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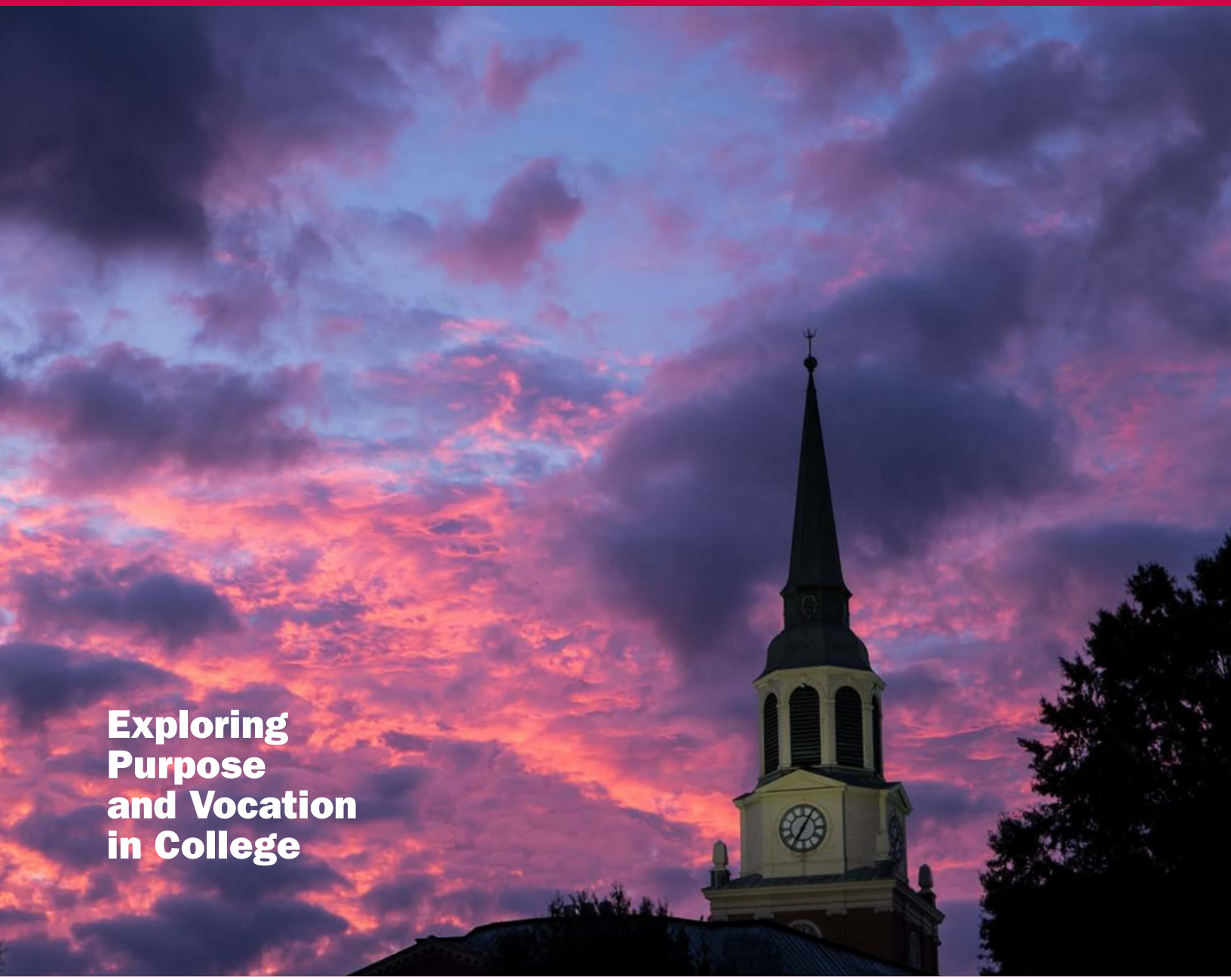

Exploring Purpose and Vocation in College

ALSO INSIDE:

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Liberal Education

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EXPLORING PURPOSE AND VOCATION IN COLLEGE

The Lilly programs demonstrate that it is possible to recover the formative power of liberal education, even in a time when fixation upon its merely instrumental value threatens to diminish the promise of higher education as a whole
—WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN

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FROM 1818 R STREET, NW

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FEATURED TOPIC

COVER:
Wake Forest University

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PERSPECTIVES

■ ■ ■

MY VIEW

What Fires Should Educators Light?

As I was pondering what I wanted to say in my President's Message for this issue of Liberal Education, *a colleague sent me a wonderfully compelling essay by Diane White Husic that communicates beautifully—and from the perspective of a teaching faculty member—what we at AAC&U see as a primary purpose both of the Liberal Education and America's Promise initiative and of liberal education at its best. With Professor Husic's consent, I am sharing with you some of her words about helping students engage big questions, together with my own strong enthusiasm for helping students connect their learning with larger societal challenges and needed change. Because Professor Husic's essay is long, we have abridged it to fit this space; you can find the longer version online at http://anewprosperity.blogspot.com/2014/03/what-fires-should-educators-light.html.*—CAROL GEARY SCHNEIDER

Guest Message

WILLIAM BUTLER YEATS famously said that "education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Good educators really "get" the first half of this quote. Rote memorization of facts does little to inspire students. We doubt that it does much for learning either, preferring to focus instead on developing critical thinking skills and tools for lifelong independent learning. But while few would question the value of a focus on critical thinking, we do debate our role as educators in lighting fires.

Throughout my teaching career, I have been a proponent of providing opportunities for students to engage in undergraduate research—intense experiences in which students are co-creators of knowledge, rather than simply vessels to be filled with facts and ideas that others have already published. It was the transformative opportunity of doing independent research that lit my own fire as a first-generation student, so much so that I went on to graduate school to pursue a research-focused career.

As both an undergraduate and graduate student in science, I was trained to believe that the process of doing science is an objective one. But this never totally made sense to me. What makes science so exciting *and* so important is that it provides us with the ability to solve complex problems or to create technology that can be used to improve the quality of life. However, as we learn those secrets of nature and transform them into tools to manipulate elements of our natural world, including humans, we are faced with tremendous ethical dilemmas and a realization that the information we learn can be exploited and used in ways never intended. Knowledge comes with power, something that is rarely objective.

So, as science educators, do we stick to the facts and theories and "the" scientific method (as if it is a single linear process)? Do we continue to perpetuate the myth that science is not subjective at times or could never be used for questionable purposes? I think not. It is important to teach about the social context of science and to critically evaluate the outcomes of scientific research.

My personal career path in science and education has certainly not been a linear one. Graduate school was followed by a stint in cancer research when HIV/AIDS first emerged as a new disease within the gay community. How can you stay objective when you attend a conference in San Francisco and walk to the venue through crowds of terrified men facing an early death and begging you for information on what advances in science will help them? To this day, I show my students the film *And the Band Played On* so that they might know the early and ugly history of this disease—the science, the cultural context, the politics, the religious fanaticism, and the fear. I find that I can't simply stick to the facts about the biochemistry of this disease.

I now work in the areas of ecological restoration (which involves value judgments about what to "restore to") and climate change. Today, it is the *scientists* who are fearful—this time not about a disease, but about the fate of the planet. They find themselves caught up in a bizarre social frenzy that is fraught with controversy, public distrust, media manipulation, and politics. Today, whether it be climate change, evolution, nutrition, or genetic engineering, science has been flung onto political battlegrounds.

Should I ignore this in my teaching?

The American Association for the Advancement of Science concluded more than twenty years ago, in *The Liberal Arts of Science: Agenda for Action* (Washington, DC: AAAS, 1990), that scientific goals to solve society's problems are fostered by a greater emphasis on liberal education. In other words, it is the liberal education of students that will help move science out of the laboratory and into practice for the common good.

At a time when society is faced with the tremendous challenges of poverty and growing inequality, global environmental problems, food security, new and emerging diseases, scarcity of resources, and conflict, more than ever we need not only science and technology, but also innovative thinkers, advocates, and activists. We need educated people who aren't content with simply finding a job, but are still idealistic enough to want to change the world for the better. In other words, we need higher education to lead the charge in lighting fires, to be inspiring the next generation of problem solvers who will work at the front lines of these grand challenges of the twenty-first century.

A few years ago, I participated in a march in Washington about the Keystone XL pipeline project. When I came back to campus and told my students about the experience, it was obvious that they were shocked that I would do something like this (it isn't what scientists do) and fearful that it was my expectation of them to do something similar (it wasn't). We talked about their obvious aversion to political activism. Some noted that such activity would be a black mark on their record, thus hurting their chances for securing a job in the future. Most didn't have a clue as to what the Keystone Pipeline XL project was.

Since then, I have been thinking a lot about these messy issues. My work with the United Nations on climate change has taught me that while science might get countries to the negotiating table, policy and multilateral agreements will ultimately be battles about economics, cultural differences, national priorities, and politics. Nothing about the process is objective or logical. But the process is filled with passionate people who care about the future of the planet, or at least their countries, and about protecting their people and national interests.

Over the past few years, we have brought some fascinating speakers to campus. Some were involved in the civil rights movement (Jesse Jackson and John Lewis). Winona LaDuke talked about environmental and cultural sustainability initiatives on reservations. Students wanted to know how she dealt with the label of "activist." Her response: "I don't consider myself an activist, just a responsible citizen." Perfect. Biologist and author Sandra Steingraber spoke of the need for a liberal arts education in order to understand an issue like natural gas extraction (fracking) and to be able to formulate an educated position about whether it is a good idea or not. Yes, she is an activist, but that wasn't her message on our campus. Each of these speakers illustrated to students what it means to be engaged in a cause, to care about *something*.

Aren't issues like inequality, the impact of the forces of capitalism, the consequences of past and present exploitations, social and environmental justice, clean energy (or energy independence), and climate change the very ones that we should be lighting fires over? If not those of us in higher education, then who? Many colleges and universities have somewhere in their mission statement a line about preparing students for "service for the common good." If we aren't tackling the big questions of our time, what "common good" are we working toward? And who decides? These aren't questions that are objective, or ones that any science I know can answer.

My role as an educator is not only to teach students about science and to give them experiences in research, but also to inspire in them a desire to be socially responsible and use their knowledge and experience to solve some of the world's most challenging problems. A lofty ambition, perhaps, but in my mind, an essential one.—DIANE WHITE HUSIC, *professor of biology and chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Moravian College*

FROM THE EDITOR

On hearing the word "vocation" used in the context of American higher education today, many may think first of the sort of occupation for which narrow technical training is required or perhaps more broadly of an unwelcome "vocationalization" of undergraduate programs. Those who don't, who think instead of vocation as a calling to wholeness and of promising applications of this concept as a framework for undergraduate liberal education, likely have in mind the Lilly Endowment's Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV).

From 1999 to 2002, the Lilly Endowment provided funding to a total of eighty-eight colleges and universities that, both singly and in ongoing conversation together, sought after ways to reconceive of college as a means for exploring purpose and vocation. Through the resulting programs, campuses developed an enriched understanding of undergraduate education as involving the student in a process of discovery that is oriented toward flourishing, a process to which both faculty and staff can make invaluable contributions and for which moral, religious, and spiritual traditions can offer invaluable resources and support. What, the PTEV schools asked, does it mean to have a vocation in life, and how can the college experience help students discover theirs?

In this special issue of *Liberal Education*, the Featured Topic section is focused on the many achievements and the lasting legacy of PTEV. Both the initiative itself and this issue's coverage of it are introduced in the lead article by Shirley Roels, who directed the PTEV project at Calvin College and now serves as senior advisor to the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education, or NetVUE, a widening circle of colleges and universities carrying the PTEV work forward. In the second article, Tim Clydesdale presents findings from his national evaluation of the PTEV initiative. Next, Bill Sullivan presents core educational practices associated with PTEV and gives some examples. Finally, through three case studies, Molly Sutphen shows how the theological exploration of vocation can be conducted in disparate institutional contexts.

I want particularly to thank Bill Sullivan, who served as editorial advisor for this special issue of *Liberal Education*. It's thanks to Bill's work with his fellow contributors that the overview of PTEV presented here is as compelling and, indeed, coherent as it is. Sincere thanks also to the Lilly Endowment for its generous support for this issue and to Chris Coble, vice president for religion at Lilly, for his support and encouragement.—DAVID TRITELLI

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News and Information

New Report Documents Professional Success of Liberal Arts Graduates

In January, AAC&U and the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems released a joint report, *How Liberal Arts and Sciences Majors Fare in Employment: A Report on Earnings and Long-Term Career Paths*. Written by Debra Humphreys and Patrick Kelly, the new report tracks the earnings and employment rates of liberal arts graduates and counters negative stereotypes about the value of a liberal education. In addition to providing data on long-term employment outcomes for four-year college graduates with an array of undergraduate majors, the report details how humanities and social science majors, in particular, are flocking to a family of educational and social services professions. For more information about the report or to obtain a copy, visit www.aacu.org/leap/nchems.

New Project Focuses on Diversity and Equity in STEM Fields

The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust has awarded a $4.9 million grant to AAC&U and Project Kaleidoscope to support a new three-year curriculum and faculty development project called Teaching to Increase Diversity and Equity in STEM (TIDES). Through this new project, at least fourteen competitively selected campuses will develop models for broad institutional change in order to advance evidence-based and culturally competent teaching. TIDES will create a national community of faculty leaders committed to developing supportive and empowering environments for students from groups traditionally underrepresented in STEM fields. For more information or to submit an application, visit the project website at www.aacu.org/pkal/tides.

New Funding for Projects on General Education and Assessment

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has awarded AAC&U a $2,305,000 grant to support initial work on two projects designed to improve the quality of undergraduate education and increase student success. Together, the new General Education Maps and Markers (GEMS) project and the newly expanded Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) project will lay the groundwork for a cornerstone-to-capstone "remapping" of general education, and for a new approach to quality assurance that moves students' own work to the center of educational assessment and accountability.

Bernice Resnick Sandler Inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame

This past fall, Bernice Resnick Sandler, founding director of AAC&U's Program on the Status and Education of Women (PSEW), was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame.

Upcoming Meetings

- October 16–18, 2014
  Global Learning in College: *Cross-Cutting Capacities for 21st-Century College Students*
  Minneapolis, Minnesota
- November 6–8, 2014
  Transforming STEM Higher Education
  Atlanta, Georgia

For over forty years, Sandler has been a key advocate for educational equity for women and girls, and she played a critical role in the passage of Title IX in 1972. Under Sandler's direction, PSEW published the first set of papers on women of color in higher education; the first national report on sex discrimination in collegiate athletics; the first report on the "chilly climate," a term the project coined; and the first report issuing guidelines to help faculty search committees identify whether applicants would be strong advocates for women. Sandler, who directed PSEW from 1971 to 1991, is currently senior scholar in residence at the Women's Research and Education Institute.

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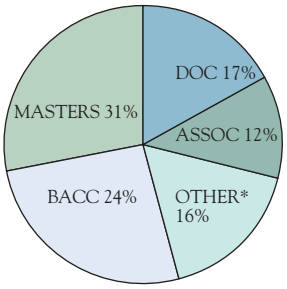

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An Education for Life Abundant

SHIRLEY J. ROELS

Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?
—MARY OLIVER, "THE SUMMER DAY"

MARY OLIVER'S POEM, quoted above, asks a basic question about human identity, purpose, and direction that is at the foundation of liberal education. This question was also at the core of the Lilly Endowment's Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV) and is now at the base of the Lilly-supported Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education (NetVUE).

In the late 1990s, the wild hope of the Lilly Endowment was that a set of American higher education institutions would respond to the call for an exploration of vocation, giving a portion of their precious institutional lives to explore this question with undergraduates. Through projects on multiple campuses, the intent was to learn whether and how a theology of vocation and calling could deepen undergraduate education. The goal was to strengthen an education that could sustain abundant lives for these emerging adults, an education in which intellectual and applied learning could converge with resources from moral and theological traditions. PTEV was an experiment to learn how we might reshape effective liberal learning for life, work, and citizenship in the twenty-first century.

Through projects on multiple campuses, the intent was to learn whether and how a theology of vocation and calling could deepen undergraduate education

What can educators learn from these Lilly Endowment–supported efforts about the future of effective undergraduate education? What should we now reclaim for a liberal education to encourage students' big questions and worthy dreams?[1] In this special issue of *Liberal Education*, several writers explore PTEV and note the development of NetVUE as its successor. As someone invested in PTEV, first for eight years as grant director of the Lilly Vocation Project at Calvin College and now as senior advisor for NetVUE, I provide a brief history of this initiative, reflect on what was learned, and note strategies for continuing this work in American higher education. Three independent scholars then document the outcomes of PTEV in the articles that follow.

As skilled and knowledgeable higher education researchers, Bill Sullivan, Molly Sutphen, and Tim Clydesdale each asked, did PTEV improve the actual outcomes of undergraduate education? Through campus interviews, document analysis, case studies, and social science surveys, these researchers probed whether and why PTEV programs were effective. They each have gathered wisdom for us as higher education leaders. Bill reflects on the experiences of several PTEV campuses as they sought strategies to renew liberal education as vocational discernment. Molly offers case examples and describes campus factors and strategies that led to effective results. Through student stories, Tim assesses how campus initiatives deepened student maturity and resilience. As educators, we expect evidence to connect goals with outcomes. These three commentators document tangible results in order to inform the shape of undergraduate education.

SHIRLEY J. ROELS *is senior advisor for the Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education at the Council of Independent Colleges and professor of management at Calvin College.*

Calvin College

Lilly Endowment support for vocational exploration

During the 1990s, the Lilly Endowment's board of directors became convinced that young adults needed more focused attention in order to develop meaning, purpose, direction, and practices that could shape life-defining decisions and prepare them for lifelong leadership. At that time, much of higher education was expanding its specialization by task or field of study. Some of these dynamics thwarted the time and energy required to work with students as whole people. Frequently, specialization led to fragmentation; undergraduate students' critical need for deep perspectives and commitments, the educational threads for life clothing, became secondary to other interests. Educational responses to whole-student needs were thinning as institutional specialization thickened. If the goal of undergraduate education is to shape a summoned life through which students can become responsive in their changing contexts, then more focused attention to the whole of their wild and precious lives was needed.[2]

Lilly Endowment leaders, including then-vice president Craig Dykstra and then-program officer Chris Coble,[3] recognized that the undergraduate experience, especially in liberal arts colleges and universities, was particularly well suited to education for lifelong leadership contributions. Frequently, such institutions had ready access to resources from religious and moral traditions to aid their efforts. They could encourage student flourishing as their campus leaders engaged undergraduates in the thinking of an Augustine, Aquinas, Dorothy Day, Mahatma Gandhi, Gustavo Gutiérrez, Martin Luther, Eboo Patel, or Howard Thurman.[4] At the same time, the Lilly Endowment's leaders were also aware that religious communities needed a new generation of talented, creative, and committed leaders. So they began to envision strategies to enrich settings in which those coming of age could discover paths toward abundant, rooted lives that connect with religious communities. So church-related independent American colleges and universities became a focal point for the endowment's experiment. Lilly leaders focused their initial efforts on such higher education institutions with the hope that their campus leaders could mesh intellectual, theological, and practical strains in varied pilot projects from which all could then learn. The hope was that such colleges and universities would be able to translate the endowment's broad vision into specific initiatives and that, through these on-the-ground experiments, in failure and success, undergraduate education could become more effective in educating the young for abundant lives.

Between 1999 and 2002, the endowment sought institutional grant proposals from a set of campuses in response to its call for initiatives to foster a theological exploration of vocation. Over three annual rounds of response to this invitation, the Lilly Endowment received more than four hundred campus proposals. From these proposals, the endowment funded eighty-eight colleges and universities to engage a theological exploration of vocation in undergraduate education. Most of these institutions received close to $2 million dollars for an initial five-year grant period; and most of them qualified for a follow-up sustainability grant approximating $500,000 as they then embedded their initiatives in long-term campus plans. Over time, the Lilly Endowment devoted more than $220 million to its PTEV initiative.

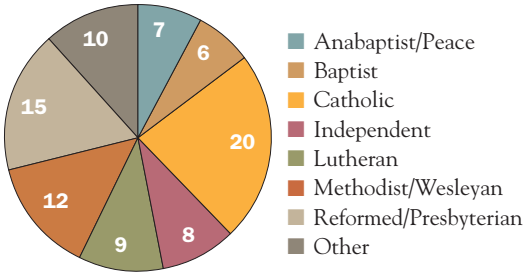
The Lilly Endowment's leaders began with a question, asking colleges and universities how to educate future leaders for society who would have a sense of purpose, meaning, and direction. This initiative was framed as an "honest inquiry, a true exploration . . . more an important question to ask than it is an answer we have some way of providing."[5] Varied Christian traditions of vocation and calling were acknowledged and encouraged. Vocation was understood as a response to the One who calls each person from the depth of being to a moral and purposeful life; and vocation was differentiated from career, which is solely focused on paid employment. The call for proposals explained that campus explorations should encompass students in many fields of study, but also described the endowment's concern for the future leadership of American religious communities. Yet the endowment did not define vocational terminology tightly, constrain the scope of these initiatives, or dictate a preferred program. Instead Lilly Endowment leaders consistently communicated that each college or university should develop a vocational exploration strategy that fit its particular identity, mission, and context. The resulting initiatives were diverse, and the campus circles of engagement were expansive. Initiatives encompassed students and campus leaders from multiple perspectives, including participants

from Buddhist, Jewish, humanist, and other traditions. The quest for identity, purpose, and direction, and those who supported its exploration among undergraduates, was not confined by Christian history about a theology of vocation. Instead, while honoring its faith-related roots, the vocational framework became flexible and fluid to honor a variety of voices joined in common cosmic pilgrimage.

While honoring its faith-related roots, the vocational framework became flexible and fluid

The selected colleges and universities represented a variety of Catholic traditions, those typically identified as evangelical or mainline Protestant, and a few institutions, such as Butler University, that did not claim structured ties to a particular religious circle. The PTEV network also included some historically black colleges, such as Spelman, as well as Hellenic College, which is associated with the Orthodox Christian tradition. In all their particularity but also together, these eighty-eight institutions constituted the PTEV network. (Figure 1 depicts PTEV institutions by religious affiliation.)

Figure 1.
PTEV Institutions By Religious Affiliation



NOTE: *"Other" includes Adventist, Assemblies of God, Church of God, Churches of Christ, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Nazarene, Nondenominational, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America, and United Church of Christ.*

The Lilly Endowment supported the PTEV network not only with substantial grant funds, but also with multiple avenues for development. Campuses used grant funds to improve first-year experience programs, reframe capstone courses, enhance service learning, expand internship options, host summer theology institutes, strengthen campus ministries, reformulate advising systems, and open centers for faith and learning. Many institutions enriched students' explorations of future congregational leadership and their knowledge about theological education. Student retreats about purpose and values abounded. Many of us recall more than one campground floor on which we slept; and we still reflect on the nuggets of vocational gold shared during dinners with famous scholars and over coffee with not-so-famous campus custodians. In PTEV national conferences, administrators, chaplains, faculty, and professional staff learned how to advance a vocational framework and culture on their campuses through sessions lead by senior scholars, educational experts, theologians, and each other; and PTEV coordinators gathered recommended books, course syllabi, and film suggestions to share across the network. These opportunities heightened campus leaders' knowledge of what a vocational exploration could become and advanced their capacity to implement it.

To build vocational vocabulary and understanding, the Lilly Endowment's leaders also supported the publication of books and articles that explored theologies of vocation. A good share of the PTEV campuses utilized and still benefit from William Placher's edited anthology *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* in which he gathers many vocational voices. In his own voice, Placher writes that "central to the many Christian interpretations of vocation is the idea that there is something—my vocation or calling—God has called me to do with my life, and my life has meaning and purpose at least in part because I am fulfilling my calling."[6] To add further nuance about such response and service to others, many campuses also engaged a robust collection of vocational narratives edited by Mark Schwehn and Dorothy Bass called *Leading Lives That Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be*.[7] With such helpful support, some campus leaders observed that the Lilly Endowment was generating its own cottage industry within higher education, and students on more than one campus observed that they were the "Lilly vocation babies." Having come to believe in the efficacy of blending a moral and religious sense of calling with undergraduate study, by the latter 2000s the majority of these eighty-eight campuses were on their way to sustaining a post-grant strategy for an undergraduate culture of calling.

PTEV's success in fostering the student exploration of vocation gave rise to a related

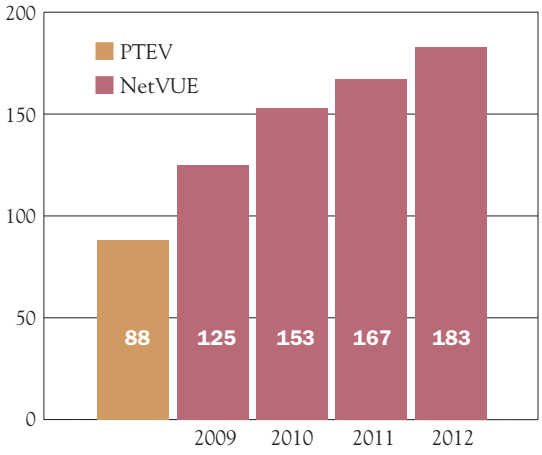
A theological exploration of vocation not only anchors identity but also provides hope, creativity, and courage

request from college and university presidents. Presidents observed that senior leadership turnover in independent higher education institutions was too rapid, and they recognized that they were missing out on part of the rich conversation that was building on their campuses. These leaders wanted a similar conversation about vocation with their presidential peers. Building on the early success of PTEV, in 2004 Lilly turned to the Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) to develop a program on Presidential Vocation and Institutional Mission. The program's premise is that better alignment between the "calling" of the president and the mission of the institution would result in a longer, happier, and more successful presidency. The CIC established two year-long seminar series—one for presidents and a similar one for those aspiring to the presidency—that joined the reading of texts with periods of reflection and facilitated conversation. To date, more than sixty-five presidents and a hundred senior administrators, most with their spouses, have participated in the CIC program. A quarter of those considering the presidency have been thus far successful in their searches.

But how could all this knowledge about the reframing of undergraduate education expand and flourish beyond the PTEV grant years? As the Lilly Endowment's active support concluded, college and university presidents were pleased with the positive results of these programs and recognized the benefit of inter-institutional collaboration for sharing resources and practices. So they asked the Council of Independent Colleges to develop a nationwide campus-supported network for the exploration of vocation. In early 2008, the CIC began to craft a vision for such a network, identified its goals, and laid the groundwork for an inaugural conference in March 2009. By the fall of 2009, NetVUE was launched as a network of colleges and universities committed to fostering this cause in their campus communities. Within three months, 125 institutions had joined as dues-paying members of NetVUE. More than half of these institutions had not been a part of PTEV. With important supplemental support from the Lilly Endowment, a successor to PTEV was born. And in NetVUE, there is now an opportunity for all independent colleges and universities to participate in building institutional capacities to educate for vocation.

NetVUE's stated mission is to deepen understanding of the intellectual and theological exploration of vocation in a variety of institutional contexts and to share best practices and resources in this regard. To date, more than 180 institutions have joined NetVUE, and the network is still growing (see fig. 2). Members now include a majority of the former PTEV institutions plus a diverse mix of more than a hundred additional colleges and universities that did not participate in PTEV. Many of these latter campuses were already doing this work on their own without the generous financial support of PTEV. Members include smaller liberal arts colleges like Hendrix and Westmont as well as larger research universities like Baylor and Seton Hall. NetVUE campuses are rural, suburban, and urban, and they extend across thirty-seven states from Massachusetts to Hawaii. Some member colleges and universities engage a variety of intellectual and theological traditions. Others have a close affiliation with a particular tradition, and some have no particular religious affiliation. But all share NetVUE's goals.

Figure 2.
Growth in the number of member institutions



For this network of colleges and universities, NetVUE provides national and regional conferences, campus visit and consulting programs, program development grants, an effort to strengthen chaplaincy, a project to develop new scholarly resources, and online resource libraries to expand what Lilly began in PTEV.

Through NetVUE, the seeds that Lilly Endowment leaders planted and watered so judiciously during the PTEV years are now growing into hardy plants.

Lessons for undergraduate education

As educational leaders, what have we learned during PTEV that we now carry forward in NetVUE? We know more about the dynamics of emerging adulthood, the educational value of campus communities, effective practices that deepen learning, and approaches that shape our graduates well for the uncertainties ahead.

Every undergraduate is an apprentice under our care in an emerging adult quest that typically continues for a decade. The designation of undergraduate students as "emerging adults" had not yet occurred when Lilly began its PTEV initiative. Only in 2004 did psychologist Jeffrey Arnett coin the phrase in *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from Late Teens through the Twenties*.[8] It would be another five years before sociologist Christian Smith's *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* was published.[9] But we now realize that we must reconfigure our educational efforts for undergraduates who take more diverse paths to full adulthood and see themselves as long-term pilgrims.

Vocational explorations are most effective when our students experience life together within educational communities that cultivate individual beliefs and contributions. Often students from fractured homes, congregations, communities, and nations are less sure of their own voices and unconvinced they can make a positive difference. Smaller pro-vocational communities within our campuses become spaces in which students find the special places they need to become known and therefore to know.[10] These pro-vocational campus spaces become mentoring communities for undergraduates, places in which to nurture the whole people we need them to become.

Undergraduate education is also deepened when ideas are intertwined with experience. When the exploration of writings by moral and religious thinkers is woven into times of community service, contemplation, internship, and study abroad, graduates recall both the experience and the ideas with which it was connected. An education for vocation must be simultaneously taught and caught. We know that vocational initiatives have greater stickiness when concepts and practices are interconnected.

Finally, in a more fluid world where it can seem that "there is no there there,"[11] a multilayered theological exploration of vocation sustains a "there" amidst continued uncertainty. If students struggle to find postcollege callings amid the crumbling of easier paths toward economic security, a theological exploration of vocation not only anchors identity but also provides hope, creativity, and courage in a context where less can be reliably known. For our students to discover their place of being and doing requires that we help them personalize vocational vocabulary, reflective skills, and moral choice. Then such efforts aid students in shaping wise ways to create a "there" that is less dependent on uncontrollable factors.

Differentiating institutions that educate for vocation

Through NetVUE, colleges and universities also continue to gain wisdom about competitive differentiation, strategies for institutional change, the role of executive leadership, and mission-based sustainability.

Vocational initiatives can differentiate campuses in their mission and outcomes. Not all college degrees are equal, and not all measures of educational effectiveness are the same. Recent research by the Astins and Lindholm provides substantial evidence that attending to the spiritual formation of students is linked to better academic performance, greater student satisfaction, and a deeper sense of campus fit.[12] So campuses that engage students' spiritual and theological dimensions can differentiate their outcomes. For a good share of prospective students and their parents, such differentiation still matters if and when it is well articulated by campus leaders. Another narrative can arise to counter the intense deliberations about massive open online courses, or MOOCS. Instead of education as information, vocational exploration sustains education as formation.

The focus on education of the whole student extends us beyond more typical campus silos and advances institutional change when higher levels of technology are matched with greater human touch.[13] The composition of campus vocational teams varies. Frequently they include professors in the humanities and social sciences, campus leaders who direct academic and career

advising, and those with responsibilities for student spiritual life. But campus vocational champions are also found among professors of chemistry, directors of human resources, and endowed chair holders. Together, faculty and staff develop civic discourse and intercultural competency while they also create a scaffold of skills that transcend academic majors. Campus vocational teams enable students' engagement of a profession's conduct, ethical standards, aspirations, and place in society so that undergraduates see their choices from multiple angles of vision.[14] Cross-campus teams help students assess their educational strengths and passions while simultaneously exploring the deep mysteries of life. Such educational "wholes" arise when groups of campus champions are less focused on specialized turf and more focused on the personhood of the student. Faculty and staff teams transcend traditional structures because they emphasize the educational task of composing a life for each undergraduate. In doing so, campuses are changing from the bottom up.

Still, active support from campus presidents and other senior leaders is crucial. Without such, campus voices are less articulate about the nature of the vocation, and priorities can be muddy. When senior administrative leaders expect and enable consistent vocabularies and ideas to support campus vocational initiatives, connections to institutional mission, strategies, and resources are more likely to emerge. Developing a pro-vocational climate does not require that executive leaders press their campus communities to answer every question in exactly the same manner, either personally or institutionally. As one president noted, "I can't make anyone on this campus do anything; but I can provide signals, incentives, and opportunities."[15] Yet institutional leaders create a campus vocational stew by focusing on common human questions about identity, character, choice, community, service, and hope. In such a stew, an intellectual and theological exploration of vocation may be a bit like tofu. It takes on a special flavor when cooked with many particular campus ingredients. Campuses with successful vocational initiatives have leaders who know and appreciate their special campus recipes and understand the cooking process.

When we educate for vocation, our students find the freedom that develops in taking responsibility for their narratives of belief and choice

Finally, a theological exploration of vocation is possible with modest resources. The Lilly Endowment's decade of financial support for PTEV was catalytic and laudable. Without Lilly's vision and gifts, PTEV could not have become the platform for what is now possible in NetVUE. Indeed, with the combination of substantial start-up funds from Lilly and institutional dues from a growing membership base, NetVUE is on track to become a self-sustaining network in the near future.

But campuses now find that educating for vocation is as much a matter of institutional vision, will, priority, and commitment as of funds. A campus does not need a mountain of new programs for excellent vocational exploration. Instead, based in mission and history, campuses can weave such questions into new student orientation programs, first-year seminars, sophomore advising, junior-year service learning and study abroad, or senior-year capstones and transitional counseling. Faculty and staff can deepen such programs by reading good books together and participating in collaborative workshops around campus. Modest vocation venture awards for materials, conferrals, and campus discussions leverage substantial outcomes. While some colleges and universities have now endowed a campus institute or faculty chair focused on integrating faith, vocation, service, and learning, vocational commitment does not require this. Instead, some professional development and modest funding can provide the basis for these educational emphases. In numerous educational moments, we can decide to dig beyond more instrumental objectives into foundational questions about the lives our students live. The outcomes reflect our own callings as educators.

Conclusion

The purpose of a liberal education is to free student minds and hearts for life, work, and citizenship. But in the turbulence of the twenty-first century, emerging adult freedom runs the risk of becoming "just another word for nothing left to lose."[16] When we educate for vocation, our students find the freedom that develops in taking responsibility for their narratives of belief and choice.

Through such an education, we give students greater capacity to build life bridges as they walk on them, a capacity that every one of our graduates will need multiple times in a world with cultural flash floods and ecological white-water. In more turbulent times, a theological exploration of vocation helps our graduates develop the grit that keeps their hearts attuned to grace, their hands engaged in service, and their heads addressing challenges of no known equation. In many small relational pockets, we help our students craft knowledge and practices from which they can then continue their journeys and create new "theres," for themselves and for others, in a restless global world.

The PTEV narrative is a story of ordinary educators on many campuses who caught the Lilly Endowment's vision of learning for life abundant and willingly gave their time to this cause. Now, NetVUE is positioned to be a lasting network that advances the many lessons learned in PTEV and extends them to a broader range of higher education institutions. The Lilly Endowment invested and remains devoted to fostering abundant life for our wild and precious emerging adults. For the sake of our undergraduates and the world in which they will lead, what will we do with what we now know? □

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

NOTES

1. Sharon Daloz Parks, *Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Emerging Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose, and Faith* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011). Use of the phrase "big questions, worthy dreams" refers to this volume, which is widely read by NetVUE leaders.

2. The idea of a "summoned life" builds on David Brooks's notion of a "summoned self"; see Brooks, "The Summoned Self," *New York Times*, August 3, 2010. Brooks compares the planned life of what an individual decides to accomplish with the summoned life, which he defines as a person's response to his or her context.

3. Craig Dykstra retired as vice president for religion in the summer of 2012 and is now research professor of practical theology and senior fellow in leadership education at Duke Divinity School. Chris Coble is now vice president for religion at the Lilly Endowment.

4. This list is for illustrative purposes, including the authors of readings that have been noted as vocational resources on PTEV and NetVUE campuses.

5. Craig Dykstra, "The Theological Exploration of Vocation" (address, plenary conference of the PTEV Coordination Program, Indianapolis, IN, 2003), http://www.ptev.org/hints.aspx?iid=22.

6. William Placher, *Callings: Twenty Centuries of Christian Wisdom on Vocation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2005), 2.

7. Dorothy Bass and Mark Schwehn, *Leading Lives That Matter: What We Should Do and Who We Should Be* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2006).

8. Jeffrey Arnett, *Emerging Adulthood: The Winding Road from the Late Teens through the Twenties* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004).

9. Christian Smith, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

10. This is a reference to Parker Palmer's book by similar title, *To Know as We Are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (New York: Harper Collins, 1983).

11. Gertrude Stein, *Everybody's Autobiography* (New York: Random House, 1937), 289. The full quote reads, "what was the use of my having come from Oakland it was not natural to have come from there yes write about it if I like or anything if I like but not there, there is no there there."

12. Alexander W. Astin, Helen S. Astin, and Jennifer A. Lindholm, *Cultivating the Spirit: How College Can Enhance Students' Inner Lives* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2011).

13. John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (New York: Warner Books, 1982); Sherry Turkle, *Alone Together: Why We Expect More from Technology and Less from Each Other* (New York: Basic Books, 2011). The need for a balance of more intensive technology with higher human relationships is articulated by Naisbitt and reaffirmed by Turkle.

14. Carol Geary Schneider, "Liberal Education and the Professions," *Liberal Education* 90, no. 2 (2004), 2.

15. This is a paraphrase of a 2011 statement by a college president during a NetVUE national conference.

16. Kris Kristofferson and Fred Foster, "Me and Bobby McGee" (1969). This song was memorably recorded by Janis Joplin and released in 1971 after her death. The full quote is, "Freedom is just another word for nothing left to lose. Nothing, don't mean nothing honey if it ain't free."

Holy Grit!

The Effects of Purpose Exploration Programming on Undergraduate Engagement and Life Trajectories

TIM CLYDESDALE

Purpose exploration produces a pattern of examined living and positive engagement with others, thereby increasing the odds that emerging adults will flourish after they graduate from college

IT IS NO PICNIC to grow up a "military brat" or a "preacher's kid." As the youngest daughter of a military chaplain, Tracy Turner had the dubious distinction of being both.[1] So *fourteen* times during her first eighteen years, Tracy and her family moved—out of one military chaplain fishbowl, across states or nations, and into another. Tracy adored her father, but the nearly annual relocations left her with few lasting friendships. Perhaps that is why Tracy grew enamored of novels and creative writing, and why she selected a literature major at Mennonite College. And perhaps that, in turn, is why she became a regular participant in Mennonite College's purpose and vocation exploration programs. These programs encouraged her thoughtfulness as well as her nascent interests in international and community development.

Idealistic students like Tracy were the core participants in every exploration program we studied. But they were not the modal student type. Most participants, like most American college students, took an instrumental approach to their college education. James Nwosu, a second-generation Nigerian American, represents this very well. James attended Richboro University with a singular focus on preparing for a career in international finance. An only child, James enjoyed an affluent lifestyle and attended elite schools, and he selected this Jesuit campus because of its prestigious school of business and without concern for its staggering price tag. His goal was to have his own international finance career and exceed his father's considerable success as an engineering consultant. And James showed every sign of being on track to do so.

I met James and Tracy during their senior year of college, when my evaluation team visited their campuses to observe the effects, if any, of the Lilly Endowment's nearly quarter-billion-dollar investment in purpose and vocation exploration programming on eighty-eight campuses across the United States. I was initially dubious that these programs would accomplish anything more than an increase in maladaptive idealism among self-selecting college students—and for months, my social scientific skepticism held firm. But accumulating data has a way of wearing one down. By the time my team had studied twenty-six campuses, interviewed 284 students and 274 faculty or staff, received 2,111 responses to a survey of participants, and supplemented these with sixty-five comparison interviews of students at nine nonparticipating campuses, I could no longer deny the remarkable and enduring effects of purpose and vocation exploration programming on college students, on faculty and staff, and, sometimes, even on whole campuses. Word limitations prevent my recounting that evidence here, so I relay James and Tracy's stories as illustrative of the hundreds more we heard.

That James sought a lucrative career and lifestyle was indisputable, but that desire was not the sum total of his identity. James also hoped his life would share "some of the opportunities that I've been provided." More specifically,

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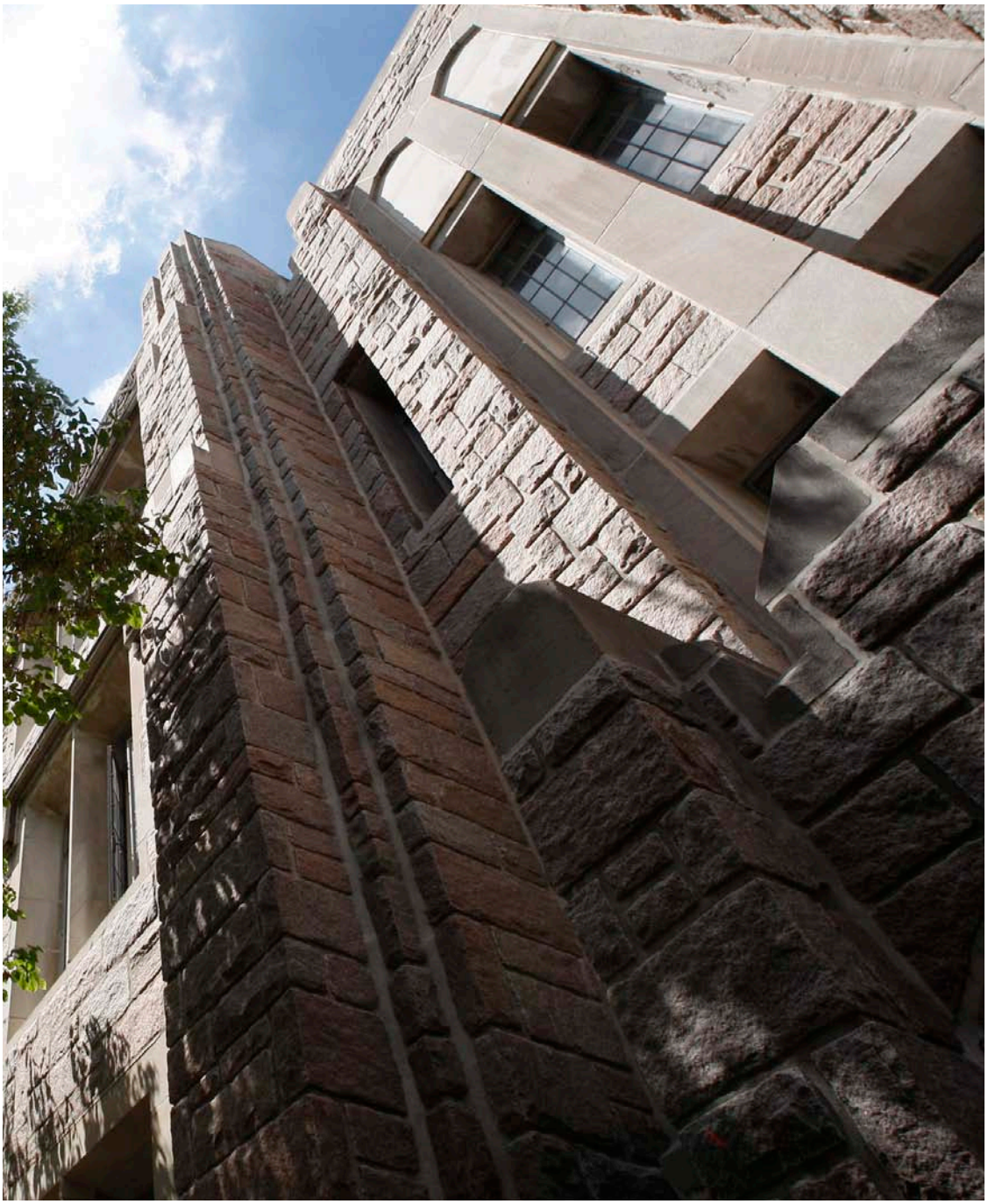

Butler University

James wanted to expose "at risk" teens "to a trading floor . . . [where] you can make a million dollars by thirty." And James's desire to broaden opportunity was both strengthened and specified through involvement in his campus's Purpose Exploration Hall.

The issues James explored during his college years were nearly the opposite, then, of those Tracy explored. Tracy sought to identify which career and what manner of living she should pursue given her well-established values, while James sought to infuse a dose of service into the finance career and lifestyle he planned. For Tracy, exploration included participation in a two-year pre-ministry fellowship requiring a church internship during the academic term, a summer of full-time ministry, and weekly meetings to discuss readings with other fellows. For James, exploration included two years of participation in the varied activities of Richboro's Purpose Exploration Hall, and accepting his hall mentor's suggestion that he see the economic challenges of a developing nation firsthand by studying abroad.

Tracy admitted that her interests in international and community development "weren't really whetted until coming to college," but that the process of ongoing conversations, community service, and her fellowship helped her identify this career field. That still left Tracy

with a couple of big questions—like "where?" and "doing what, exactly?"—but Tracy was taking advantage of her senior year to research careers in international community development. Similarly, James used his senior year to apply for an international fellowship, developing for it a project proposal infused with service. Even a lucrative job offer from Wall Street did not dissuade him; despite his father's objections, James postponed responding to an offer from a multinational financial corporation in order to await the outcome of his application. James's desire to serve differed, then, from Tracy's in degree only. Tracy planned to live simply within a needy community and to serve that community via a helping career. James planned a financially successful life that would include service to needy communities akin to the one in which Tracy planned to reside. James, just as much as Tracy, sought to lead a virtuous life, and both deserve commendation.

Were James and Tracy's stories to stop there, they might encourage those who still value higher education as a life-transforming experience. They would not address the possibility of exploration programs fostering a maladaptive idealism, however. What transpired in James and Tracy's lives *after* they left their nurturing campus environments and made their way into "the real world," I contend, is what makes purpose and vocation exploration programming so compelling: these smart, driven, and compassionate young adults experienced setbacks and harsh reality checks, which they confronted honestly and resolved maturely while still maintaining the overall arc of their intended life trajectories. Rather than becoming disillusioned and disappointed, and rather than abandoning their ideals, Tracy and James demonstrated a *grounded idealism* that made peace with setbacks and helped them chart revised courses to their long-term destinations. Positive psychologists label the dogged determination to attain one's goals despite challenges "grit," and they document its powerful effects.[2] But grit can be deployed to any end, which is why I add the qualifier "holy," as the goals that most exploration participants sought ultimately involved service to God and humanity. Tracy and James honed a grounded idealism, or holy grit, during their undergraduate years, and they deployed it to powerful effect during the crucial months that followed their graduation from college.

Catching up with Tracy and James a year after they graduated from college, I learned that Tracy did not find work in international community development as she had hoped, nor did James win the international fellowship for which he had applied. Both were disappointed, but only briefly, and both were quick to redirect their efforts. Tracy and James both recognized the opportunities that still lay open to them, the privileged position they occupied as college-educated young adults, and the lifetime they had to pursue their goals. So James accepted his Wall Street job offer, and Tracy

Calvin College

arranged housing and recruited other seniors to live in and serve a fading deindustrialized city near Mennonite College. James had the golden backup plan, or so it seemed until the financial world "ended" in September 2008—just two months into his employment. His own company received so many resignations and issued so many layoffs that James was left without an identifiable supervisor for nearly a month.

What transpired *after* they left their nurturing campus environments and made their way into "the real world" is what makes purpose and vocation exploration programming so compelling

Tracy, meanwhile, discovered that launching an intentional service community with young adults is arduous without support from an umbrella volunteer organization, and she watched it nearly fall apart when participants realized the significance of not having health insurance. Her project survived, but at the cost of its members securing jobs based on benefits and scaling back their community service to nights and weekends. As stark as the foregoing sounds, our conversations with James and Tracy were anything but. They were delighted to speak with us and to share all that had transpired since their first interviews, and they were genuinely optimistic about the future. Though some consider optimism to be a generational trait,[3] I argue that James and Tracy's grounded idealism helped them accept these setbacks and move forward without surrendering their goals.

For James, grounded idealism found expression through his enjoyment of the work of a financial analyst; he was learning how international finance works, while simultaneously developing an exit strategy. James was aghast to see senior partners putting in the same eighty-hour weeks as he did. In two years, when his training program ended, James planned to move to the Far East, either by company transfer or by joining an international organization to teach English. After that, James would start his own company, and then sell it by the age of forty so that he could "give back and actually have a true purpose in life." James's years at Richboro University inculcated a language of purpose, his time abroad sensitized him to the underbelly of globalization, and his daily walk on Manhattan's sidewalks solidified his resolve. "Down on Wall Street," he told us, "you can be walking right next to a millionaire and in the same [moment] see a homeless person who has nothing, and is fighting to survive." For now, James understood that he was in training—for a purpose larger than himself and for people who have never had the opportunities that James refused to take for granted.

Tracy spent her first year after college doing the kind of service that James planned for his near and long-term future. So Tracy did not lose her appetite like James did when encountering homeless persons. She was not walking past them to dine at her city's toniest establishments with other investment bankers; instead, she was walking beside them to a church pantry in order to help them obtain food and other essentials. For this, Tracy was grateful. She was also grateful for an old Lutheran church that donated the use of its tattered manse to Tracy and four other young adults in exchange for their volunteer work. However, her first year after college had not been without its challenges:

> What I think a lot of people my age have been having a difficult time with, is making ends meet while trying to live intentionally. I never once thought I would be talking about health insurance as much as I've talked about it since graduation. . . . I hate it that the finances really do rule so much of the choices that I've made. I would've gone to Europe much, much earlier in my life if I had had the capital to do so. [Yet] what I like about where I am is [that] I'm with a group of people who are trying to make the best of their own personal situations and trying to make the best of the community situation so that life squeaks past a little easier for everyone. And I like being invested in that so young. It's a choice that I would make again if I had to.

Tracy found a job that provided health insurance, leaving her with nights and weekends to do the community service she cherished. And yet, Tracy was not resentful. "It's difficult to make ends meet, but it's difficult for everyone. . . . I don't feel particularly victimized by that reality." Nor was she resentful about not finding international work, for her frequent moves as a child left her "hungry for a sense of belonging and place," which spending a fifth year in the Rustbelt City region was beginning to impart. If there was any resentment in Tracy, it lay in the gap between her long-term desire to marry

and have children, and the current absence of a boyfriend. In the interim, however, "I feel good about the quality of life I lead, and I think that I have a life that is centered in faith." She then added with a laugh, "but I am also just out of college, I live in a household of postcollege friends, and there's wine!"

A skeptic might argue that Tracy and James would have proceeded along these lines without participation in campus exploration programming—that these two young adults were more resilient, intentional, and mature to begin with and that purpose or vocation exploration added nothing to these preexisting traits. There is evidence to support the former, but not the latter. Participants entered exploration programs slightly higher in maturity than nonparticipant peers, but they also made substantial gains over the course of their participation. Follow-up interviews with 123 recent college graduates, both participants and nonparticipants in exploration programming, inquired into graduates' satisfaction with six broad areas of life: work or graduate school life, finances, living arrangements, social life, love life, and spiritual life. On the whole, all interviewees indicated they that were more satisfied than dissatisfied with these six areas of their lives—an unsurprising result, given the ultimately privileged position from which a college graduate engages the world and given the optimism of youth. Those who had participated in purpose exploration during college, however, expressed broader satisfaction with life after college than did those who did not participate, a statistically significant result that held firm even after controlling for respondents' gender, race, age, socioeconomic status, and attendance at religious services.[4] Participants in purpose exploration were not semi-satisfied with their lives, they were *broadly* satisfied with them—they were, in short, flourishing. They were independent, responsible, broadly engaged, and pursuing positive life goals.

So how should we make sense of this, and what might it mean for higher education? The takeaway lesson is that *purpose exploration produces a pattern of examined living and positive engagement with others, thereby increasing the odds that emerging adults will flourish after they graduate from college*. While this may be a bold claim, it is but a variation of an ancient truism. Since Socrates, educators convinced that "the unexamined life is not worth living" have labored to facilitate thoughtful self-examination within their students. Purpose exploration programming offers appealing mechanisms for life examination and fosters relationships that sustain ideals in spite of setbacks. Such outcomes represent

Wake Forest University

the "higher" in higher education, and if delivered widely and consistently, they would pull the rug out from under the feet of higher education's many critics.

Purposeful citizens, missional campuses

Despite the draconian cuts to higher education budgets during the Great Recession, more than 90 percent of the campuses I studied continued their exploration programs—despite the attendant real costs—for three or more years after their grant funds were depleted. The majority also became dues-paying members of the Council of Independent College's Network for Vocation in Undergraduate Education, where they were joined by a hundred additional campuses eager to replicate these exploration programs' good work. The reasons for this are many, to be sure, but among them are the value-added benefits these programs deliver to students, to faculty and staff participants, to cocurricular life, and even to the campus as a whole. Eighty-six percent of faculty respondents, for example, agreed or strongly agreed that their campus's exploration programs had "positively impacted my own work at [this school]"; 75 percent agreed that their participation "helped me hone my own sense of 'vocation,' 'calling,' or 'purpose,'" and 85 percent said that participation "deepened my appreciation for the mission of [this school.]" The percentages were even higher among staff participants—90 percent, 84 percent, and 93 percent, respectively. Purpose exploration programs have the remarkable effect of refreshing the good citizens one finds on every campus, of strengthening support for institutional mission, and of helping to launch pro-exploration communities dedicated to the holistic flourishing of students, faculty, and staff and to the service of others near and far.

Purpose and vocation exploration will not, to be sure, appeal to all students or all employees. The anxious waters that invisibly flood contemporary campuses lead majorities to seek relief wherever they can—often via binge drinking and disengagement. But students, faculty, and staff from a wide variety of campuses and with even wider worldviews have reported pivotal life changes as a result of the opportunity to explore ideas of purpose and vocation. Quality exploration programs can help encourage yet ground idealistic students like Tracy, support more instrumental types like James as they convert generalized desires to do good into tangible commitments, renew employee support for mission and citizenship, and even re-center institutional mission among administrators' activities. Purpose and vocation exploration programming deserves careful consideration by any campus serious about integrative learning, holistic development, and lifelong citizenship.

Purpose and vocation exploration programming deserves careful consideration by any campus serious about integrative learning, holistic development, and lifelong citizenship

Young adults have become subjects of intense attention, both scholarly and otherwise. Some fall into the aimlessness that is so well captured by popular media, while others delay commitments and spend years "tinkering" with identities, careers, and relationships. These wider realities highlight the intentionality, resilience, and maturity that is demonstrated by participants in purpose and vocation exploration. Tracy and James' adulthood was not emerging, it was realized. Lengthening pathways to adulthood are, of course, macroeconomic and macro-cultural phenomena. But the blame for emerging adults' travails is starting to congeal around higher education. Graduating purposeful citizens has long been the enduring goal of higher education; purpose exploration programming may well be the anticoagulant that colleges and universities need at this critical moment. □

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

NOTES

1. Throughout, quoted material is taken from interviews conducted by the author. All individual and institutional names are pseudonyms, and all identifying information has been changed in this article.

2. See, for example, Martin Seligman, *Flourish: A Visionary New Understanding of Happiness* (New York: Free Press, 2011).

3. See, for example, Neil Howe, William Strauss, and R. J. Matson, *Millennials Rising: The Next Great Generation* (New York: Vintage, 2000).

4. Tim Clydesdale, *Calling on Purpose: The Conversation Every Campus Must Have with Students* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Renewing Liberal Education as Vocational Discernment

WILLIAM M. SULLIVAN

A MAJOR DISCOVERY, or rediscovery, of our time is that an education that matters—an education that enhances capacities and expands outlooks—is one that engages the whole student. Research in learning has shown that making sense of the world and learning to use knowledge and skills in responsible and engaged ways—long the developmental goals of liberal learning—require coherent curricula and ways of teaching. It has also become clear that the essential basis for both academic success and personal resilience—the "grit" that sustains energy and direction in life—hinges on finding a sense of meaning and purpose. Education aligned with these goals must intentionally foster students' deepening exploration of life's ends and values. And far from being a solitary quest, this kind of learning is most effective when students participate in communities of learning that are structured by these concerns. Such learning demands the development of critical awareness. But it also requires the cultivation of empathy and receptivity as well as the appreciation of value and imagination. These qualities of sensibility and disposition, of what were once called "heart" and "spirit," are the necessary complements to analytical prowess.

The Lilly programs demonstrate that it is possible to recover the formative power of liberal education

What, then, might a college education that takes these themes seriously look like? How to provide a center of curricular gravity that can enable students to build connections between concerns about their lives and futures and liberal learning?

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Enter, PTEV

Among recent innovative efforts to connect liberal learning with the personal, moral, and civic development of students, one of the most successful has been the Lilly Endowment's Programs on the Theological Exploration of Vocation (PTEV). Through a decade of experiment and reform, many of the participating institutions found effective ways to foster the development of purpose among their students, while the faculty have reported a greater sense of common purpose and personal commitment to the profession of higher education.

The PTEV programs all included three key elements. The first was the use of the language of *vocation* as the primary approach to enabling students to grow toward a life purpose. This language framed holistic student development by employing the search for purpose in order to focus and inspire academic learning as well as personal and career development. Second, the exploration of vocational purpose was rooted in campus learning communities that supported students on their developmental path, a process that frequently gave rise to faculty and staff learning communities. This process has had a revitalizing effect on educational mission on many PTEV campuses. Finally, the third element was the fostering of specific practices of reflection—focused on identity, learning, and purpose—that enabled students, as well as faculty and staff, to connect the liberal arts disciplines, experiential and civic learning, and career preparation in ongoing ways. The most successful PTEV campus programs have become explicit and intentional about fostering these practices, but all campuses share them to varying degrees.

Santa Clara University

Engaging the language of vocation: "Your Personal Renaissance"

To see how these ideas have played out in practice, consider a course developed at Santa Clara University as part of its participation in PTEV. It is called "Vocation: Your Personal Renaissance." The course was designed to provide students at the mid-point in their college careers, when students are most open to questions about identity and purpose, with the opportunity to consider the question of vocation in an engaged and intellectually sophisticated way. At Santa Clara University—a middle-sized, selective institution in the Catholic, Jesuit tradition—the course fulfills requirements of the core curriculum. It is also a course in a new type of core known as a "pathway," part of a "double helix" curricular model. Pathways, such as "Vocation," are sequences of courses that parallel specialized study in the major with connecting themes designed to bring students' educational experiences together.

The course is taught by Professor Diane Dreher, a scholar of Renaissance literature who has also participated in positive psychology research on the course theme. "As you become more aware of your calling," Diane Dreher writes in a text read in the course, "it weaves like a bright thread through the daily fabric of your life, and as you move through life's seasons, into new roles . . . every stage in your life invites you to discover your calling on another level."[1] The idea of "personal Renaissance" draws together Dreher's own areas of expertise, the comparative literature of the European Renaissance and developmental psychology, with themes of the religious dimension of life. "Renaissance men and women were empowered by a sense of calling [newly expounded by religious leaders in the Reformation]. . . . [T]heir identities were informed by a sense of personal destiny, their faith in a meaningful universe and their place in it." Because of this religious understanding, Dreher continues, such figures were accustomed to "seeing themselves as creative agents, not passive victims of fate."[2]

The fundamental strategy of the course involves both imaginative participation and analytic rigor. It seeks to engage students in understanding the inspirations and challenges, setbacks and crises, of famous men and women of the Renaissance. Each student must choose from a group of twenty-eight such figures—ranging from Shakespeare to Teresa of Avila to Michelangelo—a life to explore in depth, reading their works, viewing their art, and researching their activities and context. These lives then function as distant mirrors for the students in exploring their own lives in similar terms.

The motivating questions of the course are, finally, "how should I live?" and "whom might I become?" Understanding how exemplary men and women of the Renaissance answered these questions by finding their vocations is intended to provide "insights for your life today." The syllabus also explains that the course addresses

Augsburg College

a learning goal Santa Clara calls intellectual "complexity" through requiring demonstration of the capacity to "reflect, compare, and integrate approaches to vocation from religion, literature, art, and contemporary psychology." The course also tries to stimulate "religious reflection" directly by using "comparative analysis, ongoing contemplative practice, reflection, and your own vocational narrative" to "clarify and express your beliefs about your own vocation."[3]

Such teaching carries the accomplishments of liberal learning into the practical dimension

The several major writing requirements reveal the underlying pedagogical aims most clearly. They combine academic rigor with an imaginative extension of the concepts of the course toward making sense of the students' own experiences. The first half of the course culminates in a paper in which the student presents and analyzes the "vocational narrative" of the Renaissance figure under study. In the second paper, toward the end of the course, students repeat this exercise, only now focused on their "personal vocational narrative."

As an educational experience, then, "Vocation: Your Personal Renaissance" presents finding a vocation as a live option that admits of various religious as well as secular interpretations. Vocational decision making is examined from the "inside" point of view of those involved as well as analytically from "without," as a historical phenomenon—the bifocal approach characteristic of humanistic inquiry. Students gain insights into the content and approaches of a number of academic disciplines. They must show analytical skill and synthetic capacity in relating these approaches to the course themes. But students in this course are also being explicitly taught how to *use* that learning to inform their education and their lives. Such teaching carries the accomplishments of liberal learning into the practical dimension not by reducing learning to an instrument for advancing individual interest, but by expanding the horizon of the practical to connect with the wider possibilities of human flourishing.

Building learning communities around vocational exploration

The idea behind the development of campus learning communities is that liberal learning happens best when students and educators work together over time in communities that are small enough that everyone knows everyone else's name and yet span a significant breadth of disciplines trained on wide-angle questions. For PTEV programs, there was also an internal fit between the way in which learning communities educate by focusing on students and faculty in a shared context, and the vocational content the Lilly initiative was crafted to promote. On some campuses, residence halls became sites for such integrated learning, bringing academic activity together with civic service and social life. On others, cohorts of students embarked on civic and service projects that were woven into parts of the academic program, often also linked to student affairs, religious life, and career planning activities. In many cases, these learning communities provided an organizational basis for faculty and staff cooperation that could grow into mutual understanding of each other as fellow educators sharing a common mission.

While undergraduates were the primary intended beneficiaries of the Lilly initiative, faculty and, over time, staff from student affairs, counseling, and career planning also joined learning communities that paralleled those of the students. Faculty and staff might come together initially for instrumental reasons—to support the "real work" of PTEV—directed at students. Fairly quickly, however, the participants realized that through their cooperation and discussion they were building professional relationships of intrinsic rather than simply instrumental value that were important for the vitality of education on the campus as a whole. The frequent and enthusiastic report was of "being heard." In these groups, faculty and staff came to recognize each other as peers—something that was often especially important to staff. Many reported having developed a greater ease in speaking of the ups and downs of their lives in terms of meaning and calling, saying that this enabled them to engage more easily around these issues with students.

A context for making positive connection to the life of their times

A major goal of liberal education has always been enabling students to make a responsible contribution to the life of their times. By building learning communities around the theme of vocation, PTEV has achieved this goal in noteworthy ways. At Our Lady of the Lake University

in San Antonio, a student learning community was developed as part of *La Llamata* (The Call), as the program was known. Organized by the Roman Catholic campus minister, Gloria Urrabazo, the program began by offering faculty small grants to incorporate service experiences into their courses. It grew to include the participation of student affairs and career placement staff as well. The focus of the program was on strengthening the university's relationship with San Antonio's West Side, a largely Hispanic neighborhood that is home to many immigrant families and to some of the university's students as well. These service projects were anchored in Roman Catholic parishes, which also provided internship placements for weekly work with youth groups.

While not all interns were either Hispanic or Roman Catholic, through the coaching of parish staff, students reported developing greater understanding and empathy for the circumstances and struggles of the families of the West Side. For some of the students, this provided a kind of renewed connection with their own ethnic roots. For others, it was an awakening to aspects of contemporary life of which they had little understanding. On campus, participating faculty described these experiences as promoting students' growth in maturity: being entrusted with responsible roles in the life of these communities affected students' sense of what they could do, and it deepened their commitments.

The formation of this extended student learning community at Our Lady of the Lake was a direct outgrowth of the Lilly initiative. But it built upon a longer tradition at the institution. Founded by the sisters of the Congregation of Divine Providence a century ago, the university initiated the first program in social work in the region. It had long participated in the economic and social development of the American Southwest, providing a base for enriching the material as well as the spiritual lives of its students. With PTEV, it has added the conscious task of preparing students to take a constructive part in one of the major features of today's globalization: the migration across national borders of formerly agricultural people seeking a better life through urban jobs and lives.

PTEV's focus on cultivating vocation has provided students and faculty with new inspiration for learning and service. Connecting students and staff with communities in San Antonio provided a context for employing various academic disciplines in order to understand the effects of vast economic and social developments on their actual neighbors. Grounded in contemporary Catholic social teaching, the program's themes of solidarity, human dignity, and economic justice created a way to make sense of the moral demands thrown up by contemporary life. As one student put it, "It has been a huge learning experience for me, not just spiritually, but in terms of personal self-confidence and my ability to work as a team member. It has helped me develop better as a person. . . . I've learned to engage with many points of view and people at different levels."

The concept of vocation adds the important dimension of response to sacred value and of responsibility to and for others

Reflective learning: Connecting knowledge to purpose

Practices of reflection fostered by PTEV have made it possible for students to put the elements of their lives together more coherently than would otherwise be expected. Especially today, when life often feels like a succession of discontinuous bits of experience, there is appeal in the notion—common in liberal learning from the *Bildungsroman* through Erik Erikson's influential framing of the life course—that education can mean the beginning of a life trajectory that can maintain direction through crisis and struggle in the quest for integral identity and positive purpose. The concept of vocation adds the important dimension of response to sacred value and of responsibility to and for others. PTEV's emphasis upon vocation as a narrative quest, rooted in learning communities, provided students with experiential proof that life could be more than just "one damned thing after another," that it might matter that one had lived.

At Augsburg College in Minneapolis, the PTEV program, called "Embracing Our Gifts," built intentionally on the college's Lutheran heritage by attempting to infuse vocational reflection through the curriculum and cocurriculum. A noteworthy feature was the "senior keystone" requirement. For business majors (Augsburg's largest major), "Vocation and the Meaning of Success," which was taught by teams of business and religion faculty, aimed not simply to consolidate students' knowledge

of business as a discipline, as in a typical capstone experience, but to enable them to use their business knowledge for finding personal significance in a life with social purpose.

The curriculum provided the keystone as a way to draw together the major with earlier courses that explore the vocation idea in global religious context. For seniors, this meant encountering three large questions that organize the course: Who are you? What is your sense of mission? What are you going to do with your business knowledge and skills? Many of the students, often the first generation of their families to attend college, were wary of such questions, fearing they could distract them from the serious business of entering the occupational world.

The response of the faculty was to link the large vocational questions with knowledge and skills of immediate practical value for occupational success. Accustomed to approaching business with questions about goals and strategy, the course faculty encouraged business majors to use these skills to think about their lives as an ongoing narrative—looking backward to understand themselves and their gifts, and then analyzing the challenges at hand by inquiring about their place in the world, their values (what "success" might mean for them), and their possible futures.

Students were prompted to reflect on their self-understanding and their values by readings that placed business careers within a normative perspective drawn from Lutheran theology, which interprets work as a way for individuals to contribute to the common good. The course also promoted a similar reflectivity in occupational exploration by requiring placements in community and business organizations in Minneapolis. In addition, working in teams to find equitable solutions to business problems enlarged the scope of reflection to include a critical look at what makes some business professionals admirable, which business contexts seem best able to sustain that kind of professional identity, and the role of business in civic life. This exercise tied the humanistic questions of personal identity and mission directly to the students' life challenges in the present and the near future. It provided perspective that is often missing in the transition from college to work. As written academic work, students' reflective papers not only fostered habits of thinking about goals and challenges in light of value commitments, but they also provided graduates with potent examples of their ability to investigate complex and challenging problems in contemporary business from more than a purely technical perspective—examples they can present to potential employers.

Conclusion

Reflection on vocation, grounded in a community of shared interest and support, shifts the framing of higher education. It invites students to engage their college education not as passive consumers, but as protagonists in a collective drama with real import. The Lilly programs demonstrate that it is possible to recover the formative power of liberal education, even in a time when fixation upon its merely instrumental value threatens to diminish the promise of higher education as a whole.

This is a significant story. It points to new directions for the nation's many religiously affiliated colleges and universities. But it also holds lessons of value for the enterprise of higher education as whole. Many of the participating campuses succeeded in engaging students in learning by fostering exploration of purpose, guided by humanistic ideals, religious and secular. They intensified professional commitment as educators among not only faculty but also staff. And perhaps most notably, administrators and governing boards were sometimes swept up in the enterprise, forging or renewing a sense of common purpose for their institutions, making them more vital centers of learning and more actively connected to their communities and civic contexts. □

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

NOTES

1. Diane Dreher, *Your Personal Renaissance: 12 Steps To Finding Your Life's True Calling* (Philadelphia: DeCapo Press, 2008), 3.

2. Ibid., 5.

3. Diane Dreher, "Vocation: Your Personal Renaissance" (course syllabus, English 198, Santa Clara University, 2013).

Practicing a Good Life

Three Case Studies from the Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation

MOLLY SUTPHEN

THE EVENING WAS COLD, and the path to the house was already dark. We walked into the warmth and light of a small house, welcomed by three people on their way to the kitchen. The kitchen table was loaded with two kinds of chili, just-baked bread, sautéed kale, a homemade apple pie, and other dishes fit for Thanksgiving the following week. After about twenty of us had gathered, balancing our plates on our laps, one of the hosts suggested we begin with a moment of silence. As we started to eat, another host asked us to introduce ourselves with our names and to tell the group about something for which we felt grateful. We heard about singing in a choir, a paper finished, and several students relished the food they ate rather than the dining hall fare. A potluck around the end of the semester is hardly a rare event at many small liberal arts colleges, though one with home-grown kale and carefully prepared food may be more unusual. What was noteworthy is why we were there. The meal preceded a meeting of the Quaker Fellows, a group of first-year students at Earlham College who were engaged in a program to help them discern their vocations.

Whether they drew on a liberal arts or religious tradition, PTEV schools borrowed from each other and from a rich variety of practices common in higher education

The potluck and meeting of the Quaker Fellows on that cold November evening is one answer to the call to arms issued separately by authors Andrew Delbanco, Anthony Kronman, and Mark Roche.[1] They urge their colleagues in higher education to find ways to help students identify what is important in their lives and then to help them figure out how to live accordingly. Delbanco, Kronman, and Roche bemoan the losses to society when faculty members do not help students find meaning and purpose in their education. They also point out the challenges faculty face, notably how overspecialization in disciplines—especially in the humanities—militates against such an approach.

These authors' concerns highlight another fundamental challenge in higher education: how to educate the "whole" student. How can we help students make sense of their whole lives, when schools expect them to parse their lives? A student is a history major for her advisor, an athlete for her coach, and a volunteer at the food pantry for her college chaplain. Yet this student is changed by her experiences in each of these endeavors, and she learns in each arena, often simultaneously. This student might be lucky enough to have a faculty member, coach, or chaplain who helps her make sense of these experiences as a means for her to decide who she may want to be. She might find such an adult, one who knows her as a whole person and who alternately offers advice, provides her with insight about herself, or simply listens to her as she makes connections about her choices in college. This person might be with her as she reflects on her experiences before college and as she moves through her courses to stretch her imagination of what her life might be. The call to arms from Delbanco, Kronman, and Roche speaks to the needs of those students who do not have opportunities for such guided reflection on the meaning and purpose of their undergraduate experience.

The Lilly Endowment's Programs for the Theological Exploration of Vocation offered a range of educational activities and opportunities for students, faculty, and staff to reflect on and discern their values, beliefs, and goals across a

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Wake Forest University

wide spectrum of collegiate life. Tim Clydesdale has found that these opportunities were of much value to those who participated in them, as well as to the schools that created them.[2] The success of these programs raises the question of how others might create similar opportunities, including at schools that are not faith based.

Earlham College, Wake Forest University, and Butler University tailored programs to meet the needs of their students, staff, and faculty according to their institutional missions. As well, in the cases of Earlham College and Wake Forest University, the programs were consistent with the schools' respective denominations (Butler University does not have a religious affiliation). Although the programs looked very different at each school, common to the three were the ample opportunities they provided for students to reflect, discern, and practice living a vocation. Common as well were the experiences of those students who do not follow a neat line from reflection through discernment to living their vocations. Instead, students at each school reflected and discerned simultaneously, iteratively, in fits and starts, sometimes solo, and at other times in groups. The three schools also provide a glimpse of how individuals with responsibilities in different domains of a campus—the staff of a center for religious life, a university leader and head of a career center, and faculty members—can contribute to the theological exploration of vocation.

Earlham College

A fellowship for reflection and discernment

Students entering Earlham may apply to be Quaker Fellows, if they have belonged to a meeting or attended Quaker schools. Those chosen are awarded a scholarship for four years of commitment, which includes weekly meetings, retreats, and the responsibility to write about their experience for about thirty minutes per week. Emma Churchman and Trish Eckert, who serve as staff leaders for the Quaker Fellows, are housed in the Newlin Quaker Center (formerly the Newlin Center for Quaker Thought and Practice). They meet with students, read their journal entries, act as a sounding board, and, for some, provide spiritual direction. The program is designed to engage "the whole person"; as Eckert puts it, "I look at [the Quaker Fellows program] as concentric rings, as we are talking about their own individual spiritual formation [and] as we look at how they want to be leaders in the world." She notes that the program defines leadership broadly to include, for example, helping students define what they mean by social justice as well as helping them organize an event in order to raise money to meet a need in their community. She says that, for students, leadership means "you take some kind of conviction that you have and bring it to the world" and that the program helps students "navigate that."

The program encourages the fellows to consider what it means to be a Quaker living in this world. As Eckert sees it, the program offers students opportunities to see the world through a Quaker lens by learning about the history and practices of the Society of Friends as well as religious practices more generally. For many, the latter is novel. She gives the example of several fellows who attended a conference on monasticism, where they met a young man from an intentional community who shared with the students the high standards he set for living his life according to his Christian beliefs. Eckert relates that because of this man's example, one of the Quaker Fellows was astonished to realize, "Oh my gosh, I might be a Christian." A goal Eckert sets is to help students learn "actual God language," or to give them words to use in expressing what they are thinking, feeling, and believing.

The Quaker Fellows program provides students with different ways to engage with ideas, concepts, and values associated with Quaker theology. As part of that engagement, each student is required to write in a journal for thirty minutes each week, in addition to attending courses, activities, and meetings. The fellows' meetings are where, according to Eckert, students learn "a way to articulate what's important to them" with a common language. Along with the meetings of the fellows, the required writing allows students to use theological language to reflect on their lives. The journal entries serve as instruments of witness and discernment. The writing commitment helps students narrate their lives and gain confidence that staff leaders will respond to them nonjudgmentally and in depth. In their own responses to the weekly writing assignments, the staff leaders model for the Quaker Fellows what others who gathered for the potluck meal also experience: members of a group encouraging each other, providing

hospitality and care, and listening attentively to and talking with each other about what is important to them.

The program also challenges students to make choices about how they live out their values. For two fellows, this means they have a pact not to censure others aloud. If they are tempted to say something negative about another person, they instead use the phrase "wild grapes." As one student mused after the potluck, the meetings of Quaker Fellows are a specified time in their busy schedules for each to consider his or her beliefs, what is important, and how to live. Other students are clear that the Quaker Fellows program has changed them by deepening their faith and helping them reflect on their values, articulate their beliefs, discern how they want to live in the world, and live according to their values and beliefs.

Faculty do not necessarily see it "as their place" or know how to help students discern a vocation

Courses for reflection and discernment

The Quaker Fellows program at Earlham is designed to develop a close-knit cohort of students who reflect over the course of their undergraduate lives, as they pursue their majors, take courses together on Quaker thought and history, and discern their vocations. Andy Chan, vice president for personal and career development at Wake Forest University, leads an approach that looks very different, though what he and colleagues from the Office of Personal and Career Development have created also provides students with opportunities to reflect on their values and discern their vocations.

The idea of establishing the Office of Personal and Career Development grew out of Wake Forest President Nathan Hatch's consideration of both the mission of the school and, more generally, the liberal arts. In Hatch's view, it has never been harder in higher education to help students discern their vocations and find ways to live with meaning and purpose. As he put it, faculty do not necessarily see it "as their place" or know how to help students discern a vocation. For Wake Forest, a school dedicated to the liberal arts and to a collegiate ideal, he sees the challenge of vocational discernment as "mission central." However, as President Hatch was refining Wake Forest's mission, the Great Recession began, lending new urgency to the question of how Wake Forest can help students discern a vocation as they pursue a rigorous liberal arts education and find ways to earn a living. He found his answer in Andy Chan.

Soon after he arrived from the Stanford Graduate School of Business, Andy Chan built a new office for personal and career development that offers open spaces for conversation, clearly delineated areas for research on careers, and spaces for quiet, private conversations. The layout is a bricks-and-mortar embodiment of the overall approach the office takes: optimistic exploration of possibilities for living one's life, measured research for how to achieve one's goals, and the development of reflective practices. Similarly, the office's website offers a path for the undergraduate's career, with signposts and benchmarks for students to follow.

The layout of the office aligns with the learning goals of four courses offered through the academic Department of Counseling that are designed to prompt reflection through dialogue. The college-to-career courses offer students a path that is marked by distinct rhythms of individual and group reflection. The courses are designed to help students explore their values, learn about their personal attributes, make decisions about their majors, and discern what kind of lives they might lead after they graduate. The first course in the series asks students to consider happiness and meaning, both abstractly and in their lives. In light of this, they discuss what their majors might be. The second course asks students to consider how they might want to live their lives after college and what career options might be available. In the third course, students learn the skills and strategies of career planning and job search, including how to research and evaluate options. The fourth course helps students realize and articulate the value of their liberal arts education and the professional competencies that they have learned to begin and sustain flourishing lives and careers after college.

Butler University

Overall, the sequence of courses challenges students first to learn about themselves, to discover what a liberal arts education offers them, and to develop and articulate the skills needed to help them align who they are with how they want to live in the world. The courses

Butler University

lead students from reflection on their lives and values through the process of discerning a vocation that will enable them to live according their hopes, goals, and values.

Slow reflection and discernment

Like President Hatch, former Butler University President Bobby Fong holds that the academy has a duty to help students grapple with important, difficult moral questions. He believes the academy also has a duty to develop the habits of the mind and heart that will enable graduates to live well, both by making a living and by living a life with purpose. To meet this duty, Butler offers students various opportunities through formal programs hosted by the Center for Faith and Vocation, a series of public seminars, and courses offered through the Department of Religion. As director of the Center for Faith and Vocation, Judith Cebula is largely responsible for steering these programs and seminars. Through engagement with a small number of faculty, students also have informal and unplanned opportunities for reflection and discernment over the course of their undergraduate lives.

One set of planned opportunities is available through the service-learning projects sponsored by the Center for Faith and Vocation. After engaging with them in a project or volunteer activity, a moderator asks students to reflect on their experiences and beliefs, also providing opportunities for self-critique. One student found her experiences of volunteering through the Center for Faith and Vocation to be unlike any previous volunteer work she had done. In the past, she had volunteered for her church, and when she and her fellow parishioners finished at a soup kitchen they left with an unambiguous sense that they were then better people. At the Center for Faith and Vocation, she found that it was not taken for granted that she was a better person, and she was asked to reflect on the ambiguities inherent to charity. She explained how she understood herself better because of such discussions and her reading of *Don Quixote*, a text in one of the PTEV courses.

At the heart of Butler's program is a strong, though small and informal, network of individuals who are willing to engage with students and who make themselves available to discuss questions of vocation, choices in students' lives, and their beliefs. One student narrated the process of how such conversations with two faculty members, Paul Valliere and Chad Bauman, changed him. Soon after this student started at Butler, he fell into a funk; he felt his world to be dark and cold. He mourned the deaths of several people close to him, he hated Indianapolis, he detested his roommate, and he decided to transfer from Butler. He was also taking Paul Valliere's class Faith, Doubt, and Reason, where his spirits lifted when he and his fellow students engaged in discussions about a ballet performance the class had attended. The readings for this class, especially *Crime and Punishment*, stand out as light in his darkness. In addition to his class assignments, he read Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha* and emailed Paul Valliere, who invited him for tea to talk about it. Their conversation about the book was casual, without hurry or pressure.

Two years later, this student proudly announced to another faculty member, Chad Bauman, that he had decided to spend his junior year in New Zealand. Bauman's response was not what the student expected. Why go to a place, Bauman asked him, where everyone speaks English and where study abroad students while away their time hopping from pub to pub? You can do better. Why not go to a country where few people speak English—Cambodia, say, or Nepal—and do something unexpected and important?

With help from the religion department and the Center for Faith and Vocation, the student applied for and received a scholarship for study in India, where he participated in a program on sustainable development and social change. He left the experience convinced that he had found what he wanted to do. He applied to the Peace Corps, was accepted, and plans eventually to attend graduate school in order to study international development. This student contends that the conversations about ideas, beliefs, and values and the questions faculty posed to him were particularly important to the subtle shift from feeling untethered to being able to be challenged, change his plans, and finally articulate his values and a vocation.

The choice to draw on practices from a faith tradition or from a liberal arts tradition did not seem to depend upon the position of faith in the school

What makes these programs successful? Whether they drew on a liberal arts or religious tradition, PTEV schools borrowed from each other and from a rich variety of practices common in higher education—including study abroad programs, experiential or service-learning programs, and special programs offered through chaplains' offices—and tailored them to suit their own particular needs. In general, schools took one of three approaches for engaging faculty, students, and staff in the exploration of vocation. In their design of new programs, or their expansion of already existing programs, schools such as Earlham drew directly and explicitly on a religious tradition in order to find practices and stances for living well. Several Jesuit schools offered student retreats or other opportunities to undertake the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola, founder of the Jesuit order. Others drew on secular traditions rooted in liberal education, as Butler did. These included modified "great books" course sequences or year-long seminars. The choice to draw on practices from a faith tradition or from a liberal arts tradition did not seem to depend upon the position of faith in the school. Gordon College, where the life of faith is central to the mission, instituted an honor's seminar that would be at home at any liberal arts college.

Although there are more differences than similarities among Earlham College, Wake Forest University, and Butler University in terms of size, student demographics, location, faculty composition, religious tradition, and other factors, each program offers (and some require) students the opportunity to complete credit-bearing courses rooted in the school's liberal arts curriculum. The vignettes sketched above hint at the variety of approaches and individuals who may lead such programs as well as the range of places on campus where programs can be offered.

Earlham demonstrates how program leaders from a center for religious life can work directly with students to develop a cohort and to challenge each as an individual. As a small, residential college with a faint faith tradition and a fierce dedication to upholding high academic and personal standards for students, Earlham found an approach that resonates with its faculty, staff, and students. Wake Forest provides opportunities for students to reflect on their values from the moment they start college. Andy Chan has been able to establish a career and personal development office that offers students many chances at various points in their development as college students. By way of measured steps, students learn about themselves, articulate their values, and discern what is most important to them as they explore their career options. At Butler, Paul Valliere, Chad Bauman, and other faculty members make themselves available to students, get to know them, and challenge them to reflect and discern a vocation for a life of meaning and purpose. □

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

NOTES

1. See Andrew Delbanco, *College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012); Anthony T. Kronman, *Education's End: Why Our Colleges and Universities Have Given Up on the Meaning of Life* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007); Mark William Roche, *Why Choose the Liberal Arts?* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010).

2. See Tim Clydesdale, *Calling on Purpose: The Conversation Every Campus Must Have with Students* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015).

Higher Education as a Matter of National Security

Can a Democracy Plan Ahead?

DAVID SKAGGS

WHAT IS OFTEN VIEWED as the fairly arcane business of determining and administering higher education policy is a matter of great national interest and, actually, a matter of national security. It thus makes a difference for American society in ways you may not have considered.

My thesis is pretty straightforward. The ability of the United States to protect itself and its interests around the world—our national security, broadly defined—depends directly on the strength of our economy. And it is clear that economic strength in the era of global competition depends on a nation's educational attainment—most importantly, the proportion of the workforce with postsecondary credentials.

National security is inherently a function of the economy, and the economy is inherently a function of educational attainment

What you and your higher education colleagues do has a direct bearing on the nation's economic viability and our ability to project power and influence for good in the world. I've learned that politicians and sportscasters share a common skill or conceit, namely, the ability to say something obvious and make it sound profound. That's what I just did—at least, the obvious part.

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We've been here before; in the fall of 1957, the Soviets' launch of Sputnik sent an existential chill down the spine of this country. How could the Commies have beaten us into orbit?

Before heading farther down this path, let me make a disclaimer. My argument is going to be essentially pragmatic. Please don't misinterpret. I do not want to fall into the trap of justifying education only on the basis of national economic and military power. As the product of a liberal arts education, I cherish the *in*trinsic, noneconomic value an education has for the educated person, as well as the *ex*trinsic value education has for the society and democracy. However, as a politician, I realize that such sentiments don't cut it in these days of sequestration and budget cliff-hanging. So, please forgive the necessity of appealing to necessity.

The connection between education and national defense

We spend more on education than on national defense. Who'd have thought, or wanted, it to be otherwise? Still, I fear that the *connection* between the two is hugely underappreciated—the direct relationship between education and the ability of the United States to hold its own in the world economically and eventually, as a consequence, as a world power. National security is inherently a function of the economy, and the economy is inherently a function of educational attainment.

In the national debate about what matters, education needs to pull out all the stops and make all its best arguments. One argument that has been neglected is based on the direct relationship between educational attainment and national security. In the near term, the debate about our national stature will still turn a lot on military capability. So, it's probably smart for educators to try to drill into that conversation.

Wabash College

In the economics of national strength and stature, educators should be able to exert the sort of leverage we usually attribute to hedge fund managers and derivatives traders.

Now, I don't see us relinquishing our power position in the world any time soon. We will devote whatever it takes to remain the sole superpower—until it takes too much of GDP. That would be too much of a GDP that is at risk of not keeping pace with other advanced nations, not keeping pace largely because, in a global information-age economy, the US economy is hampered by an underperforming educational system.

Before some recent improvement, the US educational system had essentially flat-lined the proportion of adults with postsecondary degrees and certificates. Meanwhile, most of Europe and much of Asia have charged ahead of us in this critical predictor of economic strength.

The public and policy makers alike expect a lot from educators, especially those in higher education. That is an expectation that has been heightened by the huge recent increases in tuition, costs, and, consequently, student debt. The public needs to not misunderstand what is at stake. (Sorry for the double negative.) At key risk of misunderstanding is that higher education is just a *private* good, an expense justified by increased earning power. That's all well and good, but it can't be the end of the discussion. If it is, it may portend the end of higher education as we know it—that is, as a system historically supported though public expenditures because policy makers (and their constituents) see in it a *public* good, the importance of which isn't fairly captured in private income data.

I'd love somehow to broker a conversation between Chuck Hagel, the secretary of defense,

and Arne Duncan, the secretary of education, in which Secretary Hagel would recognize the connection between what Secretary Duncan is trying to accomplish today and the ability of his own successor in, say, 2025 to be able to sustain American power in the world. I have no doubt that Secretary Hagel "gets it." But his silo is not well connected to Secretary Duncan's silo. They're both too preoccupied with the exigencies of today to have much time left to fashion some interdepartmental strategy that might show results in a generation. But, in the long haul, they are in the same business: preserving what's best about America.

Currently, an army sergeant E-5 with a high school diploma earns about $55,000 in pay and benefits annually; a first lieutenant with a college degree earns about $80,000. The average new teacher earns less than the sergeant, and the average tenure-track assistant professor earns less than the lieutenant. It carries no disrespect to the military to suggest that something closer to parity with the sergeant and lieutenant is in order.

Assuming you may be persuaded—or didn't need persuading—that there's a connection between postsecondary education and national security, let me now draw out some of the implications of that proposition.

Here's the bottom line: the most important thing you can do as higher education policy folks is to be consumed 24/7 with the messy business of our representative democracy. The best policies in the world related to completion or longitudinal data will count for little unless they are embraced by policy makers, especially state and federal legislators, and their employers, the ever more fractured and politically self-segregated electorate—people who often don't look past the *private* benefits of higher education.

What will be the Sputnik of the twenty-first century that will push our society out of its individualistic preoccupation with *private* wealth and put us back in touch with our legacy quest for *public* richness?

I hope we can aspire to a better grasp of some fundamental values that need to be instilled in and by every educator—the values of community, democratic involvement, and citizenship. These are not academic disciplines or subject-matter areas. However, these values are at the foundation of any educational system that prepares its students for their eventual responsibilities. They are about character as well as competency. And competency *without* character is not all that attractive.

The centrality of citizenship

Let's consider briefly the impact of computers and technology on our sociability and, so, on our democracy. The isolative effects of the personal computer—and of our collective online habits—are both direct and indirect. We are spending more time *alone* with our computers and smart phones, and less time in the personal, physical company of other human beings. While technology enables us better to manage our individual informational intake, it often serves to exclude what we may disagree with or think we needn't learn about. Although some research has suggested that the Internet may be more broadening than narrowing, I have to say that the narrowing makes more intuitive sense than the broadening. And it comports better with what I see and experience.

A base level of public honesty is needed to support the integrity of our politics. Our system of government and our sense of a democratic political community depend on broad exposure to what's around us—on an understanding of differences among us, and on the tolerance that comes from that understanding. Together, that understanding and tolerance are the predicate for compromise and problem solving, which are, in turn, the central function and responsibility of our representative democracy. To the extent that *the way* we learn narrows our social and political horizons, it starts to get in the way of the solving of our society's problems. It subverts the raw materials of compromise.

The technological advances that both facilitate intellectual pursuits and erode them seem likely, at the same time, to impede social pursuits and the efficacy of democracy. The way we learn and communicate with each other—or don't—affects the way we govern ourselves. If schools and colleges—if *educators*—are not seized of the centrality of citizenship, I fear they will eventually fail us as much as if they didn't address the STEM disciplines.

The ability of our people to appreciate *and act on* the connection between educational attainment and our national and international strength depends on their being ready to be, and motivated to participate as, responsible citizens. The viability of our *democracy* is a direct function of civic literacy and participation. In turn, the viability of our *educational system* is a first derivative of that civic literacy and participation. Our elected representatives need to pay attention to civic deficits as much as to budget deficits. The latter won't likely

be solved without progress on the former. So, too, must our educators pay attention.

The founders—especially Jefferson—understood this. They knew that their experiment in self-government through representative democracy could not succeed unless the citizens—the voters—understood what it was all about and were both prepared and inclined to participate. In a compelling aphorism, John Dewey gave voice to this civic mission of the schools early in the last century: "Democracy needs to be reborn in each generation, and education is its midwife."

The most important thing you can do as higher education policy folks is to be consumed 24/7 with the messy business of our representative democracy

Why is that? Well, our governmental structure and the ways it works (or doesn't) is complicated stuff. We are not genetically hardwired as citizens. Self-government involves learned behavior. It must be taught.

One of my favorite statements from the founders is Madison's explanation of what a republic is all about. I like it because it actually makes it sound like being a legislator is an honorable calling. In *Federalist 10,* Madison explained the difference between direct democracy and representative democracy and the reasons that a representative democracy was central to the new American republic:

> A republic, by which I mean a government in which the scheme of representation takes place, opens a different prospect, and promises the cure. . . . The two great points of difference between a democracy and a republic are: first, the delegation of the government, in the latter, to a small number of citizens elected by the rest. . . . The effect . . . is . . . to refine and enlarge the public views, by passing them through the medium of a chosen body of citizens, whose wisdom may best discern the true interest of their country, and whose patriotism and love of justice will be least likely to sacrifice it to temporary or partial considerations.

Admittedly, with its eighteenth-century language, this is fairly esoteric material. But it is absolutely central to understanding our system of government. Conversely, without a grasp of such basics, we risk becoming a people who are dismissive or distrustful of politics because our people don't understand it—probably because they were never taught it. And, I fear, that is what we have gradually become: a people dismissive and distrustful of government.

A few years ago, the American Bar Association conducted an extensive poll to determine how well American adults understood their own government. The poll asked people to identify the three branches of government. Barely half of the sample polled had the right answer. The remainder was split, answering either Democrats, Republicans, and Independents or local, state, and federal.[1] If the adult players don't know the rules, it's awfully hard for them to play the game. So let's also take a look at the farm team for citizenship, our K-12 system.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress—better known as NAEP, or the Nation's Report Card—tests a broad cross section of our students on a range of subjects. There is a NAEP test in civics for students in grades four, eight, and twelve that is given every four years, most recently in 2010. For each grade level, questions are designed to measure civic knowledge, intellectual and participatory skills, and civic dispositions.

How did our kids do? In comparison to earlier years, the average scores in 2010 didn't change much, even though the vast majority of students reported learning about civics in eighth grade and studying civics or government in high school. That may sound reassuring. However, the grade-level scores all hovered around 150 (the maximum score is 300). Approximately two-thirds of students scored below "proficient." Seventy percent of eighth graders could not identify the historical purpose of the Declaration of Independence.[2]

Now, maybe people don't need to be able to recite in Madisonian terms the philosophical underpinning of the Republic. They do, however, need to know that this country and our fifty states are set up to be republics. And they need to know the differences between a republic and a pure democracy. To live in one but expect the other is a sure prescription for frustration and disenchantment.

The role of politicians

Let me quickly stipulate that we politicians, former and current, are due our fair share of the blame. That's in part the result of some mixture of educational fatigue and pandering on their—our—part. The educational fatigue comes from politicians not having the energy—maybe even

the desire—to fulfill their role as educators themselves. Politicians need to explain what it is they are up to and how it's supposed to work. It has to go with the territory for our electeds also to be teachers. It is in the essence of the representative dynamic for those in office to come home and explain their decisions. It has to become part of *their* accountability system.

This country has systematically engaged in unilateral civic disarmament for a couple of generations

Here's where the pandering comes in. It is in politicians' acquiescing to the idea that they, our representatives at whatever level, from Congress to general assemblies to city councils and boards of education, are mere agents of popular opinion.

Politics is not arithmetic or polling. If we let our people think it is, then they will inevitably be disillusioned and turned off by it—and very hard to persuade that they should trust government. And the schools are the places where most people have the most telling and personal encounter with government.

Those of us who hold (or held) public office have to be proud enough of the work that we do—the time we put in, the homework we do, the deliberations we undertake before negotiating the compromises—and the skills and knowledge it takes to do it, to stand up and explain that the end result is the product of *judgment*, not just some reflexive, mechanical assessment of what the voters believe they want and, therefore, believe they are entitled to. A representative in our system, at whatever level, is hired to exercise judgment and discretion based on expertise—expertise informed by deliberations and tempered by compromise—all in the cause of serving purposes *greater than*, but not *disrespectful of*, one's constituency.

Here is where we face the challenge for a representative democracy trying to plan ahead. Planning ahead usually involves making the case for deferred gratification. That is, it involves saving and investing now for a more important goal in the future. An electorate that hasn't been educated to insist on problem-solving behavior and compromise is not likely to be susceptible to arguments for deferred gratification. It may be the greater long-term interests of the district, the city, the county, the state, the nation, or the world. Our purposes in public life cannot be limited by the *immediate*, self-defined, and self-serving interests of the voters who elect us.

It is the duty of everyone running for or holding office to explain that reality—to be a civics teacher of this fundamental truth. This involves absolutely no disrespect for the voters. To the contrary, we must credit them with the intelligence to understand that leaders in whatever office ought to have a broader perspective and a long-term view of what ultimately serves the public interest. Crediting voters with that *capacity* to understand their system of government is merely a starting point. It is a source of hope. It means that we have some reasonable prospect for turning around the current dysfunction in our politics.

Some of you may remember the old Pogo cartoon that Walt Kelly did for the first Earth Day. Pogo is sitting in the middle of a swampy pool with discarded tires, an old washing machine, and bottles marked with "XXX." The caption reads, "We have met the enemy, and he is us."

As appealing as it may be to blame the politicians for all that ails the body politic, this misses the boat. Electoral politics is a kind of market system, where votes serve the role that money plays in the conventional marketplace. Just as the efficiency of consumer markets depends on transparency and good information and informed and savvy consumers, so too does the efficiency of political markets.

Yet, this country has systematically engaged in unilateral civic disarmament for a couple of generations. The teaching of government—that midwifery of democracy, as Dewey would have it—has been severely neglected. We have asked the schools to fill a whole lot of other obligations, but at a deep cost to their original responsibility to educate citizens.

American democracy surely has to be protected. But it also has to be nurtured and cared for. I am confident that with some care and feeding, the American people can regain a sufficient understanding of their own political system. If so, they will again insist on electing people who realize that their job is not to bow to ideology but to work out the differences that will always beset a huge and diverse nation. We have to figure out how to re-knit some semblance of a political community that can function—function with the give-and-take needed to work *through*, and work *out*, our differences. We all must be stewards of democracy.

Candidates appeal to us with simplistic arguments, like "government should be run more like a business." I fear most Americans don't

The College of New Jersey

appreciate or understand why requirements like due process and equal protection actually mean that we have to put up with some necessary *in*efficiencies in the cause of something more important—fairness and justice. We need citizens who can take apart notions like "running government more like a business" and figure out what about the idea may make some sense, and what is a red herring. I believe most people would agree with President John Kennedy that "the ignorance of one voter in a democracy impairs the security of all."[3]

The role of educators

The connection between higher education and national well-being and security is obvious. But to make that connection work politically requires that you, as educators, look beyond your usual provinces and provinciality. You must recognize your existential stake in a political system that can function. You must take on the job of restoring basic civic literacy, or, I fear, our politics will fail to plan and to appreciate and support our colleges and universities.

One weapon you have to deploy is your fundamental role in advancing national security and economic strength. I ask that you find some way to bring a sense of urgency about this to your work, as tangential as it might seem at first. Your work in higher education can thrive only in a broader and broadened educational culture, one that embraces its own civic connections—from teachers, students, and citizens to the nation's economic and political strength and to our national security—and then returns to supporting schools and teachers.

Your work—either by intention or through in*a*ttention—will shape how the coming generation sees its role in the democracy. Will you see to it that members of the next generation are encouraged to look beyond their academic disciplines and see their role in the great American political experiment? If they *do*, the experiment can only succeed; and with its success, so also will come success in educational attainment, economic well-being, and national strength. If they *don't*, then I fear the further crumbling of the political foundation on which the educational system and our national strength rests.

The democracy lesson is not for someone else. It is for us. There is no more important work to be done—for the sake of education. □

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

NOTES

1. Harris Interactive, *Civics Education* (Washington, DC: American Bar Association, 2005).

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A Big LEAP for Texas

LORAINE PHILLIPS, DAVID ROACH, AND CELIA WILLIAMSON

In January 2014, Texas officially became the tenth LEAP state

IMAGINE TRYING TO COORDINATE the efforts of fifty community colleges, thirty-eight universities, and six university systems—encompassing nearly 1.5 million students—within the constraints of accreditation, state and federal regulations, increased accountability, decreasing state support, increasing costs, and loudly articulated pressures for cost containment. Imagine trying to balance the needs of the "new traditional" student who must juggle family, work, and school with the expectations of providing a robust college experience. Imagine trying to respond to the need to update curricula continually in order to address societal and workforce needs, while also providing for smooth transferability. And imagine trying to do all of this in the context of a quickly changing technological environment, full of MOOCs, badges, and alternative educational providers.

It can be *very trying,* indeed.

But imagine, also, what it might mean for those 1.5 million students as they make their way in this quickly changing world. Imagine empowered graduates who stand ready to tackle the complexities they face in a world where the job they may hold tomorrow doesn't even exist today and the colleagues they may work with are half a world away. This is the state of complexity we live within. This is the state of Texas—and, perhaps, the state you find yourself in, as well.

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This article chronicles the ongoing journey of a group of educators in Texas who are engaging with each other and with the resources available through the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) in order to address these challenges and leverage the opportunities that come with them.

In 2006, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, a statewide regulatory body, convened the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee and charged it with updating the core curriculum that is mandatory for all public institutions in Texas. At the time the committee began its work, the state-required core, set forth in 1997, included forty-two to forty-eight credit hours, which were distributed across eight specific "component areas" representing various disciplines. Each component area was tied to between five and twelve "exemplary educational outcomes." In addition, institutions were expected to address six "intellectual competencies" and eight "perspectives." While the intention to provide a common foundation for learning across the state was commendable, its implementation resulted in a complex set of criteria that posed challenges for both assessment and transfer.

The committee drew upon the wisdom and resources developed through AAC&U's Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP) initiative to guide its work, and it published two white papers with recommendations for improving undergraduate education in Texas. The second of these papers provided explicit recommendations that align closely with LEAP's Essential Learning Outcomes.[1]

Addressing the challenge of transferability

As a statewide group composed of members from community colleges and universities alike, the

Texas Tech University

Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee worked hard to find the right balance between the need to localize and personalize education in order to make it clearly relevant and engaging, on the one hand, and the need to facilitate students' ability to transfer to another institution without undue loss of credit, on the other. Achieving robust transferability was a key priority for the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board. Yet, individual campuses were also well aware of the local needs of their students and the importance of ensuring that the content of early classes is highly engaging so that students connect with enthusiasm in their early coursework.

In the 1997 state mandates, transferability of the core was anchored in providing the same *content*, regardless of where the student took the course. This was promoted through a set of "exemplary educational outcomes" designated for each area of the core. The practical challenge here was that the outcomes needed to be sufficiently generic to apply across, for example, all fields of natural science, while still being sufficiently specific to ensure that a student could smoothly move from one institution to another. Finding the right balance proved difficult. When the outcomes were sufficiently general to apply to both physics and astronomy classes, for example, they were too diffuse to address the issues of transfer adequately.

The LEAP framework provided an alternative. Rather than anchoring on *content*, the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes allow for an anchoring on *skills*. This was the strategy adopted by the committee (see table 1). Both the Texas core and LEAP build upon a breadth of disciplines, ensuring that students are exposed to a range of disciplinary perspectives and frames. These provide the context for developing the skills needed for the world to come. The aspects of personal and social responsibility, also clearly articulated in both frameworks, are also anchored in key skills, such

as decision making and intercultural competence.

In terms of progress toward a major, the courses in the foundational component areas offer introductory content. These courses also provide the context for cultivating skills essential to both citizenship and career—a key goal of liberal education (the "core"). By practicing the skills across a variety of disciplines, students gain "transferability" in two senses. First, when they move from one institution to another, they can be assured of gaining the full set of skills. Second, and perhaps even more importantly, they learn to recognize the skills in the context of more than one discipline or situation, allowing for "transfer" into a variety of life situations.

Access to content does not result in education

The Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee created a matrix (see table 2) to indicate which component areas within the core would give special attention to each of the six learning outcomes, assigning a minimum of three skill areas to each component area. This was done to ensure that students would gain from repeated exposure to those skills across contexts, regardless of where they took a particular part of the core.

Table 1. Comparison of outcomes

Texas Core Curriculum	LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes
Foundational Component Areas • Communication • Mathematics • Life and Physical Sciences • Language, Philosophy, and Culture • Creative Arts • American History • Government/Political Science • Social and Behavioral Sciences	**Knowledge of Human Cultures and the Physical and Natural World** • Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts *Focused* by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring
Core Objectives • Critical Thinking Skills—to include creative thinking, innovation, inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and synthesis of information • Communication Skills—to include effective development, interpretation, and expression of ideas through written, oral, and visual communication • Empirical and Quantitative Skills—to include the manipulation and analysis of numerical data or observable facts resulting in informed conclusions • Teamwork—to include the ability to consider different points of view and to work effectively with others to support a shared purpose or goal	**Intellectual and Practical Skills, including** • Inquiry and analysis • Critical and creative thinking • Written and oral communication • Quantitative literacy • Information literacy • Teamwork and problem solving *Practiced extensively,* across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance
• Personal Responsibility—to include the ability to connect choices, actions, and consequences to ethical decision making • Social Responsibility—to include intercultural competence, knowledge of civic responsibility, and the ability to engage effectively in regional, national, and global communities	**Personal and Social Responsibility, including** • Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global • Intercultural knowledge and competence • Ethical reasoning and action • Foundations and skills for lifelong learning *Anchored* through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

Advantages in the changing context of higher education

By viewing the core curriculum through the lens of skills rather than content, the committee was able to address a key challenge in the broader educational environment. In the current "Google-enabled world," content is no longer primarily the responsibility or even the purview of education. Content is becoming increasingly ubiquitous and freely available. Yet we know that access to content does not result in education. Individuals become educated when they learn to make productive and appropriate use of content, making clear judgments about what content to use and how to use it, and combining that content in new ways to bring new understanding. This requires the cultivation of key skills—the very skills outlined by LEAP and recommended by the committee. This move from anchoring on content to anchoring on skills allowed the committee to "recalibrate college learning to the needs of the new global century."[2]

Addressing challenges of assessment and accountability

The Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee also grappled with the need for assessments that balance the need to provide feedback for students with the need to use assessment results for institutional improvement and accountability. The first step in addressing the assessment challenge was to move from a complex variety of items (six "intellectual competencies," eight "perspectives," and a total of thirty-seven "exemplary educational outcomes") to a more streamlined set of expectations, which is articulated in the six outcomes drawn from the LEAP Essential Learning Outcomes. By focusing on six key skills and addressing them repeatedly across the core, institutions gained clarity and the potential to measure student growth. Moreover, AAC&U's Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Education (VALUE) rubrics not only provide a practical tool for institutions to use in assessing student work, but they also open the door for the possibility of external benchmarking of student achievement.[3]

In these ways, AAC&U's LEAP initiative provided an excellent framework for the committee, as it is built upon shared educational goals and values: inclusive excellence, clearly constructed learning and highly valued outcomes, high-impact practices to move students toward deep learning, and authentic assessments that demonstrate the integration and application of knowledge and skills. By anchoring on these shared values, the committee was able to explore

Table 2. Matrix used to indicate which component areas within the core give special attention to each of the six learning outcomes

Foundational Component Area	Critical Thinking	Communication Skills	Empirical & Quantitative Skills	Teamwork	Social Responsibility	Personal Responsibility
Communication	Required	Required	Optional	Optional	Required	Required
Mathematics	Required	Required	Required	Optional	Optional	Optional
Life & Physical Sciences	Required	Required	Required	Required	Optional	Optional
Language, Philosophy, and Culture	Required	Required	Optional	Required*	Required	Required*
Creative Arts	Required	Required	Optional	Required	Required	Optional
American History	Required	Required	Optional	Optional	Required	Required
Government/Political Sciences	Required	Required	Optional	Required	Required	Required
Social/Behavioral Science	Required	Required	Required	Optional	Required	Required
Component Area Option	Follow corresponding component area requirements					

**Based on proposed state rules (August 26, 2011)*

a variety of strategies to meet the challenge of creating a cohesive curriculum that would also facilitate transfer of credit between institutions. LEAP's advantage is that it provides a well-defined, yet flexible structure. It sets parameters without either requiring a level of conformity that would limit the creative energy of faculty and students or obscuring those unique aspects of a particular college or university.

Moving from the work of the committee to the work of the consortium

Through the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee, the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board provided an excellent framework for the work of revising the state-mandated core curriculum. The committee facilitated robust conversations and engaged in multi-institutional dialogue about the challenges facing the state. As the individual institutions moved toward the implementation of the new plan, however, it seemed prudent to engage in the work outside the structures of the coordinating board. With the board's approval, a voluntary association was created by interested institutions across the state. The creation of this new association helped decouple the work from the oversight role of the coordinating board, which allowed the institutions themselves—and the faculty within them—to take the lead.

Pursuing the LEAP path

When the Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board approved the new core curriculum, many on the Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee realized that more support would be needed to implement the new curriculum statewide. Representatives from colleges and universities across Texas began a dialogue that culminated in the formation of the LEAP Texas Task Force. Initially meeting in September 2011, the LEAP Texas Task Force was composed of representatives from each of the six systems in the state and the Independent Colleges and Universities of Texas as well as representatives from individual community colleges, private institutions, and one independent public institution. At this especially inspirational meeting, the representatives dreamed of what could be and began outlining strategic paths. Very quickly, the LEAP Texas Task Force realized that broad-based inclusion and support would be needed from institutions across the state, if such a "grassroots initiative" was ultimately to become an official "LEAP state"—joining California, Indiana, Kentucky, Massachusetts, North Dakota, Oregon, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin as formal partners with AAC&U in the LEAP States Initiative.[4]

Through targeted, system-based work, AAC&U's LEAP States Initiative fosters cross-campus collaborations in order to raise levels of

Table 3. A view of the resonance between LEAP and the Texas core curriculum

LEAP Focus	Texas Context
Essential Learning Outcomes • Knowledge • Skills • Responsibility • Application	New student learning objectives in the core curriculum have shifted to emphasize the following student competencies: critical thinking, communication, empirical and quantitative skills, teamwork, social responsibility, and personal responsibility.
Authentic Assessment	The core curriculum creates opportunities to address accountability within a framework that supports innovation and a continued focus on students.
High-Impact Practices	Research-based strategies target student success, particularly among students in one of the most diverse states.
Inclusive Excellence	All public institutions in Texas are accountable for *Closing the Gaps: The Texas Higher Education Plan*, which sets forward goals for student participation, student success, institutional excellence, and research funding.

inclusion and success for all students. In the summer of 2011, in an effort to initiate such collaborations, the LEAP Texas Task Force issued a call to institutional representatives across the state, seeking their responses to the prospect of Texas becoming a LEAP state. As a result of a series of responses to this call from interested institutions, interactions with AAC&U staff members, and revisions of the core curriculum, it was determined that the LEAP Texas initiative would focus on four key areas.

LEAP's advantage is that it provides a well-defined, yet flexible structure

1. *Leveraging the redesigned state core curriculum*. The first step in the LEAP Texas initiative was to foster cross-institutional conversations concerning the alignment of the state outcomes and institutional core curricula in the component areas. (The new core outcomes and applications within component areas are shown in table 2.) The LEAP Texas initiative group coordinated several statewide meetings to discuss institutional alignment and strategies for the implementation of the new outcomes. Participants from the various institutions were particularly interested in discussing how to integrate state core outcomes in specific areas (e.g., implementing instruction and assessment of communication skills in life and physical sciences).

2. *Assessing core objectives*. When expectations for the application and implementation of the state outcomes are firmly established in the curriculum, the LEAP Texas initiative will facilitate collaboration on the development and implementation of authentic assessment methods across participating institutions. The AAC&U VALUE rubrics will serve as a starting point and will be modified as needed to fit the expectations for the outcomes.

3. *Improving achievement through high-impact practices*. LEAP encourages institutions to foster the development of high-impact practices across curricula. The LEAP Texas initiative will raise awareness of the benefits of embedding high-impact practices within the undergraduate experience. And institutions across Texas will benefit from AAC&U resources and assistance as they identify, explore, and implement strategies to enhance high-impact practices.

4. *Becoming a LEAP state*. The fourth key area of activity for the LEAP Texas initiative was to engage state higher education institutions in a conversation about becoming an official partner with AAC&U through the LEAP States Initiative. This conversation was contextualized by many challenges, including multiple institutional structures and systems, an increasingly diverse and growing student population, increasing demands for accountability, the proposition of a new core curriculum for the state, and a period of rapidly changing technology and globalization. To be proactive in addressing these challenges, the LEAP Texas initiative has focused on the structure and depth of research found in the LEAP framework. Table 3 provides a view of how LEAP themes resonate with core curriculum activities in Texas.

The tenth LEAP state

In January 2014, by which point LEAP Texas had become a voluntary coalition of more than sixty higher education institutions across the state, Texas had officially become the tenth LEAP state. As a consortial partner in AAC&U's LEAP States Initiative, LEAP Texas will continue the work of leveraging the redesigned state core curriculum for the overall improvement in undergraduate education, creating a capacity for inter-institutional collaboration in robust and authentic assessment, and embedding high-impact practices in the undergraduate curriculum. □

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

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1. Undergraduate Education Advisory Committee, *Revising the State Core Curriculum: A Focus on 21st Century Competencies* (Austin, TX: Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board, 2011), http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/index.cfm?objectid=6EA8957A-D7E2-C369-67F42EC166BC88FC.

2. Association of American Colleges and Universities, *College Learning for the New Global Century: A Report from the National Leadership Council for Liberal Education and America's Promise* (Washington, DC: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2007), vii.

3. For more information about AAC&U's VALUE initiative, see http://www.aacu.org/leap/index.cfm.

4. For more information about AAC&U's LEAP States Initiative, see http://www.aacu.org/leap/states.cfm.

Why Are We Hiring So Many Non-Tenure-Track Faculty?

ADRIANNA KEZAR AND SEAN GEHRKE

WHY ARE WE HIRING so many non-tenure-track faculty? The answer may at first seem so obvious as to make the question itself seem absurd. Most department chairs, deans, and tenured or tenure-track faculty members would likely point to budget shortfalls, last-minute increases in enrollments, and the inability to win approval for new tenure-track faculty positions. Yet, these simple answers obscure a larger, systemic trend: the majority of the faculty at US colleges and universities has been moved off the tenure track. Non-tenure-track faculty now account for nearly 70 percent of all faculty members, and three out of four hires nationally are off the tenure track.[1] Simple answers also hide the fact that hiring practices have changed in recent years; hiring decisions have become decentralized to departments, non-tenure-track faculty appointments are not tracked as tenure-track appointments are, larger strategic plans related to faculty hiring have been abandoned, and intentional and reflective hiring practices often are missing.

The majority of the faculty at US colleges and universities has been moved off the tenure track

These changes in hiring practices were first documented by John Cross and Edie Goldenberg, formerly dean and associate dean, respectively, of the College of Literature, Science, and the Arts at the University of Michigan. Cross and Goldenberg had noticed their own increasing reliance on non-tenure-track faculty in their college, but felt the reasons for this were not accurately reflected in claims that administrators were hiring more non-tenure-track faculty in order to "intentionally save money by hiring less expensive teachers" and further exploit them by providing little pay and benefits for many hours worked.[2] So they undertook a study of ten liberal arts colleges in elite research universities whose faculties had, like their own, devolved with little intentionality or even awareness to include large numbers of non-tenure-track members.

Cross and Goldenberg wanted to understand how such a process could and did indeed take place. In fact, as they dug deeper into data from the ten campuses, they discovered that the hiring trends were worse than they had anticipated or understood. They found that campuses had decentralized hiring processes; that few people were involved in the hiring of non-tenure-track faculty members; that no one was tracking faculty hiring; that no staffing plans existed, non-tenure-track faculty were not included in staffing plans, or staffing plans were not followed; that data were not routinely collected, and, when they were, the data were largely inaccurate; and that hiring was largely random and followed poor management principles.

When we do not carefully consider hiring processes, we do not realize that they may be problematic—may even threaten the mission and goals of the institution. Moreover, the lack of consideration leads to a lack of accountability. Who is, or should be, accountable for composing a robust faculty that is supported in its work and can meet the needs of the institution? At present, the answer often is that no one is accountable. And that is the crux of the problem. Intentional hiring and support for faculty are essential to fostering an academy that has integrity.

Why might the increasing reliance on non-tenure-track faculty be jeopardizing the integrity of the academy? Various studies have shown that, largely due to an absence of supportive policies and practices that are aligned with

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quality teaching, non-tenure-track faculty members do not use student-centered and high-impact teaching practices.[3] Furthermore, students who take more courses taught by non-tenure-track faculty are less likely to transfer, and institutions that have more non-tenure-track faculty also have lower retention and graduation rates.[4] In order to meet the academic mission and uphold the values of higher education institutions, student learning outcomes must remain at the forefront. The trend toward hiring and not adequately supporting non-tenure-track faculty threatens this mission. By examining current trends related to the hiring and utilization of non-tenure-track faculty, we can begin to strategize about how to restore the integrity that is being lost through the lack of intentionality in hiring and supporting faculty.

The findings from Cross and Goldenberg's study, which examined trends in faculty hiring at ten elite research universities only, led us to wonder how these trends are playing out in the broader academy. To expand on Cross and Goldenberg's work, we designed a national study of deans that examined a much larger set of institutions in order to better understand and scrutinize the hiring trends occurring across American higher education. The results are presented below. But first, we set the context by discussing broad principles of sound decision making.

Sound decision making: Values, pressures, and processes

Research on decision making suggests that—particularly in resource-tight times and when there is uncertainty in the external environment—the best decisions, those that enhance the performance of an organization, result from a combination of processes: scanning the environment to identify future trends; collecting data to support understanding of the issue and the environment; analyzing internal and external data; planning; conducting a cost-benefit analysis and weighing alternatives; fostering broad participation in decision making at multiple levels; explaining decisions to affected groups; and maintaining open channels of communication in order to enable people throughout the organization to respond and provide feedback on decisions. In fact, studies suggest that organizations facing instability and uncertainty may benefit most from such processes.[5]

The effective promotion of these strong decision-making processes requires that the expertise of decision makers be utilized, that a proactive stance be taken in response to pressures,

and that systematic organizational procedures be put in place. Accounting for the views, values, and expertise of decision makers is a key dimension of strong decision making,[6] and the processes listed above offer ways to do that. Additionally, decision makers must respond to pressures that come from shifting environments, including tightening budgets and changes in enrollments. Strong decision making depends on awareness of these pressures and on a resolve to take proactive steps in order to mitigate their negative effects.

Should presidents, department chairs, and faculty senates be more involved in the faculty hiring process?

External pressures can overwhelm an organization. Therefore, to be proactive, decision makers must ensure that a solid infrastructure of support in place so that people do not respond reactively to crises, but are instead guided by sound decision-making processes—even in the event of turbulence.[7] Such an infrastructure may include a capacity for collecting data, systems to tap into the collective wisdom of the organization, sound forecasting mechanisms (e.g., for enrollments), and flexible planning processes. Those in positions of authority are typically charged with putting such an infrastructure in place.

To what degree are these proven qualities of sound decision making reflected in faculty hiring practices? To what extent are those charged with making hiring decisions relying on consultation, data, and organizational planning? Are they tapping into the expertise and values of leaders? Do hiring decisions reflect an awareness of pressures, and do they constitute a proactive response? Answering these questions was the goal of our study.

The study

For this study, we utilized data from our 2012 survey of members of the American Conference of Academic Deans (ACAD) and the Council of Colleges of Arts and Sciences (CCAS), which was designed to evaluate college deans' views on the professoriate, their values, and their beliefs pertaining to the use of non-tenure-track faculty.[8] The survey also examined the pressures influencing deans' decision making in relation to faculty hiring as well as policies affecting non-tenure-track faculty. It contained forty-seven items, which were grouped into the following categories: faculty composition, faculty hiring practices, data gathering related to faculty hiring, policies regarding full- and part-time non-tenure-track faculty, and demographics.

In the spring of 2012, the survey was sent to the membership of both ACAD and CCAS. These organizations were chosen because of their national representation of academic deans, the administrators most often responsible for hiring non-tenure-track faculty and for setting related policies. A total of 278 participants completed the survey, resulting in a 30 percent response rate after accounting both for members from institutions that do not have a tenure system and for multiple members from the same institution. Respondents were evenly divided between public and private institutions and represented a broad range of institutional types: doctorate-granting institutions (22 percent), master's institutions (48 percent), baccalaureate institutions (25 percent), and associate's or other institutions (5 percent). The results presented below focus mainly on trend data from the survey.

Using organizational processes to ensure sound decision making

We found that deans often do not adhere to practices that lead to sound decision making in the context of reduced resources. For example, they do not typically engage in participative decision making, planning, formal and systemic processes, or data collection.

When asked who has primary responsibility for faculty hiring, the deans who participated in our survey reported that provosts and deans are predominantly tasked with setting hiring priorities; this is not a shared responsibility. Given that broad participation is likely to lead to better outcomes, should presidents, department chairs, and faculty senates be more involved in the faculty hiring process? How would less pressure on deans and provosts and more shared governance affect faculty hiring? In terms of involving others in the hiring process, more than half of the deans surveyed said that they consult department chairs and provosts regarding the composition of the faculty. Less than a third reported consulting the faculty and the president, and less than one-quarter reported consulting the faculty senate or board of trustees.

Typically, any communication about hiring occurs through informal means, such as private conversation, rather than through formal discussion, release and review of data, or issuance

of public statements. The exception is for provosts, who engage in more formal processes, such as presentations at faculty meetings and the release of public statements. Nonetheless, for presidents, provosts, and board members, private conversation is the predominant mode for communicating awareness of faculty composition. Additionally, the survey revealed that only a third of presidents are brought into conversations regarding the composition of the faculty. Could this informality and lack of presidential engagement contribute to the hiring of more non-tenure-track faculty than survey participants believe is best for the future of the academy? Could deans obtain greater support for their notion of the ideal faculty through more consultation and a more open process? It is difficult to say. Perhaps the involvement of more people in the process would lead to even more non-tenure-track faculty being hired. We believe that campus leaders ought to consider these questions. Clearly, stakeholders are not being engaged to the degree recommended in the literature on best practices in decision making.

Based on deans' responses, it appears that data on hiring trends, salary, benefits, and contract renewal are being collected. However, we suspect there may be problems with these data—particularly with respect to the data on part-time faculty. Cross and Goldenberg found campus data on non-tenure-track faculty to be extremely flawed and inaccurate.[9] Further, it is unclear how these data are used on campuses or how accessible they are, especially given that hiring processes seem mostly to be controlled by a single individual and involve minimal participation of others, and that data are not widely distributed or known about.

In addition to data collection, we asked about the amount of time available to reflect and gather information when deciding about non-tenure-track faculty hires. Most respondents reported either that they have little time for this or that they have time only occasionally, which suggests that the amount of time being devoted to these hiring decisions is less than ideal. Yet, most respondents also indicated that they have adequate time to strategize when hiring new faculty 90–100 percent of the time. This contradiction is worrisome, as it suggests that deans are unsure of the time they actually spend on hiring decisions. That is, despite indicating that they have adequate time to strategize, the deans reported having little time to reflect and gather information. So even if data exist, there is little time available to review them as part of strategizing. This leads us to hypothesize that data related to contract renewals are not used to recognize any ongoing need for faculty in certain positions, a recognition that could lead to multiyear appointments. Overall, we suspect that data could be used in more systematic and thoughtful ways. It is nonetheless important to acknowledge that the systemic collection of data does appear to be occurring, which is good.

In terms of planning, nearly 40 percent of respondents utilize a campus staffing plan, which can promote sound decision making. More than 80 percent of these plans include or consider non-tenure-track faculty, which is encouraging on the surface. However, only 28 percent of deans are held accountable for following these plans—a finding worthy of further examination. We also asked about accountability for hiring in general. The particular forms of accountability reported—such as reporting data to an identified office—suggest the prevalence of a relatively passive approach. Few respondents either receive direct feedback from the board or president or are held accountable for the plans they develop. In the absence of repercussions, faculty hiring practices are unlikely to receive additional attention and consideration.

In sum, there is room for improvement when it comes to the processes used for making faculty hiring decisions. Although it is good that data about non-tenure-track faculty are being collected, there is little planning, collective responsibility, or accountability for hiring decisions.

Tapping into expertise and values

For the most part, the process for making faculty hiring decisions does not appear to tap deans' expertise or reflect their values. Survey respondents recognize that, on average, non-tenure-track faculty members comprise 50 percent of the faculty at their institutions and that the number of non-tenure-track faculty members continues to increase on their campuses. So unlike in previous periods, when academic leaders noted little awareness of the changing composition of the faculty, today there is an understanding of the sheer numbers of non-tenure-track faculty and their continuing growth. Moreover, the deans we surveyed believe that the faculty should be largely composed of tenured or tenure-track members and that, ideally, the

Current hiring practices do not reflect the best thinking or intentions of deans

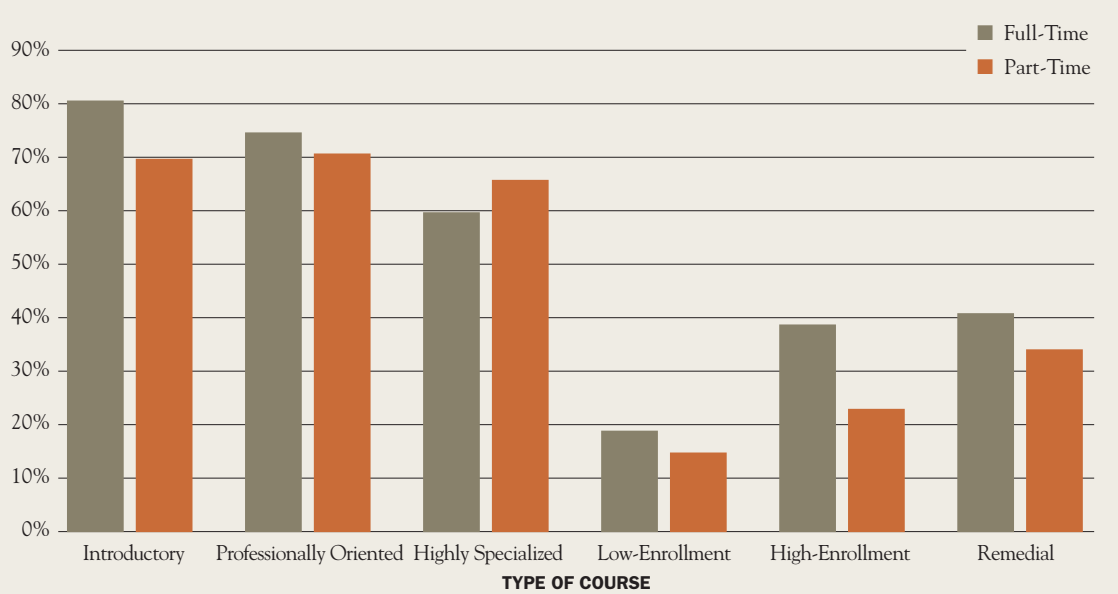
proportion of non-tenure-track faculty should be closer to 25 percent. They are particularly concerned about part-time faculty. While most believe that only about 10–20 percent of the non-tenure-track faculty at their institutions should be hired on a part-time basis, they recognize that the proportion of part-time faculty has increased significantly in recent years. As these survey findings demonstrate, current hiring practices do not reflect the best thinking or intentions of deans.

Additionally, most of the deans who responded to the survey feel that the proportion of non-tenure-track faculty to tenure-track faculty should vary by academic discipline and that, indeed, such variations exist on their campuses. However, it is unknown whether internal evidence exists to show that non-tenure-track faculty are better suited to some disciplines than others. While we did not ask about this issue in greater detail, we did wonder about this trend. We are aware of no existing research suggesting that a varying distribution of tenure among academic disciplines is good practice, but perhaps deans have developed an understanding about how expertise can best be used that has not been articulated or shared.

We asked deans which courses non-tenure-track faculty are best suited to teach (see fig. 1). Most responded by saying that non-tenure-track faculty should be used for introductory, professionally oriented, and highly specialized courses that match their expertise (since some non-tenure-track faculty come from industry, business, or the professions). Additionally, respondents said that non-tenure-track faculty should not be used in remedial education or high-enrollment courses. Here, we were struck by the lack of alignment between professed values and the reality of the use of non-tenure-track faculty today. High-enrollment and remedial courses tend to utilize large numbers of non-tenure-track faculty, yet deans indicated that these are the courses where non-tenure-track faculty should be less concentrated.

We also asked deans about their views of the abilities of non-tenure-track faculty and the contributions these faculty members make to the teaching and learning environment. Respondents agreed that non-tenure-track faculty can bring special knowledge, add to flexibility in institutional offerings, and help meet institutional objectives. Yet, they also expressed serious concerns about non-tenure-track faculty, including their relative unavailability to students, the potential for limiting creativity in curricular design, and the effects on shared governance.

Figure 1. Deans' views of the courses non-tenure-track faculty are best suited to teach



NOTE: *Percentages correspond to the percentage of deans who indicated that non-tenure-track faculty are suited to teach each type of course.*

However, although these concerns were registered by the deans who participated in the survey, they did not, in the end, shape hiring decisions nor were they brought into larger dialogues about institutional objectives. Clearly, there are competing values that make hiring decisions complex, but these competing values seem to be unbalanced, leaning in favor of the non-tenure-track faculty hire. If the composition of the faculty is not as academic leaders believe it should be, and if faculty members are not deployed in the best way possible, then what can and should be done? It is clear that the values and beliefs held by deans are not resulting in desired outcomes with regard to faculty hiring. The reason for this state of affairs may have to do with pressures originating in the external environment.

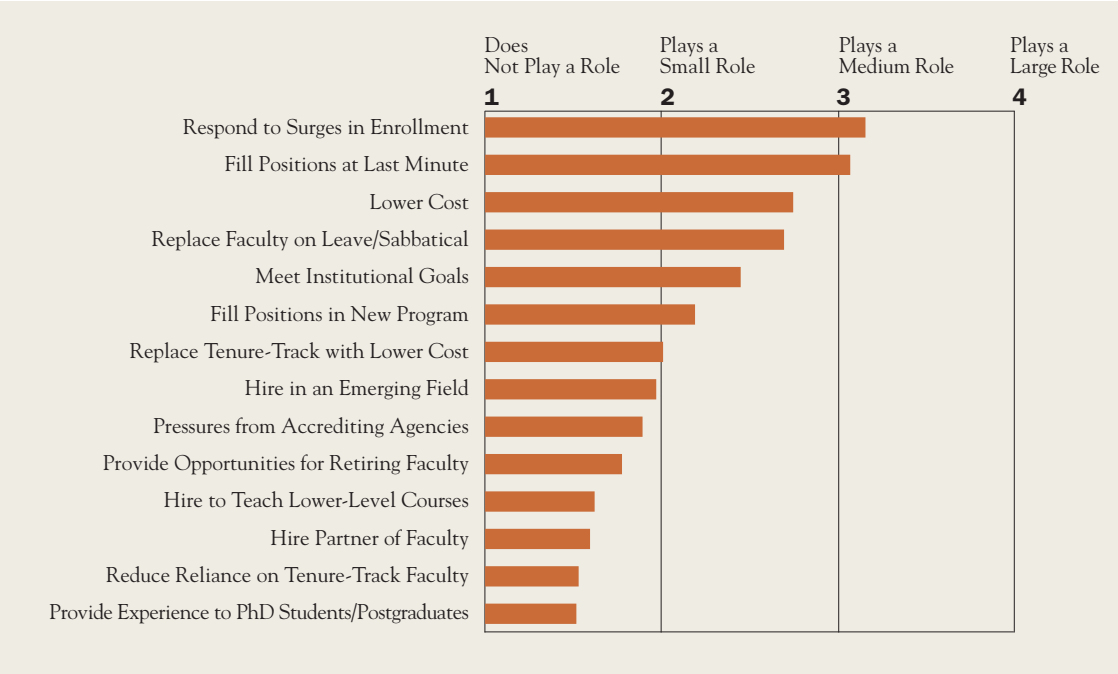
The buck has to stop with boards and presidents

Reacting versus being proactive in responding to external pressures

Colleges and universities, like most organizations, have to respond to shifts in demand and to financial upheavals. We asked deans about pressures that affect them and that lead to the hiring of non-tenure-track faculty (see fig. 2). Respondents identified the following (listed in order of importance) as the most significant pressures: surges in enrollment, the need to fill positions at the last minute, the need to fill positions for faculty on leave or sabbatical, budgetary constraints, and pressure to meet institutional goals. The fact that these pressures stem from more or less regular phenomena suggests that careful planning and systematic processes could alleviate them. Indeed, recognizing the negative effects last-minute hiring can have on educational quality and student learning, accreditors are beginning to encourage institutions to implement better planning practices in order to avoid it.

In addition to regular pressures, the recent recession led to a period of unprecedented turbulence in higher education. In this context, we asked deans how they directly responded to the recession. Among those deans who altered practices due to the recession, more than half indicated that their institutions hired more part-time non-tenure-track faculty—the action most often cited by respondents to the survey. Additionally, among all campuses represented in our survey, hiring of full-time non-tenure-track faculty increased by 40 percent in response to the recession. It is not yet known whether these trends will be reversed as economic conditions improve. But in any case, the impact of these

Figure 2. Pressures that contribute to the decision to hire non-tenure-track faculty



ongoing pressures can be alleviated by intentional planning and through the utilization of systematic organizational processes. Offering multiyear contracts, for example, or hiring faculty further in advance of the start of a semester may alleviate some of the worst practices related to non-tenure-track faculty, practices that have been shown to have negative effects on the quality of the teaching and learning environment.

Conclusion

It is understandable that deans are not taking the best approaches to decision making; campus environments are not ordinarily structured in ways that would support deans in making thoughtful and intentional hiring decisions. Theories of good decision making do not hold the individual responsible for creating such an environment. Rather, to support individuals, campus leaders at the highest levels are responsible for ensuring that appropriate decision-making mechanisms are in place—such as planning, data collection, and a broad governance structure. The buck has to stop with boards and presidents. Yet, there is also collective responsibility for faculty hiring, and we suggest that leaders throughout a campus are complicit in not pushing others to make the decision-making environment more robust and supportive. We do not mean to suggest that deans are to blame; boards and presidents need to be more active in taking responsibility for who the faculty are and for understanding how non-tenure-track faculty are negatively affecting student learning and educational outcomes.

It is often claimed that there is no time to collect data or to plan, that the current chaotic and unsystematic management approach is the only available option, or that more thoughtful approaches would be likely to have the same outcome. Perhaps. But these claims run counter to research findings from other sectors, and without trying alternative approaches, we will never know for sure. Nonetheless, it is clear that presidents need to take responsibility for fostering an environment that promotes sound decision making. It is also clear that deans need to push harder for decisions that reflect their ideals and values, and they need to respond to environmental challenges thoughtfully rather than merely reacting to them. And, finally, better processes need to be put be in place; better systems and better planning would likely result in better hiring. □

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

NOTES

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3. See Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE), *Making Connections: Dimensions of Student Engagement* (Austin, TX: CCSSE, 2009); M. Kevin Eagan Jr. and Audrey J. Jaeger, "Effects of Exposure to Part-Time Faculty on Community College Transfer," *Research in Higher Education* 50, no. 2 (2009): 168–88; and Daniel Jacoby, "The Effects of Part-Time Faculty Employment on Community College Graduation Rates," *Journal of Higher Education* 77, no. 6 (2006): 1081–1103.

4. See Charles Harrington and Timothy Schibik, "Caveat Emptor: Is There a Relationship Between Part-Time Faculty Utilization and Student Learning Retention?," *Association for Institutional Research Professional File* 91 (Spring 2004): 1–6, http://airweb3.org/airpubs/91.pdf; and Jacoby, "The Effects of Part-Time Faculty Employment."

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6. Patrick E. Connor and Boris W. Becker, "Personal Values and Management: What Do We Know and Why Don't We Know More?," *Journal of Management Inquiry* 3, no. 1 (1994): 67–73; Bruce M. Meglino and Elizabeth C. Ravlin, "Individual Values in Organizations: Concepts, Controversies, and Research," *Journal of Management* 24, no. 3 (1998): 351–89.

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The La Verne Experience

A Common Core for Undergraduate and Graduate Students

DEVORAH LIEBERMAN

THE LASTING SENSE OF CONNECTION that a graduate feels for his or her alma mater is often rooted in those especially memorable aspects of the college experience—the times spent bonding with friends and faculty, practicing and playing on athletic teams, collaborating with professors on research, and serving as leaders in student government. Such fond memories may enrich the graduate's life, both personally and professionally, but do they really reflect the achievement of an institution's mission? At the University of La Verne, we want to give our students more than "fond" memories. We want to ensure that all receive a high-quality education and are well prepared to meet the needs of twenty-first-century employers. Yet, variables such as campus geography and student demographics can present challenges to meeting these goals.

For every student, the La Verne Experience integrates the academic curriculum, cocurricular activities, and civic and community engagement with the university's values and traditions

Spread across eleven campuses and distributed among more than seventy different academic majors, the University of La Verne's approximately 8,700 students reflect the rich cultural and ethnic diversity of Southern California. Approximately 40 percent of our students are Latino, 9 percent are African American, 6 percent are Asian, and 50 percent are the first in their families to attend college. How, we asked ourselves, can we ensure that all our students benefit from a consistent pedagogical approach? How can we be intentional about incorporating the core elements of our mission into every student's program? Ultimately, these strategic questions resulted in the La Verne Experience (see fig. 1, page 54). Launched in the fall of 2012, this signature program is the cornerstone of the university's new long-term strategic vision. For every student, the La Verne Experience integrates the academic curriculum, cocurricular activities, and civic and community engagement with the university's values and traditions.

Founded in 1891 by the Church of the Brethren, the University of La Verne is a mid-sized comprehensive independent institution offering bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. It comprises four colleges—the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Business and Public Management, the College of Education and Organizational Leadership, and the College of Law. Though no longer officially affiliated with the church, the university maintains its core values through a mission focused on ethical reasoning, lifelong learning, diversity and inclusivity, and community and civic engagement.

As I interviewed for the La Verne presidency in the fall of 2010, an opportunity emerged to unify all elements of the university and its diverse populations through a signature program grounded in the institution's foundational values. The program would be academically competitive, relevant, and distinctive. Its development would provide an opportunity to galvanize the faculty, the eleven campuses, the 8,600 students, the board of trustees, and the alumni. The timing, I felt, was right.

Shortly after becoming president, I began a discussion with faculty that led to the creation of a steering committee charged with developing

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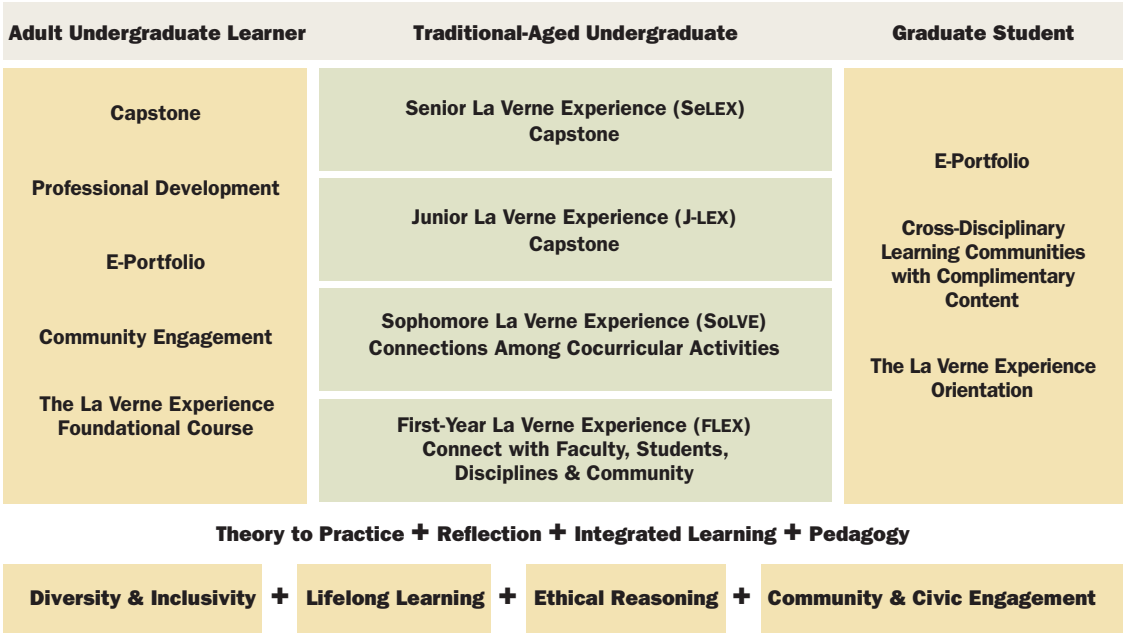
University of La Verne

Figure 1. The La Verne Experience



the La Verne Experience. The process was facilitated by the provost and a highly regarded faculty member, the LaFetra Family Endowed Chair for Excellence in Teaching and Service Dr. Peggy Redman, who was soon after appointed director of the La Verne Experience. The steering committee was co-chaired by Professor Redman and Professor Gitty Amini of the College of Arts and Sciences, and its members included the deans of all four colleges along with nineteen faculty and staff members spanning La Verne's curricular and cocurricular universe.

Within one year, with the concurrence of the board of trustees and through shared faculty governance, the committee designed and implemented the first phase of the La Verne Experience. It was understood that the design and implementation of subsequent phases of the program would continue until the fall of 2015, when all 8,600 students would be participating in the program. Unsurprisingly, this process required much thought, many meetings, and constant campus communication.

The La Verne Experience is anchored by four pillars: (1) learning communities with courses from different disciplines, (2) integrated learning, (3) community engagement and experiential learning, and (4) reflective practice. The driving purpose is to graduate students who embody the following three overarching areas: exceling in critical thinking, complex problem solving, written and oral communication, collaboration among diverse groups, and application of knowledge and perspective; demonstrating deep knowledge in a particular discipline; and living out the university's core values in their communities. The acquisition of such skills, knowledge, values, and capacities helps prepare students for success, both in their chosen careers and in their roles as civic members of their communities. Naturally, the effective integration of these goals and values throughout the curriculum, cocurriculum, four colleges, and all eleven campuses has been a massive undertaking. Each of the four undergraduate years has a distinctive La Verne Experience program: FLEX (First-Year La Verne Experience), SoLVE (Sophomore La Verne Experience), J-Lex (Junior La Verne Experience), and SeLEX (Senior La Verne Experience).

A matrix for implementation

To help determine how common elements of the La Verne Experience would be incorporated into each major and degree program, the steering committee created a matrix organized according to the six elements of the La Verne Experience:

- *community and civic engagement*—experiences

through which students and community partners work collaboratively to achieve mutually beneficial and lasting change
- *theory to practice*—applying an approach that ensures theoretical concepts learned in the classroom are applied in community- or industry-based settings
- *learning communities*—linking interdisciplinary courses that touch on common themes, along with coordinated active-learning activities that encourage close interaction with student peers and faculty members outside the classroom
- *reflection and communication*—providing opportunities to enhance critical thinking skills while solving problems and exploring issues, learning to think reflectively, and clarifying understanding through written and oral communication
- *integration*—making connections across disciplines or courses, providing multiple perspectives on how to view and resolve challenges
- *cocurricular activities*—participating in all university-related activities that take place outside of regularly scheduled classroom-based courses (e.g., participation in student clubs, organizations, and athletics)

Applying the matrix, faculty members in each academic department identified those elements of the La Verne Experience that already existed in departmental offerings and practices, courses, assignments, and other activities.

It became evident that human and physical infrastructure was needed to support successful outcomes. As a result, the new position of director for civic and community engagement was created, reporting to the director of the La Verne Experience and serving as the nexus among the external community, the internal community, faculty, staff, and students. To introduce community and civic engagement to entering first-year students, the university organized a "community and civic engagement day" during the weekend prior to the beginning of fall term. More than 650 entering students (organized by their learning communities) and faculty members participated in a variety of community-engaged projects throughout Southern California. Students, participating in their particular learning communities, began to connect with peers and faculty prior to the first day of classes.

Creating paths for all students

While all students benefit from the similar pedagogies associated with the La Verne Experience, the individual student's path of engagement with the program varies depending on whether he or she is a traditional-aged undergraduate, a nontraditional or returning adult student, or a graduate student. In the fall of 2012, the 650 first-year full-time students began their First-Year La Verne Experience (FLEX). The students selected learning communities from among twenty-two options, each comprising three integrated courses and a total of twelve credit hours. Linked to potential majors, the learning communities were specifically designed to connect subjects taught in different colleges. For example, an economics course was connected with a religion course, a kinesiology course was connected with a physics course, and a theatre course was connected with an education course. Students in each learning community formed a cohort that studied together throughout their first semester. The third course in each FLEX learning community focuses on writing and oral presentations through which students reflect on course content and community engagement. Every FLEX course is taught by a full-time faculty member, with the goal of increasing opportunities for interaction and connection between faculty and students. The linked reflection course is taught by a writing faculty member.

One of the greatest challenges facing those charged with facilitating the development of the La Verne Experience concerned how best to integrate cocurricular activities. After all, we know that participating in university-sponsored clubs and organizations and attending campus cultural events contribute significantly to student learning. Careful consideration of how to integrate these important dimensions into the La Verne Experience led to the development of the program's second phase, the Sophomore La Verne Experience (SoLVE). To be fully implemented during the 2014–15 academic year, SoLVE is a two-credit course in which students explore the values of the university as contained in the mission and expressed in the cocurriculum. All sophomore students will take a SoLVE course, participate in a wide range of campus activities, and articulate how those activities reflect university values.

During the SoLVE course, each student maintains an e-portfolio, which will serve as a foundation for self-assessment, a tool to enhance academic and career development, and a repository for the student's reflections on how, when, and why he or she demonstrated each of

the university's four values: ethical reasoning, lifelong learning, diversity and inclusivity, and community and civic engagement.

The Junior La Verne Experience (J-LEX) brings the connection between courses and community together within the students' majors. An example of this is embedded in the College of Business and Public Management's integrative business curriculum. Students register for a one-semester block of sixteen units that includes marketing, management, finance, and experiential learning. The students apply theory introduced in the classroom by identifying a business opportunity, developing a business plan, presenting the plan to a group of bankers, securing funding, marketing the product or service for the duration of the semester, and donating the profits to a worthy nonprofit organization of their choice. In this one-block module, students are able to connect theory to practice, while also directly engaging with the local community.

When fully implemented, the La Verne Experience will provide opportunities for all students to add materials to their e-portfolios that reflect their learning and the university's core values as demonstrated through activities and community engagement related to their majors, minors, and cocurricular activities. Finally, a senior seminar focused on oral and written reflections will result in the capstone autobiographical essay, "My La Verne Experience."

The La Verne Experience ensures that nontraditional and returning adult students will graduate with the same skills and competencies as our traditional-aged undergraduates

In addition to making the undergraduate curriculum available to nontraditional and returning adult students who attend part time, La Verne offers seventeen specialized undergraduate majors for those who enroll in intensive courses that are taught in the evenings or on weekends. E-portfolios will provide a foundation for these students as well. Beginning in the fall of 2015, every nontraditional or returning adult undergraduate student will complete a newly created course in which the e-portfolio template is used to introduce the practices, outcomes, and values of the university. Students will include in their e-portfolios materials that relate to advising services and engagement with community agencies and organizations, that speak to university values, and that demonstrate reflection on their current employment positions and career aspirations. The La Verne Experience ensures that

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nontraditional and returning adult students will graduate with the same skills and competencies as our traditional-aged undergraduates.

In the fall of 2013, graduate students were introduced to the La Verne Experience as part of their orientation. Each student was provided with a profile of the skill competencies expected of successful candidates for master's and doctoral degrees. The development of the La Verne Experience has encouraged scrutiny of graduate curricula and enabled the identification of commonalities. We believe it is possible to create cross-disciplinary graduate learning communities that will bring together common elements across different branches of learning as well as complementary content.

Benefits of the beginning

Though we are only three years into the conceptualization and implementation of the La Verne Experience, the benefits of the program are already clear and measurable. Rather than concentrating on a major curricular revision and expansion with hosts of new courses and programs, we have instead taken an intense, bold, strategic, and measured examination of what we are now doing in order to find complementarity. Through the use of the matrix to identify common practices and values for each major and degree, we now have a way of sharing explicitly the philosophical and programmatic elements that unite faculty and students as a university community. I believe this is enhancing the strength of the university and its culture, for which the La Verne Experience provides a unifying context.

Though the program has not yet been in place long enough to provide robust, direct correlations with retention data, the early indications are remarkably positive. The freshman fall 2012 to spring 2013 retention rate reached 96 percent, which is higher than past rates. Additionally, the proportion of the undergraduate population that returned in the fall of 2013 (88 percent) was higher than in previous years. In fact, the predicted overall retention rate for returning students (fall 2013 to spring 2014) is approximately 96 percent. Early assessment data from students who participated in FLEX indicate that they report feeling more connected with the university overall. Such an impact is especially critical for the success and retention of underrepresented and first-generation students, many of whom have little familiarity with the college experience. The La Verne Experience increases feelings of inclusion on campus. And through the expansive disciplinary offerings of the learning communities, students are able to develop a closer sense of kinship with fellow students, faculty, and staff.

At the same time, the La Verne Experience provides direction for the future. The tenets of the program will be useful for orienting new faculty, particularly graduate adjunct professors drawn from business, industry, government, and civic organizations. The elements of the La Verne Experience will also undergird ongoing professional development for faculty, helping further ignite their passions for teaching, scholarship, and community engagement.

The benefits of the increased interdisciplinary activity across La Verne's eleven campuses will help us achieve one of our 2020 strategic goals: enhancing educational excellence through enriching the university's comprehensive and relevant curriculum and cocurriculum. By taking on the La Verne Experience and bringing it to fruition with little external financial support, we have demonstrated that this signature program will be able to sustain itself for years to come. Moreover, the willingness of students, faculty, and administrators to collaborate fully and undertake an initiative of this magnitude so successfully, and in such a short time, demonstrates that institutional transformation is not necessarily limited by financial resources. Rather, it thrives on the energy, imagination, and dedication of the people behind it.

The magic of the La Verne Experience is that it builds on the strength of what has existed at the university for 123 years. When the first graduates who participated in the coordinated La Verne Experience program—whether traditional-aged undergraduates, nontraditional or returning adult students, or graduate students—walk across the stage to receive their degrees, they will become alumni who, similar to alumni long before them, are strategically and intentionally bound together not only by a college experience, but by something greater than themselves: common core values, knowledge, skills, and capabilities that prepare them to be highly successful professionals, citizens, and community members. □

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Flip Turns with Students

KATE QUEENEY

A FEW YEARS AFTER I BEGAN TEACHING, I realized that I had something to learn: the flip turn. I was training for a triathlon and thought I was ready to graduate to turning like a "real swimmer." When YouTube video tutorials and advice from other swimmers failed to overcome my limitations as a kinesthetic learner, I hired Marly.

A talented swimmer in college, Marly aspired to be a college swim coach. She was a graduate student in the coaching program at the college where I teach. I sometimes swam in the morning when she was coaching a masters swim team of adult swimmers, shouting encouragement with frightening enthusiasm for such an early hour.

MY VIEW

There is something undeniably powerful about putting myself in a position not just of ignorance but of vulnerability

I had met Marly in a different context, when she took introductory chemistry with me during her first undergraduate semester. Marly struggled in that class. I vividly remember her sitting hunched in her chair with an intent and slightly panicked look on her face. There's a student like Marly in my introductory-level class every year or so—someone who is there every day, who tries to do the work on her own but gets lost, who will never ask a question in class, and who just doesn't believe that she is capable of "doing" chemistry. The class must seem insurmountable from her perspective, and so this student opts for what I can only imagine (based on my own experience with a nightmarish graduate school class) is a miserable game of survival.

I'd never spoken with Marly about her experience in chemistry after she finished my class, so I'm only guessing what it was like for her. But my sense of her experience made me nervous about approaching her for one-on-one instruction. In the end, though, my competitive instinct triumphed. I needed to learn this, and Marly could teach me.

This is how I found myself in a swimsuit, cap, and goggles, standing in the water and looking up at Marly on the deck as she gave me instructions on how to do a flip turn. I followed her instructions. I came up, completely disoriented and with a noseful of water. "Not bad," she said. "Try again."

So I tried again. And again. Marly was consistently encouraging, and she only laughed at me in a way that encouraged me to laugh along with her, often spewing water from my nose. She corrected various mistakes, pointed out what I was doing well, and finally left me with the simple instruction to practice. "There's not really anything else I can teach you now," she explained. "You know how to do it, and you just need to do it over and over again until it gets more natural." And get more natural it did, eventually. Sometimes Marly would see me swimming and offer both encouragement and additional guidance. When I first used my flip turns to swim one hundred yards in under a minute and a half, I saw Marly across a parking lot and ran to share my accomplishment with her, in much the same way my general chemistry students sometimes stop by a semester later to tell me they aced their first organic chemistry exam.

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Smith College

Throughout this experience, I was struck by the fact that the Marly who taught me seemed like an entirely different person from the Marly I had tried to teach. I found myself wondering, what if chemistry student Marly had known me the same way swim coach Marly did now? What advice would she offer her first-year self, if she could go back in time with her revised image of me as a fallible and even slightly ridiculous human being who just happened to stand at the front of her chemistry class?

I was reluctant to broach this subject with Marly, because the last thing I wanted to do was to dredge up what I guessed was an unpleasant memory. Before I could figure out how to have this conversation with her, Marly graduated with her master's degree and moved away to take her first coaching position.

And then, with a tragic suddenness, Marly died in a bicycle accident.

As I sat at her memorial service, listening to countless testimonials about the way Marly had led and inspired those around her, it became even clearer to me that the "new" Marly I had come to know was the real Marly all along—it was the unsure, scared young woman in my class who was the counterfeit version. I missed the opportunity to benefit from her hindsight, to get her perspective on how I might help other students in her situation bring their real, confident selves to a class that is intimidating them into silence.

Marly is remembered on our campus in many ways, including an annual award given to student athletes who embody her rare combination of dedication and commitment to bringing out the best in others. I try to honor her in my own way by finding opportunities to take a break from teaching in order to learn from my students. I have tried to learn how to serve a volleyball overhand and how to do a layup in basketball. I have asked students to explain to me how they sing in languages they don't speak, what the dance step is I catch them doing while they're waiting for a reaction to finish in lab, how they've experienced the political situation in their home country that I know very little about. In all cases students visibly relax when they explain something to me.

I try to honor her in my own way by finding opportunities to take a break from teaching in order to learn from my students

There is something undeniably powerful about putting myself in a position not just of ignorance but of vulnerability. The uncertainty I felt when I tried my first flip turn and the self-doubt I experienced when I was still getting water up my nose twenty turns later were humbling and vivid reminders of what it's like to try to learn something that doesn't come easily. As faculty, we generally teach things we're good at. I think I'm a better teacher when I am reminded regularly and acutely what it's like to be bad at something, to let someone else see how lost I am, and to ask for the help I need to improve. While Marly did a great job teaching me the flip turn, it's this last lesson that was her real gift to me. □

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