues are underway, thanks to the advocacy program of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U). Yet as ever more cautious employers continue to hire specialists (not generalists), these dialogues must also plumb deeper, to fully understand worksite needs for key skills and tackle the pervasive employer bias that favors specialists. A decade ago, employers wanted “tech workers”; today, it’s “security specialists.” Whatever their needs, as newspaper publisher Paul Neely observed (1999, 38), CEOs will say they prize employees whose skills resemble “the mission of a liberal arts college: critical thinking, oral and written communication abilities.” Yet “given a choice to fill a new reporter’s slot, a cautious director of human resources . . . [ hires] a journalism-school graduate” over a history major. Neely’s reasoning: “Hiring is now a risk-averse activity.”

In my two decades of consulting, I’ve witnessed the growing ascendency of risk-averse managers. In hiring tech analysts for one department or marketers for another, these managers prefer specialists. Some executives may say otherwise, but an actual understanding of liberal education’s value is often missing in today’s hiring environment.

**Student uncertainties**

Discerning liberal education’s value is also something of a headache for students. A bracing exercise by AAC&U used focus groups in eight cities to canvass student awareness and views of liberal education. Only two features of the resulting data need highlighting here. First, there was fuzziness as students tried to characterize their idea of “liberal learning.” Second and more surprising were their views on actual college “outcomes,” as reported by Debra Humphreys and Abigail Davenport: “most students believe that something important goes on [in college]. 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 [work] on precisely those outcomes most important to their future success” (2005, 39).

So high school students misconstrue “what matters” in college, Humphreys and Davenport tell us. Even the actual college students surveyed are uninformed about college outcomes. Students don’t see how their college experience relates to their future professional success because they are not getting “information about . . . the specific outcomes of college that employers identify as essential” (Humphreys and Davenport 2005, 38).

To help these students understand the value of liberal education and to prepare them for more effective “work-ready” studies, we need verifiable clarity in educational goals, plus greater dialogue with employers. As schools clarify their goals for students, they must forcefully show employers how liberal arts graduates and specialists with a strong liberal education can and will “do the job” in the workplace.

How to manage this is the question. Faced with this “clear and present danger,” we need strategies that generate lasting results. This surely means curricular change and new relationships with stakeholders who can promote these changes far and wide.

**Two modest proposals**

With these issues in mind, I offer two modest proposals.

1. Nurture “work-ready” students who can apply the lessons learned from employer dialogues, and refocus liberal education programs on core strengths. It’s one thing to hold faculty-employer dialogues, another to manage these “moments of truth,” as former Scandinavian Airlines CEO Jan Carlson calls them. Faculty and academic leaders must work to persuade employers of the value of liberal education and how it is
evolving to meet the actual demands of twenty-first-century workplaces. It is hard work.

One principle helps: dialogues change minds by appealing to common interests. Leverage this by showing how all students—those in traditional liberal arts and sciences or in professional fields—are immersed in learning work-specific “competencies” demanded by workplaces, and build measures for these competencies in courses. (“Competency” at work means effectiveness with high-percentage consistency. For example, bike riding is a skill, but know-how for biking fifty miles daily is a competency.)

Any “industrial strength” liberal education toolkit offers the analysis, persuasive writing, argumentation, and presentation skills useful in diverse groups, but these must be “work-ready.” They are taught, but students must make them competencies, not simply skills. They are crucial to workplaces hiring “knowledge workers.” In my consulting to Fortune 500 groups, for example, we “refresh” how people operate in major work units by reengineering a process. Here, key liberal education competencies are vital: first, multifaceted analysis of a current procedure; then reframing of that process; finally, persuasion that convinces unsympathetic audiences to adopt new procedures for daily tasks—in short, analysis, synthesis, complex persuasion. Easy to say, difficult to do.

Experience in today’s work groups also shows the need to change employers’ older “mental models.” The key here is being clear about the goals of liberal education. Meanwhile, employer dialogues will yield the guides teachers can use to show students how to hone “work-ready” competencies. To some, these are “soft” skills, but in most workplaces, these are crucial competencies for “knowledge workers”:

• results-focused approaches for analyzing complex issues
• audience-specific skills in writing about complex topics
• techniques for marshaling persuasive mathematical evidence
• advanced skills in developing presentations for unsympathetic audiences
• guides for negotiation and conflict resolution in teams

Every working executive I know would pay dearly for graduates who are “work ready” in this sense.
To produce such graduates, we need intensive teaching sharply focused on outcomes—and creative approaches. The payoff is large, so this must be done. On one New Jersey campus, for instance, science faculty in four disciplines team-teach a series of courses—avoiding silo-like departmental focus on separate topics and focusing on similar scientific analysis. At a North Carolina campus, faculty members in one department gather weekly (and in advance) to critique individual lectures by professors and to generate more effective lectures. As a teacher and trainer of trainers, I know this is difficult; but the examples show it is indeed doable.

2. As curricula are refocused, tap all constituencies to promote the changes to employers. Faculty and administrators are key agents, but when tapped, alumni can be exceptionally helpful, especially in changing employers’ “mental models.” To reach alumni, adapt the best practices of alumni groups—groups that typically are tens of thousands strong. As graduates of traditional liberal education programs, alumni can effectively make “the business case” for liberal education at their worksites.

One idea with growing appeal to schools is to establish, in effect, an alumni “customer loyalty program.” As in businesses, so in schools: alumni “customers” are tough to replace once lost. Businesses work to keep customers, and schools must do likewise to regularly refresh their connection with alumni. This is doable with initiatives that support alumni needs, as alumni continue supporting campuses in traditional funding drives.

Such programs simply recognize an emerging view of alumni: as Steve Calvert, alumni relations director at the University of Denver, puts it, it’s not just staff or faculty but alumni that increasingly are seen as the “permanent constituency” (Sanoff 2005, D1). And though “without portfolio” now, alumni can be chartered to promote new campus initiatives and curricular change.

For their part, alumni overwhelmingly want career guidance and help. The need reflects one statistic: working lifetimes are now sixty years (a threefold rise in a century), as Peter Drucker notes (2000, 1). So a typical graduate’s lifelong “career portfolio” may show four or five careers, each with separate demands. And as alumni regularly reinvent careers—responding to the same market forces that source their jobs and affect higher education funding—schools can offer “alumni loyalty” support as alumni help campuses in turn.

One best-practice alumni career networking model is “Net Nights,” developed by Princeton alumni. Its adaptable framework makes it replicable in most colleges’ city-based alumni groups. The Net Nights model is focused on building relationships and long-term business connections, and designed for continual “knowledge exchanges.” (One city in the Net Nights alumni network has attracted nearly 3,000 visitors in four years.) The benefits of alumni career networking groups are visible to all participants. They measurably encourage higher alumni volunteering and higher levels of annual giving, and they create more opportunity for alumni participants to hone “work-ready” competencies (guided by mentors and small groups).

Other models will work in other circumstances. But overall, we know that successful institutions will anticipate their need for change and manage their resistance to it. For these institutions, alumni loyalty is a two-way street, and they offer “alumni loyalty programs” to attract alumni support for their future growth.

Adjusting our bearings without losing our way

Let us take stock. If liberal education is to remain the nation’s premier educational approach, we need a twist of the thinking cap—among administration, faculty, alumni, and “risk-averse” employers all at once. Our
goal: persuading employers to solve workforce needs by turning to liberal education (not “specialist program”) graduates. Reversing this imbalance demands faculty ingenuity.

Rebalancing, at first, means managing change. Essential here is a notion familiar to corporations: tempering fear of the “change monster,” a psychological process with predictable phases (Duck 2001). Experience with campuses, foundations, and corporations has shown me that many initially fear change; radical change, after all, might force an institution to lose its way. But everyone can learn to tame this “monster.”

Creatively adjusting college curricula is just as critical as launching dialogues with employers. Options include across-the-curriculum efforts to retarget competencies actually prized by workplaces and to establish measurable “learning outcomes” that pinpoint the value of liberal education for students themselves. All stakeholders can help here, including the largely untapped constituency of alumni.

We know educational leaders in engineering and business do make their “business case” to employers. They show how their graduates offer “value” that worksites need. In turn, their success explains why their corporate funding rises as funding for more traditional liberal arts and sciences disciplines “flatlines” or falls.

Campuses focusing on liberal education, or offering professional preparation, will succeed equally by nurturing competencies with competitive advantage for the workplace. This asset untapped advantage is vital to organizations restructuring everywhere, and an advantage we can create through liberal education curricula.

We know schools can bolster the competencies of deft analysis, audience-sensitive writing, persuasive presenting, and negotiating. Can we use them as strategic assets and show employers that these are premier “work-readiness” toolkits? Time will tell.

To respond to this article, e-mail liberaled@aacu.org, with the author’s name on the subject line.
ONE OF THE MORE INTRIGUING TRENDS at the
turn of the twenty-first century is the ascendant
influence of religion
in various aspects of
American life. The renewed interest in religion
and spirituality is not just a function of aging
baby boomers acknowledging their mortality.
The University of Pennsylvania reported that
86 percent of those between the ages of
eleven and eighteen believe religion is an
important part of life (Hulett 2004).
Religion has always had a place in Ameri-
can higher education. Most colonial colleges
were founded to transmit and preserve the
values, beliefs, traditions, and cultural her-
tage of their sponsoring denominational
groups. Today, the small segment of higher ed-
ucation devoted to this mission includes de-
nominational and faith-based institutions,
particularly the members of the Council for
Christian Colleges and Universities, and
some visible national universities such as Bay-
lor, Brigham Young, and Notre Dame. At
the same time, increasing numbers of students are
openly practicing their religious beliefs or ex-
ploring spiritual dimensions of their personal
development, whether at a small private

church-related college or a large public univer-
sity. Their presence will, if it hasn’t already,
present challenges to faculty members, ad-
ministrators, and governing boards who have
not determined how to strike the appropriate
balance between spiritual or religious prac-
tices and student learning, or whether these
human development goals can or even should
be addressed within the curriculum.
Although the relevant issues are too com-
plex to summarize here, a few tension points
immediately surface. For example, some fac-
ulty members worry that students who arrive
at college holding fast to religious beliefs are
conditioned to resist the “liberal learning”
curriculum and may graduate without seriously
reexamining their beliefs and values. At insti-
tutions as different as Knox College (Hulett
2004) and the Air Force Academy (Gorski
2004), many students exhibit little tolerance
for peers who practice religious beliefs differ-
ent from their own. These behaviors, too, are
antithetical to the goals of liberal learning.
At first blush, the search for meaning—in-
cluding reflecting on one’s spiritual or reli-
gious beliefs—is consistent with exposure to
liberal arts educational practices (Blaich et al.
2004) that encourage students to become
more open to alternative, diverse views about
various matters, including religion and spiri-
tuality (Astin et al. 2005). On balance, col-
lege does have a liberalizing effect as students
tend to become less rigid in their orientation

GEORGE D. KUH AND ROBERT M. GONYEA

Spirituality,
Liberal Learning,
and College Student
Engagement

GEORGE D. KUH is Chancellor’s Professor of Higher
Education and director of the Center for Post-
secondary Research, and ROBERT M. GONYEA is
the associate director of the Center for Post-
secondary Research, both at Indiana University.
toward religion by the time they are seniors. Students attending a church-related college are less likely to experience changes in their religious affiliation and degree of religiosity (Astin 1993; Feldman and Newcomb 1969; Kuh 1999; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Faculty members, peers, and campus cultures are key factors as an institution’s environmental press can encourage or discourage religious and spiritual practices and participation in other activities that are linked with character development (Kuh 2000; Kuh and Umbach 2004).

**Does spirituality enhance or detract from liberal learning?**

Given the dramatic demographic and attitudinal changes marking recent college-going cohorts, it would be instructive to know how participating in spirituality-enhancing activities relates to other aspects of the college experience (Astin et al. 2005). To learn more about the relationships between spirituality, liberal learning, and college experiences, we turned to the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) database. Using students’ responses to NSSE questions, we can estimate whether students who frequently worship or engage in other spirituality-enhancing practices are more or less likely to:

- engage in deep learning activities;
- interact with students from different religious and political backgrounds;
- participate in community service and service-learning programs;
- perceive the campus environment to be supportive;
- be satisfied with college;
- make gains in writing clearly, speaking effectively, self-understanding, understanding others, and so forth.

In addition, we can determine the extent to which these relationships are “general” (i.e., essentially the same across all students) or “conditional” (i.e., specific to certain types of students or to institutions with certain characteristics). For example, do students majoring in traditional liberal arts fields differ in systematic ways from their counterparts in...
other majors? Does the strength of the denomi-
national affiliation of an institution matter to
spirituality, college student engagement, and
desired liberal learning outcomes?

Who, where, what, how:
A note on methods

Our data come from 149,801 randomly sampled
first-year (51 percent) and senior students (49
percent) who completed the NSSE survey in
2004 when they were attending 461 different
four-year colleges and universities in the
United States. Almost two-thirds were women;
90 percent were full-time students. In terms of
major field, about 40 percent of the seniors
were majoring in what might be considered
liberal arts disciplines (arts, humanities, bio-
logical and physical sciences, social sciences)
with the rest distributed among professional
fields (42 percent) and other areas (15 percent)
or undecided (3 percent).

Schools were assigned to one of five major
Carnegie institutional categories: Doctoral/
Research-Extensive (Doc-Ext), Doctoral/
Research-Intensive (Doc-Int), Master’s I & II
(MA), Baccalaureate-Liberal Arts (Bac-LA),
and Baccalaureate-General (Bac-Gen).

About 16 percent of the institutions are liberal
arts colleges, the same proportion that make
up the national pool. In addition, twenty-nine
of the participating colleges and universities
were classified as “faith-based” for the purpose
of this study. The faith-based college category
is made up of institutions with reputations for
being fundamentalistic in their adherence to a
religious tradition, including member schools
of the Council for Christian Colleges and
Universities. Comparing faith-based with
other institutions is an attempt to better un-
derstand how the emphasis schools give to re-
ligion and religious practices affects other
aspects of the college experience.

Variables of interest

Student Engagement. Three student engagement
measures are of particular interest in this study
(see box below). The first two, spiritual prac-
tices and interactions with diverse peers, deal

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEASURES OF STUDENT ENGAGEMENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual practices (one item): In your experience at this institution, how often have you participated in activities to enhance your spirituality (worship, meditation, prayer, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with diverse peers (one item): In your experience at this institution, how often have you had serious conversations with students who are very different from you in terms of their religious beliefs, political opinions, or personal values?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deep learning (nine items): How often have you:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources, or included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing assignments?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Put together ideas or concepts from different courses when completing assignments or during class discussions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with faculty members outside of class?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussed ideas from your readings or classes with others outside of class (students, family members, co-workers, etc.)?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Synthesized and organized ideas, information, or experiences into new, more complex interpretations and relationships?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Analyzed the basic elements of an idea, experience, or theory, such as examining a particular case or situation in depth and considering its components?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Made judgments about the value of information, arguments, or methods, such as examining how others gathered and interpreted data and assessing the soundness of their conclusions?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Applied theories or concepts to practical problems or in new situations?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
with aspects of religion and spirituality. The third, deep learning, is particularly relevant because it is composed of behaviors that are essential to acquiring the skills and competencies needed to become an intentional learner, one of the more important outcomes claimed by proponents of liberal learning (Association of American Colleges and Universities 2002; Entwistle and Entwistle 1991; Schneider 2004; Tagg 2003).

To see if participating in spiritual activities made any difference in how students spent their time, we also included in the analyses several other engagement measures from NSSE, such as contact with faculty members outside of class, community service, and service learning.

Perceptions of the Campus Environment. Students’ perceptions of the campus environment are associated with their engagement in educationally purposeful activities and many desirable outcomes of college. To assess the degree to which students perceive their institution supports and encourages their development both in and out of the classroom and fosters positive, productive relationships among students, faculty, and administrators, we included three sets of environment items in the analysis: perceptions of the extent to which the out-of-class environment is supportive of students’ academic and social needs (three items); quality of relationships among faculty, administrators and students (three items); overall satisfaction with the college experience (two items).

Self-Reported Outcomes. NSSE asks students to estimate the progress or gains they have made since starting college in a variety of areas, almost all of which are valued in the liberal arts tradition: general education (four items—thinking, writing and speaking clearly, and acquiring a broad general education); personal-social development (eight items such as self-understanding, developing a personal code of ethics, and understanding people from other backgrounds); practical competence (three items—acquiring job or work-related knowledge and skills, using computing and information technology, and analyzing quantitative problems); and deepened sense of spirituality (one item).

Analytical approach

After examining various descriptive measures, we fitted the regression models in table 1 iteratively to include only items that were statistically related to the behaviors and outcomes of interest, including spiritual practices, interactions with diverse peers, deep learning, and a deepened sense of spirituality and other self-reported outcomes. Because our analyses indicated that grades and major field made no difference in terms of spiritual practices, these variables were dropped from the regression models. Student background characteristics and institutional characteristics were used as controls.

The plus and minus signs in table 1 represent the effect size associated with the variable, or the degree to which a statistically significant difference represents a “real,” meaningful difference in student behavior or institutional performance. In other words, is the difference big enough that the finding warrants attention and, perhaps, interventions in terms of policy or programmatic changes? Plus signs indicate a positive relationship between variables; minus signs indicate a negative relationship. The more plus or minus signs, the stronger the relationship. Additional information about the data sources and analytical methods used for this study is available online at www.indiana.edu/~nsse/html/research.htm or www.teaglefoundation.org.

What we learned

Our analyses revealed three noteworthy patterns.

1. Students who frequently engage in spirituality-enhancing practices also participate more in a broad cross-section of collegiate activities.

Students who engage frequently in spirituality-enhancing activities exercise more, attend cultural events more often, and are more likely to perform community service. They also are somewhat more satisfied with college and view the out-of-class environment more positively. In addition, they spend less time relaxing and socializing (including “partying”) and more time in extracurricular activities. One exception to the latter finding is that varsity athletes participate less in spirituality-enhancing activities than any other student group. Worship, meditation, prayer, and similar activities during college appear to contribute to personal and social development through a deepened sense of spirituality. Perhaps most important, there is no evidence that spiritual practices have negative effects on other desirable activities, such as studying, deep learning, or extracurricular involvements.
Table 1

Relationships between spirituality, liberal learning, and student engagement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDEPENDENT VARIABLE</th>
<th>DEPENDENT VARIABLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deep learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Spiritual practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interactions w/ diverse peers: relig., polit., values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deepened sense of spirituality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal-social development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Practical competence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>General education</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Deep learning</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual practices</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working with faculty out of classroom</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based work as part of a course</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community service/volunteerism</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with diverse peers: religious beliefs, political opinions, and personal values</td>
<td>+ n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactions with diverse peers: race and ethnicity</td>
<td>+ + +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attending art events</td>
<td>+ +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exercising</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Relaxing and socializing</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of the Campus Environment</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions of the out-of-class environment</td>
<td>+  +  +  +  +  +  +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of relationships</td>
<td>+</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall satisfaction with the college experience</td>
<td>+ + + + + + +</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institutional Mission</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faith-based institution</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Student- and institution-level controls included class standing, sex, race/ethnicity, enrollment, transfer students, participation in the Greek system, parental income, international students, athletes, self-reported grades, sector, Carnegie type, selectivity, and enrollment size.
2. Institutional mission and campus culture matter more to spirituality and liberal learning outcomes than most other institutional characteristics.

Students who view the out-of-class climate as supportive of their social and nonacademic needs report greater gains in all of the outcomes on the NSSE survey, including a deepened sense of spirituality. From analyses not displayed in table 1, we noted that students at baccalaureate general colleges participate more frequently in spirituality-enhancing activities and gain more in this area, but they are less likely to engage in meaningful ways with students from different backgrounds.

In contrast, students at baccalaureate liberal arts colleges interact more frequently with diverse peers and are comparable to students at other types of institutions (except baccalaureate general colleges) in how often they participate in spirituality-enhancing activities and the extent to which they deepen their sense of spirituality during college.

Institutional size and selectivity have only trivial effects on the frequency with which students engage in spirituality-enhancing activities and interact with students from different backgrounds or the extent to which they deepen their sense of spirituality. This finding is consistent with many other studies of the relationships between institutional characteristics and student engagement (Kuh and Pascarella 2004; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005).

3. Students at faith-based colleges engage in spiritual practices more and gain more in this area, but participate less often in certain other activities associated with liberal education outcomes.

As expected, students at the twenty-nine faith-based schools worship much more frequently and report deepening their sense of spirituality to a greater degree than students at other institutions. This is true even though other denominationally-affiliated colleges are combined with nondenominational institutions in the comparison group.

However, students at faith-based colleges have far fewer serious conversations with students whose religious, political, and personal beliefs and values differ from their own. This is not surprising, given the characteristics of students who matriculate and persist. Because the student bodies at many of these institutions are relatively homogenous, students have less contact with people whose values, attitudes, and beliefs are very different from their own. As a result, the campus culture tends to reinforce a fairly narrow range of thought and action.

The findings also indicate a tendency for students at faith-based colleges to engage less in deep learning activities and to gain less in developing practical competence and general education outcomes. However, the effect sizes associated with these differences are small. To the extent there are educational and social tradeoffs for attending a faith-based college, especially in terms of outcomes traditionally associated with liberal learning, the collegiate experience of students at faith-based colleges warrant a more thorough examination.

What to make of this?

For those concerned that the resurgence in participating in worship, prayer, meditation, and related practices might have a dampening effect on liberal learning and engaging in other educationally purposeful activities, the answer from this study is “not to worry.” Spirituality-enhancing activities do not seem to hinder, and may even have mildly salutary effects on, engagement in educationally purposeful activities and desired outcomes of college. In fact, participation in religious activities is positively correlated with interacting with students with very different religious and political beliefs and personal values, though the effect size is trivial. In addition, involvement in spirituality-enhancing activities during college is strongly linked to a deepened sense of spirituality across all types of students. These patterns are pretty much the same across different types and sizes of institutions and major fields. The one clear exception is faith-based colleges where students on average are highly involved in spirituality-enhancing activities, but have less contact with students from different backgrounds and engage less often in deep learning activities.

It stands to reason that colleges with a faith-based mission attract students who are predisposed to participating in religious and spirituality-enhancing and related activities and reinforce these behaviors after they
matriculate. Also, students who perceive their campus environment to be supportive of their needs and interests are more likely to engage in spiritual practices and to report deepening their sense of spirituality to a greater degree. This leads us to wonder: What can colleges do to make their campus climates more supportive of students’ nonacademic needs and interests and to involve them in religious and spiritual activities in ways that are compatible with their interests and further liberal education aims? Do some faith-based colleges engage their students in deep learning activities to a greater degree than others, thereby attaining a better balance in terms of religiosity and liberal arts education? Do some public institutions have an especially hospitable campus climate that encourages student participation in spirituality-enhancing activities for those seeking them?

The changing nature and characteristics of college students in virtually every sector, coupled with the rising prominence of religiosity and liberal arts education, underscore the importance of answering these and related questions. Without such information, efforts to improve teaching and learning will almost certainly have limited impact on student development.

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

NOTE
1 The research reported in this paper was conducted with the support from the Teagle Foundation. However, the views expressed in this paper are solely those of the authors, not Teagle.

REFERENCES
What is the educational purpose of the curricular breadth encouraged at liberal arts institutions? Presumably we want students to acquire a variety of skills and knowledge, but we often claim that most skills are taught “across the curriculum,” and liberal arts colleges tend to downplay disciplinary information when listing their educational goals. In this article, we argue that one important educational outcome should be for students to develop accurate perceptions of the disciplines they study.

The research described here originated when Elmore and Prentice were seniors at Grinnell College. Both were pursuing double majors across academic divisions (chemistry/English and biology/sociology). Both regularly noticed—and were disturbed by—negative and inaccurate impressions of their major fields held by students studying other disciplines. They became interested in C. P. Snow’s concept of “two cultures” (1988, 3), which suggests that “the intellectual life of the whole of western society is increasingly being split” into sciences and humanities. Therefore, we designed a study that would measure students’ perceptions of the various disciplines they study.
liberal arts disciplines and see whether they changed during the four years of college.

Methods

The research was conducted during spring semester of 1998 at Grinnell College. Grinnell is a small, highly selective, liberal arts college in Iowa. It has no distribution requirements, but student majors are distributed fairly evenly across the three divisions of humanities, natural sciences, and social sciences, and about 85 percent of graduates take at least three courses in each division.

First, twenty seniors representing various majors and seven first-year students were interviewed and asked to sort Grinnell's academic departments into piles of subjects with similar characteristics. These students were also asked to explain their clusters and to describe the characteristics of each. Six groups of departments were consistently described as similar and treated as clusters in the later survey research:

- biology/chemistry/physics (natural sciences)
- math/computer science (math/CS)
- music/art/theater (fine arts)
- Russian/Chinese/Spanish/French/German (languages)
- sociology/anthropology/American studies (soc/anthro)
- religious studies/philosophy (rel/philo)

The remaining departments were treated separately because they were not consistently grouped with any other fields: classics, economics, English, history, political science, and psychology.

Next, 108 seniors and 102 first-years responded to a survey, using a seven-point scale to rate each discipline or cluster according to the following parameters:

- helps with understanding people
- deals with feelings and emotions
- involves creativity
- deals with developing theories
- requires a special talent
- is inherently challenging
- deals with concrete facts
- develops communication skills
- makes an important contribution to society
- is applicable outside academia
- is important for an individual's education (regardless of major)

The students surveyed were representative of their classes in terms of gender and (in the case of seniors) major field.

If one of the goals of a broad liberal arts curriculum is to ensure that graduates understand the various fields of study, then a survey such as ours becomes an outcomes assessment instrument. Since not every student experiences every discipline, or even every cluster of disciplines, to use this study for assessment purposes we needed to know the course-taking history of each individual respondent. Trosset (then Grinnell’s director of institutional research) linked seniors’ survey responses to their transcript data. She then calculated each student’s total credits in each disciplinary cluster and their average grade in each area studied. Seniors were divided into two groups for analysis—those with zero credits in that area, and those with twelve or more credits (at least three courses). Seniors with between one and eleven credits in an area were eliminated from that analysis. We also collected survey responses from a small number of faculty members on their own disciplines. Our assumption is that the more students study a particular subject, the more closely their perceptions of it should resemble those of its practitioners.

Results

Using consensus analysis (a statistical technique that measures levels of agreement within populations), we found that, despite some individual variation, Grinnell students could be considered a single culture with respect to their perceptions of various disciplines. There was general agreement across academic divisions and between the two class years. Thus, though differences were perceived between disciplines, it was not the case that natural science, social science, and humanities students had different overall perceptions.

How, then, does this culture perceive the various disciplines? With respect to each attribute, there were statistically significant differences between some disciplines (here we used ANOVAs and paired t-tests). The table below shows an overall summary of the data.

There are several things we should notice about these results. Some of these perceptions are perfectly accurate. Sociology and anthropology are about understanding people, and math is not about emotions. Likewise, some of these perceptions are false. Perhaps
most glaringly, math and computer science largely do not deal with facts, but rather with theories and/or processes. It may be that students are confusing the existence of right and wrong answers with a focus on facts and information.

In the following sections, we focus on a few particularly intriguing aspects of students’ perceptions.

The “humanness” of disciplines. An interesting pattern was revealed by a factor analysis, a statistical technique that identifies clusters of questions that tend to be answered in similar ways. We found a very strong association among five of the questions: contribution to society, fostering communication skills, helping to understand people, involving feelings and emotions, and involving creativity. The association among these questions suggests that they were all measuring something the students saw as related. Our interpretation is that these questions all relate (positively or negatively) to how much the students saw the various disciplines as being concerned with “the human condition.” It appears that Grinnell students tend to apply some category of “humanness” when they perceive and assign value to academic disciplines.

Taking more credits in some disciplines was associated with an increase in their perceived “humanness” (especially history, sociology/anthropology, and psychology). This was not true of others; in fact, math/CS and religious studies/philosophy were actually seen as less “human-related” by seniors who had taken more courses than by those who had taken none. (Grades did not particularly correlate with any aspect of students’ perceptions.)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Helps understand people</th>
<th>Involves emotion</th>
<th>Involves creativity</th>
<th>Develops theories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Soc/anthro (6.2)</td>
<td>Fine arts (6.6)</td>
<td>Fine arts (6.9)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (6.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology (6.1)</td>
<td>Psychology (5.9)</td>
<td>English (5.8)</td>
<td>Psychology (5.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel/philo (5.8)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (5.6)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (4.7)</td>
<td>Math/CS (5.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History (5.7)</td>
<td>English (5.1)</td>
<td>Math/CS (4.5)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (5.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine arts (5.6)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (5.1)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (4.4)</td>
<td>Economics (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages (5.3)</td>
<td>History (4.2)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (4.3)</td>
<td>Political science (5.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (5.0)</td>
<td>Classics (4.0)</td>
<td>Psychology (4.2)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political science (4.7)</td>
<td>Languages (3.9)</td>
<td>Classics (4.0)</td>
<td>History (4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics (4.2)</td>
<td>Political science (3.5)</td>
<td>Languages (3.8)</td>
<td>Fine arts (3.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics (3.9)</td>
<td>Economics (2.4)</td>
<td>Political science (3.8)</td>
<td>English (3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences (3.7)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (2.1)</td>
<td>History (3.7)</td>
<td>Classics (3.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math/CS (2.4)</td>
<td>Math/CS (1.7)</td>
<td>Economics (3.3)</td>
<td>Languages (2.8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Requires a special talent</th>
<th>Inherently challenging</th>
<th>Involves facts</th>
<th>Develops communication skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fine arts (6.2)</td>
<td>Math/CS (6.2)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (6.3)</td>
<td>Languages (6.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math/CS (5.0)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (6.2)</td>
<td>Math/CS (6.3)</td>
<td>English (6.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages (4.9)</td>
<td>Languages (5.4)</td>
<td>History (5.3)</td>
<td>Fine arts (5.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences (4.5)</td>
<td>Fine arts (5.3)</td>
<td>Economics (5.1)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (5.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (4.4)</td>
<td>English (5.0)</td>
<td>Languages (4.9)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics (3.9)</td>
<td>Economics (5.0)</td>
<td>Psychology (4.1)</td>
<td>Psychology (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics (3.9)</td>
<td>Classics (4.9)</td>
<td>Political science (4.1)</td>
<td>Political science (4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History (3.6)</td>
<td>History (4.7)</td>
<td>Classics (3.8)</td>
<td>History (4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political science (3.5)</td>
<td>Political science (4.7)</td>
<td>English (3.7)</td>
<td>Classics (4.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel/philo (3.4)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (4.7)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (3.6)</td>
<td>Economics (3.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology (3.4)</td>
<td>Psychology (4.6)</td>
<td>Fine arts (3.1)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (3.4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc/anthro (3.1)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (4.1)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (2.6)</td>
<td>Math/CS (3.1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Students believe some fields are more essential for everyone’s education. Students see some disciplines as more worthwhile than others. In general, the fields seen as more important for everyone to study are those widely taught in high schools—English, history, sciences, math—and disciplines often encountered for the first time at the college level are seen as less important, such as psychology and political science. The fact that seniors as well as first-year students held these views suggests that perceptions that students brought to college were largely unaltered by their experiences on campus.

Transcript analyses do reveal an association between students’ perceptions of the importance of studying certain disciplines and their enrollment in these fields. First-years and seniors with no credits in a subject rated some academic fields as much more important than others (from English at 6.0 to sociology/anthropology at 4.1). However, seniors with twelve or more credits in various subjects tended to rate those they studied as of very similar importance (mostly in the 5.x range). We cannot, of course, say whether they learned the importance of the fields by studying them, or whether they first decided the fields were important and studied them for that reason. In either case, it appears that a significant subset of students does embrace a model of liberal education during college. Further study of those who do not adopt liberal arts ideals might help with understanding what it takes to change their perceptions.

Students believe some fields contribute more to society. Generally, the fields seen as making a contribution to society are those seen as applicable outside academia. These include the natural sciences, math/CS, the fine arts, and economics. In our preliminary interviews, students identified various “good” contributions of the sciences and math, such as medicine and various technologies, but also mentioned “bad” ones like the design of weapons. Economics is presumably seen as related to finance and investment. Some students we interviewed mentioned that the fine arts are important because they make the world more beautiful.

Some disciplines are perceived to be more challenging. Some disciplines are fairly consistently seen as either hard or easy. In particular, math/CS and the natural sciences stand out in students’ minds as the most challenging.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contributes to society</th>
<th>Applicable outside academia</th>
<th>Important part of education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natural sciences (6.2)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (5.7)</td>
<td>English (5.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math/CS (5.8)</td>
<td>Math/CS (5.7)</td>
<td>History (5.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine arts (5.7)</td>
<td>Economics (5.7)</td>
<td>Natural sciences (5.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics (5.6)</td>
<td>Fine arts (5.5)</td>
<td>Fine arts (5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English (5.2)</td>
<td>Languages (5.3)</td>
<td>Math/CS (5.0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychology (5.0)</td>
<td>English (5.2)</td>
<td>Languages (4.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>History (5.0)</td>
<td>Psychology (5.0)</td>
<td>Economics (4.7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political science (5.0)</td>
<td>Political science (4.9)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Languages (4.9)</td>
<td>Soc/anthro (4.3)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (4.5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Soc/anthro (4.7)</td>
<td>History (4.3)</td>
<td>Political science (4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rel/philo (4.5)</td>
<td>Rel/philo (3.0)</td>
<td>Psychology (4.2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classics (3.8)</td>
<td>Classics (2.7)</td>
<td>Classics (3.6)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Interestingly, students often espoused negative views of their own fields. For example, social science division majors (as a group) tended to describe those disciplines as the least challenging, whereas science division majors did not think that science was less challenging (which they might have done on the grounds that perhaps it comes easily to them personally). Math is actually seen as slightly more challenging by seniors who avoided it than by those who studied it (6.6 compared to 6.1), and we know from other evidence that some of those who choose to avoid it do so because they find it difficult. In contrast, the fine arts are seen as more challenging by those who did study them (5.7 compared to 4.9), and the same is true of sociology/anthropology (4.6 compared to 3.7).

Comments about special talents tended to reflect the same patterns as those heard anecdotally: “I’m not good at math, or foreign languages” or “She’s very musically talented.” A recent study at Hamilton College provides a more detailed look at the concept of special talents. In an interview study, Sweet (2004) found that, while students could list the components of “writing skills” and talk about how they had acquired them, they were generally unable to describe “quantitative skills.” Even more troubling, both those who excelled at math and those who feared it tended to see it as unlearnable, saying things like “you can either do it or you can’t.”

Multiple linear regressions showed that the Grinnell students associated challenge with fields they believed to involve either facts or creativity. Fields that help with understanding people, such as sociology/anthropology and psychology, are not considered challenging. Interestingly, helping to understand people is not seen as correlated with making a contribution to society or with being an important part of everyone’s education. Though distressing to Prentice and Trosset as social scientists, this finding is intriguingly consistent with a finding from an unrelated survey Trosset conducted to evaluate the training activities for student residence hall advisers. There was a tendency for these students to feel that a lot of training was unnecessary because just being a good person should be enough to make them effective in their jobs. As one student put it, “We’re caring people, so we already know how to talk to someone who’s depressed.” As mental health professionals know, most people do not know how to talk to depressed people, but this student’s remark reflects a common perception that these activities are not challenging skills that require training.

Students espouse a narrow definition of creativity. Students seemed to define creativity narrowly as the production of a creative work; the fine arts and English (creative writing) were considered more creative than other fields. The limits of this definition are seen in the fact that fields believed to develop theories were seen as noncreative, although developing theories is a creative activity. Respondents also rarely felt that fields dealing with facts were creative. Overall, students seemed to think that certain fields would deal with facts or theories, and others would deal with emotions or creativity.

One of the few things that differed between first-year and senior responses was that seniors thought natural sciences and math/CS were significantly more creative than first-years did. They also thought that math/CS dealt less with facts. This was true for both seniors who did and did not take courses in these areas. Although we cannot explain this finding, it is possible that this attitude could be learned.
from other students who were studying these fields. Conversely, seniors who took courses in sociology or anthropology saw those fields as significantly more creative than those who had not (5.2 compared to 4.3). Faculty members in all disciplines surveyed saw their own disciplines as highly creative, reflecting what happens at the high levels of any academic field.

**Implications**

Overall, the students’ perceptions are not so different from what we might expect to hear from the general public. However, half of our respondents had already received four years of a liberal arts education. Is this what we should expect? Why are these perceptions—and misperceptions—important? How do they affect the quality of the education we provide, and of the society in which our graduates participate?

Students seem to arrive at college already holding some deep-seated views of disciplines. Clearly these views will affect their curricular choices, which will limit their exposure to disciplines they already perceive negatively (and perhaps inaccurately). In interviews with senior humanities majors who had avoided the sciences, Trosset found that many held negative misperceptions of those fields: as uncreative with one right answer and no room for new ideas; as cold, distant, and unconcerned about people; as very specialized and unrelated to their lives; and as pointless for anyone not planning a scientific career. About half said they had actively resisted pressure from their advisers to take more science. We wonder whether higher education’s increasing emphasis on interdisciplinary courses will affect student perceptions. These initiatives could provide opportunities for students to see greater similarities between fields—although negative student perceptions could limit their effectiveness.

The nature of faculty advising can also be affected by such perceptions. A 1967 study by Lionel Lewis found that faculty members in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences at a large university had different ideas about the purpose of a college education. For example, those in the sciences were more likely than others to believe an education should “provide vocational training and skills related to career,” while humanities faculty were more likely to believe an education should “provide deepening and broadening experiences.”

One thing not often mentioned at liberal arts colleges is that, even at these institutions, not all faculty members are themselves liberally educated, and not all espouse the values of the liberal arts. In the previously mentioned interviews with science-avoidant students, several said their advisers had not pressured them to take any science. In a related study in which faculty members evaluated various student curricula, some individuals indicated that they did not particularly value multidisciplinary breadth. Humanities faculty members were more likely than others to tolerate an absence of natural science courses, while natural science professors were more likely to tolerate an absence of social sciences.

Even more important, every day citizens make decisions that affect how liberal arts disciplines will be taught and used, whether or not they know very much about them. Politicians make decisions about what kinds of research will be funded, and how our society will interact with other cultures. Business executives decide how technologies will be applied and made available. School boards decide what children will study. Professional schools decide what kinds of undergraduate curricula prepare students to enter business, engineering, medicine, and the law. Misperceptions and negative views of disciplines can easily lead to actions and policies that are anathemas to those of us committed to the liberal arts. As educators, we need to be very concerned with students who only ever take one class in a subject area, and what understandings of that subject they achieve. The pervasive student misperceptions of academic disciplines described in this study suggest that this type of assessment is very important for liberal arts institutions.

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

**REFERENCES:**


The Forest, Not the Tree(s)

The Plight of the Generalist

The great naturalist Edward O. Wilson’s (1998) recent plea for the “consilience” of knowledge should strike a chord in the heart of every generalist. Invoking the unfinished agenda of the Enlightenment, Wilson has called for a rapprochement among the several branches of learning so that they can be viewed as interrelated and constituting a whole. He asks scholars to step back and see the forest instead of their small strand of trees. Such a summons may sound utopian in the light of the knowledge explosion of the twentieth century. Yet at the same time it is a plea for a kind of common sense in our endeavors.

The application to life in the university should be obvious. The “disease” of specialization has long since infected every discipline of academia. Wilson notes acerbically its effect on scholarship and teaching when he points out that “the faculties of higher education around the world are a congeries of experts. To be an original scholar is to be a highly specialized world authority in a polyglot Calcutta of similarly focused world authorities” (1998, 41). To adapt an old truism, today’s specialist is someone who knows more and more about less and less.

The continuing fragmentation, even within disciplines, has resulted in a situation where dialogue among disparate faculty is a rarity. In disciplines like philosophy, which ideally might create connections where specialties can cross-fertilize, experts often talk only to fellow experts about trivial points of analysis that remind one of nothing so much as medieval Scholasticism’s reduction to questions like, how many angels can dance on the head of a pin? Discussion of the big questions that used to reach an educated public is a thing of the past.

The generalist syndrome

For the generalist, the true “forest gazer” who does not have a permanent home in any one strand of trees, the situation has become more difficult than ever. I, for one, have experienced an increasing difficulty in getting published over the years since the ideas that interest me are of a general nature and often overlap. They result in extended, reflective essays rather than the narrowly focused or statistical studies that dominate journals today. The scholarship behind them is broad, rather than deep. I confess to partial blame for this state...
of affairs. It seems that every time I set out to mine a particularly fertile area, the enticement of other growth around it proves irresistible and I find myself wandering here and there, fascinated by how many separate paths connect.

Perhaps all generalists in the academy suffer from a kind of intellectual disorder. Instead of picking out one little niche and remaining securely in it for the remainder of a career, we have the damnable penchant to wander about, to always be intrigued with the larger picture. What I call the “generalist syndrome” is certainly not a rewarding condition in today’s academic world.

One rarely becomes a generalist out of specific intent. More often, the mode is adopted due to a restless intellectual curiosity, which less flatteringly might be called a lack of mental discipline. This is something that has dogged me since my undergraduate days, when I had far more interest in reading widely than focusing intently in a single area. Reading was always the key: the marvel of a world within a book. Even when I did focus, that territory would sooner or later light up into a great field, revealing patterns and cross-connections. Before long, I had before my eyes a multidimensional forest instead of the little grove given me to tend. I found myself inept at multiple choice and fill-in-the-blank questions. (I doubt if, even today, I would do any better at these exams than many of my own students.) Essay exams were more to my liking, but even here I tended to wander afield.

The truth is that once a person sets out on the journey of self-education in the liberal arts, conventional exams are merely an occupational hazard. Journal jottings and conversations with individuals of similar bent work much better. I studied simply to find out, to understand, to discover more aspects of the adventure taking place in the mind. Each book led down a trail to others. Eventually, an insatiable desire is born to read everything worthwhile—a thirst that matriculation through the halls of academia can fertilize but never encompass. But it was in those early days that the generalist was born. I constantly saw connections, interrelationships, veins on a map spread out everywhere. I saw the forest, often missing the trees. And except for wanting to write lucidly, I was not interested in learning the “methodology” of a particular discipline. A habit of seeing was established that persisted straight through graduate school and into my teaching life.

**Teaching as a generalist**

Fate also has played a part. I was hired to teach in a small college, a professional school, where humanities were considered “ancillary courses” taken (or endured) by students intently focused on pursuing a career in the health sciences. Intending only a brief stay while I worked on my doctoral degree (in English, but spanning philosophy and curriculum design), I eventually decided to remain there, largely because I couldn’t find any other position that offered such a broad spectrum of courses to teach. In the early years (the late 1970s), since the department was small and understaffed, I found myself teaching a variety of English courses. In time, the range expanded to include Introduction to Philosophy, Ethics/Bio-ethics, History and Philosophy of Education, Argument and Critical Thought, Philosophy of Science, and Intellectual Heritage. As any generalist teacher can verify, being stretched like this is never boring. But we often skate on thin ice, and much midnight oil is used up in preparing for the next day.

Also, I had taken up the challenge to move my students to see learning as I did. Many were tightly focused types, homing in on a career. I pushed them to expand their horizons and to explore their humanity, something students in liberal arts colleges perhaps do more naturally. I wanted history, philosophy, literature, education to come alive in them as they had in me. The reward in teaching relatively unlettered undergraduates is that almost everything is new to them; it can also be the bane. Robert Bartlett has recently complained of how uncaring students today are of the past: “They know nothing of Pericles and little of Churchill and so cannot compare the utterances of our democratic statesmen with those of the ancient Athenians or even of modern British leaders. Pyrrhic victories, Quixotic undertakings and Socratic irony are lost on them...” (2003, 35).

All true! But as a committed generalist, I have always wanted to change that. For example, in the Intellectual Heritage program.
(a generalist’s dream, if offered as an elective over two semesters) the trick was to get the class to see things not in dry isolation but, rather, suffused with richness, caught up in the whole pattern of movement that is a civilization’s progress. The pursuit of the whole had made the learning of the particulars palatable for me, and I wanted it to be that way for my students.

I remembered that the famous personalities I encountered as an undergraduate were no longer remote once I saw them against the background of their times. They came alive then, rising almost viscerally in the space of an evening’s narrative read. I wanted my students to taste the air of those Athenian evenings when Socrates engaged his young friends in conversation; to feel Augustine’s natural despair writing in his last days as Roman civilization fell to pieces around his ears; to note the astonishing presence and heroism of Joan of Arc, the massive faith of Luther, the zealous waste of factional and religious wars, the sarcasm and outrage of Voltaire, the lucidity of Enlightenment thought, and the rise of science.

This is not to say I was always successful. Enthusiasm is certainly admirable, perhaps indispensable, in a teacher, but it does not automatically result in a rapt classroom. Sometimes my attempts were met with boredom; more often they were met with the distraction induced by the pressures of their technical curriculum. Many a late afternoon was spent with a colleague in the next office commiserating over the failure to move our students to care about these things the way we did.

Yet it was never a total loss. The supreme pleasure in teaching always remains the same: to see, even in one student’s eyes, the flash of recognition, a mind coming alive, the emotions engaged, some small explosion taking place. To observe it in a group of students or even, however briefly, in an entire class can make one forget all the near misses. The same holds true if, during the course of a semester, just a few students stop up after class or come into the office to chat about something that was said or discussed. Occasionally, one or two will put their major on hold—damn the torpedoes!—to invest themselves right now, mentally and emotionally, as I did back then. Small droppings like these are nectar to the generalist teacher.

**The generalist’s place in the educational process**

From my own experience, I suggest the generalist’s approach to teaching is similar to what Alfred North Whitehead long ago called the stage of romance. As he put it, “romantic emotion is essentially the excitement consequent on the transition from the bare facts to the first realizations of the import of their unexplored relationships” (1949, 29). In other words, it is about making connections. Often, this is as far as one gets with undergraduates; the next two stages, precision and synthesis, remain untouched. But creating that excitement, helping them to see the lay of the land, is an indispensable first step in learning. Unfortunately, however, it is the step ignored by too many teachers today who feel they must “get through the material.”

To follow through on Whitehead’s stages in the learning process, a course or sequence of courses in a given discipline can be set up so that the second stage, precision, involves the specialist. Here exactitude, focus, and analysis are central. But this crucial stage can bog down in isolated facts or ideas unless preceded by the romantic. To quote Whitehead again, “it is evident that a stage of precision is barren without a previous stage of romance. Unless there are facts which have already been vaguely apprehended in their broad generality, the previous analysis . . . is simply a series of meaningless statements about bare facts, produced artificially and without any relevance” (29).

Whitehead’s third stage, synthesis, renders an integrated view of the forest. Given enough time in a course sequence for drawing things together, this stage allows students to comprehend what they have learned. “It is,” Whitehead explains, “a return to romanticism with added advantage of classified ideas and relevant technique” (30). Here, too, the generalist can assist in the process of deepening students’ understanding.

Overall, it is the generalist teacher who can make education truly interesting since he or she has the scope and breadth and, probably much more than the specialist, is aware of the rhythms of learning. It is frightening, as Bartlett points out, how many students today are bored by their education, even in their majors. Again and again in many schools, and certainly in mine, students drudge through their courses and memorize for tests, play the game of grades, with no active, enthusiastic involvement in their
learning. They merely wait for it to yield the rewards of graduation and employment. Yet long ago Whitehead admonished us to “banish the idea of a mythical, far off end of education. The pupil must be continually enjoying some fruition and starting fresh—if the teaching is stimulating in exact proportion to his success in satisfying the rhythmic cravings of his pupils” (30).

If anyone can make this happen for students, surely it is the generalist teacher who has the broadest vision of what a liberal education should be and who is best equipped to transfer that vision in an undergraduate classroom. For the generalist is more likely to reflect on the forms of pedagogy as a craft than the specialist who often comes to the university not only lacking classroom experience, but also with a main priority directed toward research and publication.

**Overall value of the generalist**

At my university, to take humanities courses is not the main reason the students are here. Humanistic education was not on their list of priorities when they applied for admission. Understandably, members of my department envy those science professors who work in depth with graduate students. It can be frustrating always to cast the net wide rather than going in deeply at any one place. Also, keeping up with class preparations and staying reasonably abreast of the literature, while at the same time trying to publish, can be draining; care must be taken not to burn out. And since there is little likelihood that undergraduates will trip us up, we must resist the temptation to cut corners. The generalist lives with these drawbacks and challenges.

Yet who better than the generalist to help students move out of their small world and encompass larger units of time; to help them make connections among the great names in philosophy, politics, history, religion, science, the arts; to catalyze them to enter into the clash of ideas and personalities; to stretch them so that they see beyond the trees to the forest? Seen in this light, the generalist has something very valuable to offer today’s students—especially in professional schools, where they are locked so tightly into their majors. Students need to hear from a maverick who inhabits several domains, a jack/jane-of-all-trades (even if master of none). They need to be exposed to faculty who have a panoramic view of learning, who can pull the essential ideas from a range of disciplines together, who can, at least temporarily, push students out of their tiny niche and help them view the larger world of which their specialty is but a part.

More than anything else, students need to see connections between different branches of learning. Who better than the resident generalist to open such a perspective for them?

Beyond the walls of academe, there may be vital application to the “real” world. As Edward O. Wilson points out, “most of the issues that vex humanity daily . . . can be solved only by integrating knowledge from the natural sciences with that of the social sciences and the humanities. Only fluency across the boundaries will provide a clear view of the world as it really is, not as it appears through the lens of ideology and religious dogma, or as a myopic response to immediate need” (62). Is anyone positioned better than the committed generalist to make a contribution to such an endeavor?

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

---

**REFERENCES**


AAC&U BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Chair
Ronald A. Crutcher
President, Wheaton College

Past Chair
Elisabeth A. Zinser
President, Southern Oregon University

Vice Chair
Robert A. Corrigan
President, San Francisco State University

Treasurer
R. Stanton Hales
President, The College of Wooster

Ex Officio/Chair, ACAD
Virginia M. Coombs
Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs,
University of Wisconsin-River Falls

Sharon Stephens Brehm
Senior Advisor to the President, Indiana University

Anthony Carnevale
Senior Fellow, National Center on Education and the Economy

Christopher C. Dahl
President, State University of New York College at Geneseo

John J. DeGioia
President, Georgetown University

Rosemary DePaolo
Chancellor, University of North Carolina at Wilmington

Bobby Fong
President, Butler University

Kati Haycock
Director, The Education Trust

Shirley S. Kenny
President, State University of New York at Stony Brook

Elaine P. Maimon
Chancellor, University of Alaska Anchorage

Gary Orfield
Professor of Education and Social Policy, Harvard University

Eduardo J. Padrón
District President, Miami Dade College

Thomas L. “Les” Purce
President, The Evergreen State College

Arnold Rampersad
Senior Associate Dean for the Humanities,
Stanford University

Jamienne S. Studley
President, Public Advocates, Inc.

Daniel F. Sullivan
President, St. Lawrence University

Beverly Daniel Tatum
President, Spelman College

Carolyn G. Williams
President, City University of New York Bronx Community College

LE EDITORIAL ADVISORY BOARD

Norman Adler
Yeshiva University

Johnnella E. Butler
Spelman College

Mitchell J. Chang
University of California–Los Angeles

Julie Ellison
University of Michigan

Daniel Fallon
Carnegie Corporation of New York

Walter E. Fluker
Morehouse College

Andrew T. Ford
Wabash College

Tori Haring-Smith
Washington and Jefferson College

R. Stanton Hales
College of Wooster

Samuel M. Hines Jr.
College of Charleston

Patricia Hutchings
The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

George Kuh
Indiana University at Bloomington

Roberta S. Mattheus
City University of New York Brooklyn College

Jack Meacham
SUNY–Buffalo

Jo Ellen Parker
Great Lakes Colleges Association

Bridget Purton
Ursuline Provincialate; editor of Liberal Education 1993–2004

Sheldon Rothblatt
University of California–Berkeley

Nancy S. Shapiro
University System of Maryland

Peter Stearns
George Mason University

Harold Wechsler
University of Rochester

Neil B. Weissman
Dickinson College

Cynthia Wilson
League for Innovation in the Community College
AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,000 accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size.

AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Its mission is to reinforce the collective commitment to liberal education at both the national and local levels and to help individual institutions keep the quality of student learning at the core of their work as they evolve to meet new economic and social challenges.

Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.