Nearly a quarter century ago, Ernest Boyer called on higher education to remember its complex mission in a diverse democracy and interdependent world. “The aim of the undergraduate experience,” he wrote, “is not only to prepare the young for productive careers, but also to enable them to live lives of dignity and purpose; not only to generate new knowledge, but to channel that knowledge to humane ends; not merely to study government, but to help shape a citizenry that can promote the public good” (Boyer 1987, 297). Boyer was calling on an earlier tradition of liberal education that had been relegated to a dusty corner of the modern university.

Twenty years before Boyer’s comment, I was in graduate school when the world flooded campuses like a tsunami, unrestrained by the stone walls that often served to demarcate the life of the mind from the work of the world. The earthquake stirring those floodwaters originated in the big questions that dominated the sixties: questions related to racial inequality, shifting attitudes about the role of women, the war in Vietnam, the role of the military–industrial complex, and the shedding of colonial rule in African countries. The overriding question for higher education was what role it should play in the midst of the torrent. Students and a few faculty pressed colleges and universities to engage more emphatically in helping students make sense of the world and of their responsibility to it. At that time, this change in focus and mission was described as a matter of finding relevance. But those calling for change were swimming against the tide of tradition, which had firmly ensconced knowledge as value neutral, as something that transcended and was cheapened by contact with the grittiness of life. Over forty years later, the search for relevance remains an important driving force, with one critical change: now colleges and universities are seeing the work of the world as inextricable from the life of the mind. In the last decade, they have begun to define education for personal and social responsibility as one of four essential pillars of a contemporary college education (along with knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world, intellectual and practical skills, and integrative learning). Both AAC&U’s Greater Expectations report (2002) and its College Learning for the New Global Century report (2007) described this new attention to what students need if they are to be informed, empowered, and socially responsible participants in their professional, personal, and community lives.

Core Commitments: A Clarion Call
To assist colleges and universities in their efforts to recalibrate their goals for learning for the twenty-first century, AAC&U launched Core Commitments: Educating
ABOUT THIS ISSUE:

Personal and Social Responsibility for a World Lived in Common

“Conscience does make cowards of us all,” Hamlet says while expounding on his personal existential crisis. Lying at the heart of one of Shakespeare’s most famous (and most taught) plays, this statement confronts many college students just as they are struggling with their own questions about the meaning of existence. Its gist is that a preference for the life one knows compels one to continue living. But its thrust is that in consciousness lies inaction.

The sentiment will be familiar to many college students, for the first time encountering overwhelming details about the enormous challenges facing them, their country, and their planet. Compelled to ask big questions, they may find small actions insufficient, and may, like Hamlet, feel paralyzed by uncertainty. Hamlet got over this sentiment, with tragic consequences. The challenge for today’s colleges and universities is to help students likewise move beyond paralysis, but in optimism rather than vengeance, empowered by consciousness to take responsibility for their actions’ consequences in the world.

AAC&U’s Core Commitments project took up this cause as it developed tools for colleges and universities to teach their students to practice the five dimensions of personal and social responsibility, which Caryn McTighe Musil describes in this issue of Diversity & Democracy. This issue explores with particular zest those dimensions that most closely align with the goals of building a diverse and inclusive world: “contributing to a larger community,” “taking seriously the perspectives of others,” and “developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action.” Students’ capacities in these areas will be indispensable as they prepare to contribute to a world lived in common, and our authors’ contributions reveal ways to make higher education a stage for that world.

Fortunately, very few college students will find answers to their questions about the meaning of life by following in Hamlet’s footsteps. If Hamlet is a hero who conflates conscience and consciousness, and whose actions ultimately display little regard for either, our students must be modest heroes whose consciousness and consciences are tools for global change. This issue of Diversity & Democracy challenges colleges and universities to help students recognize their role in the interconnected world around them so conscience grants them courage rather than cowardice.

—Kathryn Peltier Campbell, editor
Students for Personal and Social Responsibility in 2006. With initial funding from the Templeton Foundation, Core Commitments was “designed to help campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices” and study to explore questions about their responsibilities as global and local citizens (for further information visit http://www.aacu.org/core_commmitments).

The intellectual heart of Core Commitments lies in the initiative’s articulation of five distinct but related dimensions of personal and social responsibility. While there could be additional dimensions, the Core Commitments project began with these five, formulated by a group of distinguished scholars and researchers in moral and intellectual development who helped shaped the contours of the initiative. The five dimensions are research based, intended to resonate with broad constituencies inside and outside higher education, and designed to be both fostered and assessed. They include:

- **striving for excellence**: developing a strong work ethic and consciously doing one’s very best in all aspects of college;
- **cultivating personal and academic integrity**: recognizing and acting on a sense of honor, ranging from honesty in relationships to principled engagement with a formal academic honor code;
- **contributing to a larger community**: recognizing and acting on one’s responsibility to the educational community and the wider society, locally, nationally, and globally;
- **taking seriously the perspectives of others**: recognizing and acting on the obligation to inform one’s own judgment and engaging diverse and competing perspectives as a resource for learning, citizenship, and work; and
- **developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action**: developing ethical and moral reasoning in ways that incorporate the other four responsibilities, and using such reasoning in learning and in life.

Core Commitments is a multiproject initiative designed to assist campuses as they articulate clear expectations and develop intentional opportunities to advance and assess students’ progress over time. A leadership consortium of twenty-three institutions that have exemplary programs in place but that over time. A leadership consortium also have commitments to expand, deepen, and assess student learning was formed after a national call that generated 130 applications. Over 320 college and university presidents also pledged to provide leadership in a far-reaching effort to reengage higher education with issues of ethical and civic responsibility.

Core Commitments also seeks to mobilize expanded campus commitments to personal and social responsibility by sponsoring a steady stream of topically focused public events, from symposiums to institutes to national meetings. The popularity of these events attests to a growing desire for opportunities to advance higher education’s work on this topic. Our first symposium drew 450 people from 265 institutions, and our first Network for Academic Renewal conference that focused on personal and social responsibility attracted over 500 participants. The second Network conference on the topic—scheduled for October 13–15, 2011, in Long Beach, California—is likely to attract similar numbers. AAC&U hopes that readers of Diversity & Democracy will consider both submitting a proposal and participating in the 2011 meeting (see http://www.aacu.org/meetings/index.cfm for details).

Finally, Core Commitments has generated tools, research, and a plethora of resources to inform campus practices and measure progress. One of these new tools is the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI), a climate survey that AAC&U hopes will become widely used by campuses and provide long-range measurements of national trends in both students’ capacities for personal and social responsibility and institutions’ implementation of opportunities for students’ moral and civic development. AAC&U has published three topical monographs based on PSRI findings: Civic Responsibility, Developing a Moral Compass, and Engaging Diverse Viewpoints. A fourth monograph to be published in June 2011 will draw on six national databases to explore the kinds of practices evidence suggests accelerate learning in the realm of personal and social responsibility.

**The Gap between Aspiration and Actuality**

Growing evidence suggests that today’s undergraduates long to integrate the life of the mind with responsibilities to a larger common good.

Growing evidence suggests that today’s undergraduates long to integrate the life of the mind with responsibilities to a larger common good. Researchers Alexander and Helen Astin note, "About two-thirds [of today’s entering college freshmen] consider it ‘essential’ or ‘very important’ that their college enhance their self-understanding (69 percent),
prepare them for responsible citizenship (67 percent), and develop their personal values (67 percent)” (Higher Education Research Institute 2004, 6).

AAC&U’s own research echoes these findings. AAC&U’s Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI), administered to 24,000 students and 9,000 campus professionals at the twenty-three Core Commitments Consortium campuses in fall 2007, revealed that faculty, students, academic administrators, and student affairs professionals “strongly agree” across all five dimensions that education for personal and social responsibility should be a major focus of college, with 53 to 88 percent in strong agreement across constituencies and dimensions (Dey and Associates 2009). When respondents who “some-what agree” are also considered, the percentages soar to a near-universal consensus (92–99 percent).

But while constituents across groups have professed a set of new priorities for college learning, education for personal and social responsibility remains more of an aspiration than a reality. Both students and campus professionals in the 2007 PSRI study agreed that at their institutions, such education was woefully inadequate and only spottily available. There was a striking gap—in some areas, a difference of more than 50 percentage points—between “should be” and “actually is,” revealing a clear disjunction between aspiration and actuality.

Anne Colby and William M. Sullivan posit that so few institutions address the outcomes of ethical responsibility to self and others because “despite evidence to the contrary, many educators hope and expect that these outcomes will be achieved as by-products of a college education, that they do not require explicit attention” (Colby and Sullivan 2009, 22). AAC&U contends that institutions need to invest in more purposeful and transparent developmental pathways for students to acquire these invaluable capabilities. Such educational opportunities need to be both pervasive—a shared responsibility of everyone on campus—and available to all students in increasingly sophisticated ways over the course of their educations. Colby and Sullivan explain, “It is important for the institutional culture to help students think about what they want to be like as individuals, as professionals in their fields, and as citizens as well as to engage them habitually in socially responsible behaviors through providing opportunities, incentives, and structures for that behavior” (Colby and Sullivan 2009, 29).

Closing the Gap between “Should Be” and “Actually Is”

AAC&U has been heartened by the 2007–08 findings of the University of California—Los Angeles’s Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) Faculty Survey, which reflect the views of 22,562 full-time college faculty at 372 four-year colleges and universities. The survey measured a significant shift in faculty goals for undergraduate education in terms of receptiveness to personal and social responsibility goals. In the three years since the previous polling, the percentage of faculty saying it is “very important” or “essential” that faculty help students develop moral character has jumped from 57.1 percent to 70.2 percent. An even greater percentage shift exists in support for helping students develop personal values—from 50.8 percent to 66.1 percent. Similarly, the level of support for instilling commitment to community service has leapt from 36.4 percent to 55.5 percent (DeAngelo et al. 2009, 3). Clearly, a movement to close the gap between aspiration and reality in educating for character, values, and social responsibility is underway in higher education. This issue of Diversity & Democracy is filled with superb examples of how some campuses are closing their gaps, particularly as they relate to three of the five dimensions: “contributing to a larger community,” “taking seriously the perspectives of others,” and “developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action.” The schools featured here are engaging big questions, connecting knowledge with choices and actions, creating interconnected curricula reinforced by cocurricula, investing in staff and faculty development, and anchoring students’ intellectual work in active involvement with diverse communities both local and global as they seek to understand and address real-world challenges. As a fourth-year student answering the PSRI put it, “Being in an environment that cares about the rest of the world helps encourage you to do the same” (Dey and Associates 2009, 1). For this student, at least, the life of the mind has begun to merge with the work of the world.

References


[PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY]

Perspective-Taking as a Tool for Building Democratic Societies

JOSE CALDERON, professor of sociology and Chicano studies, Pitzer College

Editor’s note: The following text is derived from an address delivered at AAC&U’s meeting on Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility in October 2009. To download a podcast of the original presentation, visit http://www.aacu.org/Podcast/podcasts.cfm?id=144.

When I came to the United States from Mexico with my parents as a seven-year-old child, I did not fit into my “English only” school system. In my new homeland, others rarely took the time to see the world through my eyes or to learn about me, my culture, and my family. They often perceived me as mute or as having physical or psychological problems. Only when a teacher, Mrs. Elder, reached out to get to know me did someone realize that I just didn’t know English. Mrs. Elder took steps to learn about my world, visiting me and my grandparents in our home. Seeing that we lived in a one-room house—a converted gas station with no indoor bathroom, no appliances, and a wood stove—Mrs. Elder responded with empathy, sacrificing her afternoons to teach me English.

What’s more, in seeking to create a similarity between us, she began our lessons by asking me to teach her Spanish. Thus we became teacher–student and student–teacher. I am sure that if Mrs. Elder had not fostered this equitable environment, if she had not sought to see the world through my eyes, I would not be a professor at Pitzer College today.

As my experience shows, the ability to communicate one’s perspective affects one’s ability to participate in society, and with it, one’s access to power. Certain individuals or groups have the power to define dominant culture, and therefore the power to oppress or liberate others. Power exists in language, too, where words create a foundation for understanding. In fact, many governments have used language to oppress others. When the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed to end the US–Mexican war, it included legal protections that Mexican-origin people living in the United States held by custom and culture, including language rights and property rights. But after 1848, the treaty was broken when Mexican-origin people faced language discrimination, resulting in losses of land and of democratic access. Thus the value of perspective-taking lies in part in its relationship not only to power, but also to democracy.

Perspective-Taking and Democratic Engagement

In The Drama of Diversity and Democracy, the Association of American Colleges and Universities brought these two terms—power and democracy—together. The publication defined democracy as “the ideal that all human beings have equal value, deserve equal respect, and should be given equal opportunity to fully participate in the life and direction of the society” (1995, 9). It also proposed that “when diversity is characterized by patterned inequity and the marginalization of specific groups,” it “can signify unequal access to political, economic, social, and cultural power” (9).

Barack Obama began to question this very relationship between democracy and power when pondering what to do after college. As he read about the sacrifices ordinary people made during the civil rights movement, he imagined himself in their place, as a Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee worker “convincing a family of sharecroppers to register to vote,” or as an organizer of the Montgomery bus boycott (Obama 2004, 134). In doing so, he formed a commitment beyond himself: a commitment to listening to the perspectives of others (134–35). When he became an organizer and placed himself in others’ worlds, he deepened this commitment, empowering himself to empower others.

When his fellow community organizers became tired, Obama had them look out of their office windows while asking, “What do you suppose is going to happen to those boys out there?…. You say you’re tired, the same way most folks out here are tired…. Who’s going to make sure [those boys] get a fair shot?” (Obama 2004, 171–72). He challenged the organizers to place themselves in others’ worlds. It was no coincidence that storytelling and listening to the stories of others later became cornerstones of Obama’s presidential campaign. Through storytelling, campaign organizers recruited thousands of new leaders whom they trained to use their life histories and those of their communities to reach out to the voting public.

By learning to understand others’ perspectives, language, and culture, Barack Obama not only improved democratic participation, but also became better able to understand himself, his family’s history, and the languages, cultures, and perspectives of community members with whom he worked. His experience became a lesson for campaign organizers in the value of understanding the language and culture of those they sought to recruit. It is also a lesson for those of us who are connecting our classrooms with social change efforts in diverse communities. Through perspective-
Perspective-Taking and Leadership

Perceiving the similarities between their own experiences and those of others led Rosa Park to sit at the front of a bus, Martin Luther King to advocate for sanitation workers in Memphis, and Cesar Chavez to live with farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley. It led writer Gloria Anzaldúa to perceive sexism and homophobia in American culture and in her own border culture, and it led psychologists Mamie and Kenneth Clark to understand why black children saw black dolls as ugly and white dolls as beautiful.

Perceiving similarities transformed Mahatma Gandhi from a simple lawyer to a great leader. As his granddaughter, Arun Gandhi, noted:

“Ironically if it had not been for the experience of racism and prejudice, he may have been just another successful lawyer who had made a lot of money. But because of prejudice in Southern Africa, he was subjected to humiliation within a week of his arrival. He was thrown off a train because of the color of his skin […] His first response was anger […] The second response was to want to go back to India and live among his own people in dignity […] And that’s when the third response dawned on him—the response of nonviolent action. From that point onwards, he developed the philosophy of nonviolence and practiced it in his life as well as in his search for justice in South Africa. He ended up staying in that country for twenty-two years—and then he went and led the movement of India (Covey 2004, 187–88).

Perceiving similarities led Myles Horton, like John Dewey, to critique the mechanistic practices that traditionally dominated American education. While building an alternative school called the Highlander Center to empower working-class people in rural Tennessee, Horton came to see that his students “were usually quiet around strangers or people they considered ‘well-spoken,’ meaning educated.” But once the school’s staff surpassed that barrier and came to understand their students, they saw that traditional top-down approaches to teaching would be ineffective. By working instead toward “mutual learning,” the staff and students “could and did learn from each other, each respecting the individual character of the other.” Horton underscored the importance of perspective-taking when he said: “Insofar as I have learned to listen to people and to honor and respect them as individuals, I have been a good teacher. When I have failed to do this my teaching has failed” (Adams 1975, 46–47).

Perspective-Taking and Education

All these examples suggest how perspective-taking can function as part of an empowering education. Ira Shor describes an empowering education as a “critical–democratic pedagogy for self and social change…a student-centered program for multicultural democracy in school and society…that approaches individual growth as an active, cooperative, and social process, because the self and society create each other” (Shor 1992, 15). If we faculty engage both ourselves and our students in perspective-taking as a component of empowering education, we can use our classrooms to practice creating an equitable democratic society.

Our classrooms are microcosms of society. They can be structured in a top-down fashion with the professor in command and students quiet and passive, as Myles Horton described his students when he met them. Or they can be, as Ira Shor proposes, places where students and teachers have relatively equal status as colearners and coeducators. Shor claims that inequalities in society at large result from the distribution of power in these microcosmic settings. He suggests that classroom cultures that support debate and critical study are necessary to advance a more democratic society.

Thus the way we faculty run our classrooms and the way we connect those classrooms to our communities can truly affect whether our teaching and learning practices advance a more diverse, socially just, and democratic culture. Providing time for students to learn about the professor’s life and for the professor to conversely learn about the lives of students is essential to building students’ capacity for perspective-taking. To succeed in fostering this capacity, faculty need to create environments where students are comfortable questioning the perspectives of others—of the authors whose works they read, of the professor, of others in the class.

Perspective-Taking and Community

In my classes, I connect assigned readings directly to challenges facing our local and global economies. These challenges affect both students’ lives and the lives of the community members with whom they come in contact. I use the course readings as media for enhancing critical dialogue on the possibilities for new models of democratic engagement and collaboration. To make the readings concrete, I give my students...
the opportunity to work alongside new immigrants in a Pomona day labor center, day laborers on the street corners of Rancho Cucamonga, farm workers in the San Joaquin Valley, and labor and community organizers in diverse coalitions throughout the region. The readings and our class discussions become “real” when students meet with these day laborers and community organizers to work on common projects that emerge from their dialogue. Just as in the classroom, students advance to new levels of collaboration and civic engagement by practicing democratic exchange.

Having identified problems that are relevant to the workers, students use participatory community-based research and action to locate solutions. Drawing on their discussions with workers, students organize various projects that push for social change. Students and workers have collaborated to implement English classes, health workshops, and immigration rights research projects. Students have also organized petition drives, researched the constitutionality of checkpoints, marched to protest immigration raids, and campaigned to ensure continued funding for the local day labor center. To combat negative portrayals of new immigrants, students and day laborers have organized community-wide art and pictorial life history presentations. Thus the workers and students join in raising their voices and ensuring that they are heard. In all these projects, students come to accept the day laborers as “real” when students meet with these day laborers and community organizers to work on common projects that emerge from their dialogue. Just as in the classroom, students advance to new levels of collaboration and civic engagement by practicing democratic exchange.

Ultimately, perspective-taking cannot occur without addressing questions of power. But academia can follow emerging trends and break down structures that separate it from the “border culture” between academia and the world beyond. Students learn to value the perspective of the “other”: the poor, the worker, the oppressed, the immigrant, or the person of another color, class, gender, or sexuality. Similarly, workers and community organizers grow to respect classrooms as places where ideas can become deeds that advance their efforts to be heard. Students, day laborers, and faculty celebrate the life of day laborer leader Fernando Pedraza. Students Junko Ihrke and Stephanie Velasco hold plaques presented to them by the day laborers as thanks for their time teaching ESL on this street corner.

REFERENCES
Encouraging Perspective-Taking among College Students

ROBERT D. REASON, associate professor of education and senior research associate at the Center for the Study of Higher Education, Penn State University; and director of research and assessment for AAC&U’s Core Commitments project

One need only watch the nightly news to understand why greater attention to taking others’ perspectives seriously might be needed in the United States. Signs of disrespect and intolerance abound across the ideological spectrum: in Representative Joe Wilson yelling “You lie!” at President Obama last year, in Harry Reid comparing opponents of health care reform to supporters of slavery, in Tea Partiers likening President Obama to Hitler. In modern political discourse, open-minded discussions are few and far between, and leaders who carefully weigh the evidence and change their minds in response are even rarer.

If we hope to alter this situation, we need leaders who can engage across difference and learn from others’ perspectives. College is one obvious place where those leaders are created, and the diversity many campuses enjoy is no small contributor to this process. Research shows that structural diversity gives college students opportunities to encounter, interact with, and engage with people and ideas different from themselves (Hurtado et al. 1998). But it does not guarantee that such engagement—or the learning it might generate—will occur. In order for students to benefit from diversity, they must be prepared to engage with and learn from perspectives and experiences different from their own. That is, they must intentionally develop the capacity for perspective-taking, as I will call it in this article.

Perspective-taking is one of five outcomes measured by the Personal and Social Responsibility Inventory (PSRI), developed as part of AAC&U’s Core Commitments Project. The Core Commitments project aims to reclaim and revitalize the academy’s role in fostering students’ development of personal and social responsibility. The initiative “help[s] campuses create learning environments in which all students reach for excellence in the use of their talents, take responsibility for the integrity and quality of their work, and engage in meaningful practices”—including perspective-taking—“that prepare them to fulfill their obligations” as students and citizens in their academic, local, and global communities (Dey and Associates 2010, 1).

In order for students to benefit from diversity, they must be prepared to engage with and learn from perspectives and experiences different from their own.

Students’ Development of Perspective-Taking Skills

Given the gap between whether perspective-taking should be a goal of their curriculum, 97 percent of faculty members, academic administrators, and student affairs professionals agreeing that perspective-taking should be an essential goal of a college education.

An objective reader might call this a mandate to include perspective-taking among expected outcomes for college students. Given that demand, the next finding is surprising: When asked if perspective-taking is a goal of their current institution, only 86 percent of both students and professionals “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree.” Thus there is a gap between the belief that perspective-taking should be an outcome of higher education and the reality that it is an outcome. Colleges and universities must make greater strides if they hope to meet the mandate to include perspective-taking among higher education goals.

Perspective-Taking as an Outcome of College

Twenty-three participating campuses administered the PSRI to over 23,000 students and 8,000 professionals (faculty, student affairs personnel, and academic administrators) in 2007. AAC&U has published three monographs drawing upon PSRI data, most recently Engaging Diverse Viewpoints: What is the Campus Climate for Perspective-Taking?, the findings of which I describe here.

The good news is that college students believe that perspective-taking should be part of their higher education experience. Approximately 93 percent of student respondents to the PSRI indicate that they “strongly agree” or “somewhat agree” that preparing students to take seriously the perspectives of others should be an “essential goal” of college. Higher education professionals stand ready as well, with 97 percent of faculty members, academic administrators, and student affairs professionals agreeing that perspective-taking should be an essential goal of a college education.

The findings of which I describe here.
an increased ability...to understand the evidence, analysis, and perspectives of others, even when [they] disagree with [those perspectives].” Approximately 56 percent of students “strongly agree” with these two statements.

Digging deeper, the data show that women and students from traditionally underrepresented racial and ethnic populations report that they have developed perspective-taking skills at higher rates than reported by men or white students, respectively. A higher percent of women than men “strongly agree” with each of these three statements. And generally speaking, students from African American and Latino backgrounds were more likely to “strongly agree” with these statements than were white students (see table 1).

The finding that white students and men report less growth in perspective-taking skills during college runs counter to both common sense and some empirical findings. Given that the high degree of racial segregation in the United States allows majority groups in particular to avoid interacting with diverse others, it makes sense that white students would have the most to gain from structural diversity on campus. Similarly, it makes intuitive sense that men, starting from relatively privileged positions, would stand to benefit most from the opportunities to explore topics related to sex and gender that most colleges provide. Empirical evidence supports these assumptions. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) found white students had the largest gains of any racial group in several learning and democracy-related outcomes as a result of engaging with diverse others, either formally in the classroom or informally outside the classroom. Empirical evidence of the effect that diverse college experiences have on men’s learning and development is somewhat more mixed (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005).

Despite mixed conclusions, the research does provide some basis for understanding the PSRI’s findings. The empirical literature on student outcomes consistently finds that engagement with diverse others is a requisite for learning from diversity (Míleim 2003; Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Unfortunately, white students—in particular, white men—consistently report less engagement with diverse others than do women and students of color (Chang, Astin, and Kim 2004).

How Campuses Can Influence Students’ Perspective-Taking Skills

The major challenge for colleges and universities is thus to find ways to intentionally engage students with diversity. In doing so, they stand to improve students’ diversity-related outcomes, including students’ capacity for perspective-taking.

Higher education professionals have long assumed that faculty members and peers are the major socialization agents acting on college students (Pascarella and Terenzini 2005). Together, these groups convey content knowledge as well as attitudes and behaviors. The PSRI data highlight the relationship between engaging with faculty and student peers and the development of perspective-taking skills.

Students who engaged with faculty members, both during and outside of office hours, “strongly agree” that they developed perspective-taking skills at higher rates than reported by students who had little or no engagement with faculty members. Faculty–student interaction has long been known to induce academic and cognitive growth in college students, with some evidence also suggesting that faculty–student interactions can correlate to attitudinal changes in students. Unfortunately, these interactions are infrequent (Cox et al. 2010). The substantial research linking faculty–student interactions with positive outcomes, along with PSRI findings linking such interactions to perspective-taking, suggests that institutions should encourage increased interaction between faculty and students.

Community service has long been lauded as a means to expose students to diverse others and diverse situations. Indeed, students who report participating in community service “strongly agree” that they developed perspective-taking skills at

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*Latino/Latina students category includes respondents who indicated Mexican American/Chicano, Puerto Rican, or “Other Latino” on the PSRI
higher rates than reported by students who did not participate in service. In contrast, participating in Greek-letter organizations, an activity that tends to allow students to engage with homogeneous groups, had mixed influence on the three perspective-taking items the PSRI measured. Notably, however, the effect of participation in Greek-letter organizations was generally not deleterious, suggesting that engagement even in relatively homogeneous groups can be beneficial (see table 2).

**Summary**

The overwhelming majority of respondents to the PSRI, both students and campus professionals, indicated strong agreement that perspective-taking should be an essential goal of a college education. This bodes well for projects like Core Commitments that focus on the development of personal and social responsibility during college and perspective-taking’s role in those outcomes. Unfortunately, respondents showed less agreement about whether perspective-taking was an essential goal of higher education at the time of the survey. In sum, there was a disconnect between aspiration and reality.

There is good news, however, for those who wish to see perspective-taking infused across higher education. Students who engaged with faculty and diverse peers report improvement in perspective-taking skills during college, a finding that provides guidance for institutional leaders hoping to influence this outcome. Higher education administrators, faculty members, and student affairs professionals can design experiences that require students to engage with diverse others, including formal activities like service-learning projects or informal opportunities like faculty–student interaction outside the classroom.

Manifold connections exist between higher education, structural diversity, and the civic good. Bowen (1977) and later Hurtado (2007) have argued convincingly that higher education is responsible for educating and training civic leaders who will advance social progress. To be effective future leaders who move beyond the name-calling and vitriol currently common in the public square, students must develop the capacity to engage with and learn from perspectives and experiences different from their own. Students, faculty, and administrators are calling for an infusion of perspective-taking across higher education. It’s time for higher education to deliver.

**REFERENCES**


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**Table 2. Percentage of Students Who “Strongly Agree” with Selected Statements, by Reported Activities**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>All Students</th>
<th>Engage with faculty during office hours</th>
<th>Engage with faculty outside of office hours</th>
<th>Participate in community service</th>
<th>Participate in clubs/organizations</th>
<th>Participate in Greek organizations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I have developed an increased ability to learn from diverse perspectives during the time I have been in college</td>
<td>52.6</td>
<td>55.8</td>
<td>57.8</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>55.5</td>
<td>55.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have developed an increased ability to gather and thoughtfully use evidence to support my own ideas during the time I have been in college</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>60.6</td>
<td>61.0</td>
<td>58.2</td>
<td>54.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have developed an increased ability during college to understand the evidence, analysis, and perspectives of others, even when I disagree with them</td>
<td>56.1</td>
<td>59.4</td>
<td>60.2</td>
<td>61.3</td>
<td>57.5</td>
<td>56.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY]

Improving Civic Engagement by Assessing Students’ Needs

CLEA ANDREADIS, associate provost for instruction and assessment; KIMBERLY BURNS, associate dean for K–16 partnerships; ELISE MARTIN, associate dean for assessment; and REBECCA NEWELL, director of leadership development and student activities—all at Middlesex Community College

Throughout its history, Middlesex Community College (MCC) has sought to align its mission with its goals related to personal and social responsibility. The college demonstrates this commitment by intentionally integrating personal and social responsibility into its academic and cocurricular programming, particularly through community engagement initiatives. As a result of this work, MCC was recognized as a Civically Engaged Campus by the Carnegie Foundation and has been on the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll since 2006. But despite these accolades, MCC knew that it could do more to engage its diverse student population in meaningful learning experiences. Thus, MCC began using assessment to identify new ways to involve students in questions of personal and social responsibility.

Unique Challenges

MCC is one of the largest community colleges in Massachusetts, serving over 12,000 commuter students on two campuses each year. At MCC, 61 percent of students are from low-income or first-generation families. While in school, our students raise children, care for elderly relatives, and work to support their families and fund their educations. Consequently, in 2009–10, 56 percent of the student body attended school part time, resulting in significant challenges for large-scale community engagement initiatives.

MCC faces additional challenges related to the unique needs of students on our two very different campuses. On the campus in Bedford, an affluent town thirty miles north of Boston, attractive brick buildings surround a grassy quadrangle. Fifteen miles north in Lowell, a midsized city of slightly over 100,000, the campus consists of a series of multistory buildings. Lowell’s urban environment comes with additional differences: the city attracts many immigrants, and linguistic minorities compose approximately 40 percent of the population. The average annual high school dropout rate in Lowell is 32 percent.

The student body’s rich diversity yields exciting opportunities to develop teaching and learning initiatives related to personal and social responsibility. It also requires faculty and staff to offer educational options beyond the traditional academic schedule to meet the needs of nonresidential students with competing priorities. MCC faculty and staff have risen to the challenge. They have developed a menu of experiences in and out of the classroom that not only help students develop personal and social responsibility, but also require them to demonstrate skills and knowledge in communica-

Faculty and administrators knew that while MCC had a robust service learning and community engagement program, that program did not always meet the needs of the diverse student body.

Institutional Assessment

It is difficult to improve learning outcomes without first establishing a baseline and a plan for improvement. Thus, in 2006, MCC implemented a broad assessment program that includes ongoing evaluation of institutional, programmatic, and course-based student learning outcomes. The college created a defined assessment cycle to measure the extent to which students are achieving these outcomes. It also designed and implemented activities aimed at increasing student achievement. As a result of these efforts, MCC was chosen as one of twelve community colleges to assume leadership in the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Roadmap Project, which aims to create robust programs that use learning outcomes as a lever to increase student persistence and achievement.

MCC’s initial assessment program established six Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs). One of these ISLOs targets students’ development of social responsibility and includes awareness of multiculturalism and diversity; understanding of ethics, values, and social justice; and capacities related to citizenship and community engagement. MCC has created pathways toward achieving this ISLO, in part through core curriculum requirements such as the Values, Ethics, and Social Policy requirement.

Students enrolled in courses meeting the Values, Ethics, and Social Policy requirement formed the initial cohort for assessing students’ sense of social responsibility. Faculty and advisers evaluated these students’ development of social responsibility using a rubric designed
by the college community (available at https://www.middlesex.mass.edu/strategicplanning/outcomes/srrubric.pdf). The MCC assessment team then triangulated the findings with recent data from the Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) and the Core Commitments Personal and Social Responsibility Index (PSRI) that reflected students’ self-assessment of the same goals. Results revealed that a majority of MCC students see themselves as members of a community with specific needs and value involvement in that community, but only a small number apply those understandings and values by participating in community-based projects.

**Seasons of Service**

On receiving these results, MCC was poised to reconsider how it educates for personal and social responsibility. Faculty and administrators knew that while MCC had a robust service learning and community engagement program, that program did not always meet the needs of the diverse student body. While MCC offered a variety of activities, these options didn’t always fit into students’ busy lives. The assessment process revealed that the college needed to develop additional flexible options to ensure that all students had the opportunity to engage in service and develop greater competency in practicing personal and social responsibility.

Starting in September 2009, MCC offered faculty, staff, and students a variety of community service opportunities throughout the year with the goal of surpassing the 2,400 hours performed on the previous year’s Day of Service, a community-wide, single-day service initiative that had been particularly well attended. MCC community members chose from a host of service opportunities and recorded their service hours as part of the Seasons of Service (SOS) initiative. SOS participants volunteered at numerous organizations addressing community priorities. Over the course of the 2009–10 academic year, MCC students, faculty, and staff performed approximately 3,200 hours of community service through the SOS project.

MCC continues to strive toward increasing our students’ opportunities to enact personal and social responsibility by using lessons learned through assessment to develop a depth and breadth of opportunities suited to our students’ diverse needs. As a result, MCC is working to educate students for personal and social responsibility through a range of integrated curricular and cocurricular options. Our assessment work informs our practice, allowing us to evaluate student growth on an ongoing basis and providing the rationale to continue improving our students’ learning experiences.

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**Community Engagement Activities**

In response to students’ needs, MCC offers a wide variety of opportunities for students to connect with community members inside and outside the classroom. Recent examples include:

- Flu immunizations administered by nursing students at Saints Medical Center in Lowell
- Community Wellness Fairs held in collaboration with MCC’s Fitness Center, Nursing, and Medical Assisting Programs
- Oral hygiene instruction provided by dental assistant students to cancer patients at local oncology and radiology units
- Targeted community outreach by dental hygiene students to increase awareness of preventative oral care and promote healthy attitudes among elementary school children
- Visits to MCC’s chemistry lab for children involved in local organizations, hosted by professor Sally Quest and her students
- Health and disease-prevention materials designed by professor Jean Cremins and her microbiology students for distribution at Milly’s Place, a family shelter in Lowell
- Alternative Spring Breaks in New Orleans and with Habitat for Humanity in Lawrence, Bedford, and Westford, Massachusetts
- Participation in the Merrimack Valley Heart Walk as part of a citywide effort to raise awareness about cardiovascular health
- Halloween safety guidelines presented by criminal justice students at Girls Inc. in Lowell

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1 Editor’s note: See Robert Reason’s article on page 8 of this issue of Diversity & Democracy to learn more about the PSRI.
Ethics and Development in Mali: Civic Engagement in Art, Culture, and Education

While it is no longer unusual for study abroad programs to include civic engagement, it is less common for these elements to be their primary focus. Michigan State University (MSU) is breaking new ground with a study abroad program that puts civic engagement at its center: Ethics and Development in Mali. Offered since summer 2004 through the Residential College in the Arts and Humanities at Michigan State University; and Yoby Guindo, education specialist, CARE Mali

Ethics and Development in Mali brings MSU students face to face with a range of difficult ethical issues related to art, culture, and education in this West African country.

Ethical Questions
Mali’s rich artistic, cultural, and musical traditions are admired throughout the world. But Mali is also well-known for confronting some of the most difficult development challenges of the twenty-first century, including reducing hunger, improving education, and building a functional democracy. Where harsh conditions and invigorating cultures meet, difficult ethical issues arise.

For example, offering instruction in students’ native languages may be the most effective way to reach them, but it may also disadvantage those who wish to attend the university, where French (the colonial language) is spoken. The use of traditional fabric patterns in commercial products may enhance export values while also accelerating these patterns’ decline in ceremonial use. In these situations, how does one weigh costs and benefits, and who should decide what tradeoffs are acceptable?

These and other ethical issues in development are embedded in a larger question about the ethics of development. Some claim that multilateral international development strategies implemented after World War II have primarily benefited wealthy donor countries. Natural resources have flowed from poorer to richer countries, with standard manufactured goods flowing in the opposite direction. Even international food aid can put local farmers out of business and make emerging democratic processes seem less relevant to citizens.

What makes our study abroad program distinctive is its dual focus, through civic engagement, on ethical issues in and of development. Our curriculum takes into account wider criticisms of development without neglecting urgent problems in development.

Structure of the Program
In summer 2010, thirteen MSU undergraduates participated in Ethics and Development in Mali. The program’s current incarnation consists of a five-week sequence divided into three parts:

Pre-departure class. This intensive one-week course at MSU focused on contemporary Malian art, education, and culture. Guests included the director of the Ciwara School, a K–9 school where we would conduct our civic engagement work; an experienced study abroad teacher who has worked with American undergraduates teaching abroad in K–12 schools; two Malian undergraduates studying at the local community college and hoping to enroll at MSU; and a former Malian ambassador to the United States.

Excursion: On arriving in Mali, we spent one week meeting with artists, writers, and teachers and traveling around the country. We toured and studied the monuments of Bamako, Mali’s capital, and its impressive National Museum. We traveled from the great mosque in Djenne to the bustling harbor of Mopti to the breathtaking cliffs of Dogon country. Finally, we participated in a workshop with the Kasobane bogolan atelier (a collective of mud cloth artists) and visited a women’s rug collective in Segou.

Civic Engagement: Following excursion activities, we spent three weeks in residence at the Ciwara community school in Kati and its affiliated Institute for Popular Education (IEP). MSU students teamed up with Malian university students from the École Normale Supérieure (ENSUP) in Bamako to develop and teach English-language classes for K–9 students using active learning pedagogies. Both the predeparture week and the excursion proved essential to helping students make sense of the customs and practices they encountered during the civic engagement portion of the trip.
While in Mali, students enrolled in six to ten credits of coursework, including a required civic engagement course connected to their collaborative teaching at the Ciwara School. In addition, students enrolled in a mix of elective courses on ethics, art, and development. All students kept a journal where they reflected on their experiences and readings, with additional writing assignments varying by elective.

Civic Engagement Content
During the civic engagement portion of the trip, students gained firsthand insight into the ethical issue of bilingual education (pedagogie convergente) by working directly with Malian students and partners. Beginning around 7 a.m. each day, MSU students met with their ENSUP partners at the Ciwara school to plan lessons. They then formed teams of two to six to teach Ciwara students (with a mid-lesson recess and food break), followed by language learning (bamanakan) with ENSUP partners and lesson planning for the next day. After lunch, the ENSUP students returned to Bamako for classes at the university, while MSU students spent the afternoon reading, writing, and relaxing before dinner and evening reflection sessions. On weekends the group explored additional ethical questions by traveling to the local market or visiting fabric artists, dyers, or tailors, with time reserved for writing, photography, and discussions.

MSU and ENSUP partners, along with Ciwara teachers, worked in groups devoted to three distinct subjects: sports and physical education, art and music, and history and culture. Ciwara students were also divided into three groups based roughly on grade level (from 1 to 9). In Week I, the youngest students participated in sports and physical education, and the older students participated in the other two groups. In Weeks II and III, the students rotated into new content areas. All content areas emphasized active teaching techniques (such as creative writing, dance, and music exercises), using English where appropriate.

Through this partnership, Ciwara students benefited from their instructors’ enthusiasm, and MSU and ENSUP students learned how to collaborate and develop active learning techniques in a bilingual context—a particularly important outcome for the ENSUP partners, who were training to teach English at the lycée level. MSU students also gained the critical opportunity to engage firsthand with issues surrounding bilingual education while developing a context in which to consider the range of ethical topics they explored during the trip.

Next Steps
In working at the Ciwara School and meeting Malian artists, students did not find clear-cut answers to ethical dilemmas. If anything, their experience raised more questions. For example, if instructional language is already a complex issue, what are the consequences of adding English to the mix? Should contemporary fabric artists use bogolan symbols in stylized ways, or should they preserve traditional patterns that convey meaningful proverbial knowledge? Our students were still debating these issues as we left Mali.

Nonetheless, most students were convinced of one thing. By participating in this program, they had incurred new ethical obligations. Some talked about staying in touch with their ENSUP partners or helping the Ciwara school after the program ended. Some are considering returning to Mali after graduation. Others want to share their knowledge with peers and family members to help dispel stereotypes about sub-Saharan Africa. In sum, students left Mali not only with a better understanding of the complexity of ethical issues, but with more confidence and greater commitment to working with Malians to address them.

Editor’s note: Stephen Esquith participated in MSU’s Core Commitments Leadership Consortium team. To read about one student’s experience with Ethics and Development in Mali, see Leila Chatti’s article on page 15.

1 The Ciwara School’s staff members were instrumental to the program’s success. Principal Michel Zerbo, Ciwara classroom teachers, and Peace Corps Volunteers Scotty Fay and Yik Lam provided advice and managed the program’s daily administrative work—an extraordinary task, given that the program involved thirteen MSU students, seventeen ENSUP partners, and between 150 and 200 Ciwara students. Cheick Oumar Coulibaly and Debbie Fredo, leaders of the Ciwara school, and Maria Diarra, director of the Institute for Popular Education, also made invaluable contributions to the program.
Months after leaving Mali, I still think of Fatoumata.
I was interested in visiting Mali for logical reasons. I wanted to teach abroad after college, so when the opportunity arose to do so through Ethics and Development in Mali, I signed up immediately. I saw the course as a chance to fine-tune my classroom skills in a foreign school—and, of course, I looked forward to visiting a new place. The trip to brighten the room, as there was no electricity. Sitting quietly in a ray of morning sunlight was Fatoumata.

Fatoumata was small, like all the children. Despite the heat, she wore sweaters most days, and her small chin peeked out shyly over their collars. Her head was always cocked slightly to the side, her hands behind her back. She didn’t speak much, but she listened. If you were to come across her, you might look right past. I nearly did.

She was different, though: Fatoumata was brilliant. In a class dominated by boys, she stood out. Fatoumata knew the answer to every question I threw at her. She not only had the correct answer, she would blush. She was always the first one with her hand in the air, patiently crouched on her knees so her small fingers could reach over the sea of heads. After every correct answer, she would blush.

Few girls get an education in Mali. I had read this before my departure. But the words meant little to me until I stepped onto the distinct red soil and saw the consequences firsthand.

Few girls get an education in Mali. I had read this before my departure. But the words meant little to me until I stepped onto the distinct red soil and saw the consequences firsthand. The windows were open and were filled with laughter.

I went. In the streets, women carried wares on their heads and children on their backs, walking across uneven terrain with a grace I could never muster. Men played drums between their knees, singing from the bottoms of their bellies and smiling with their teeth. The air smelled of plantains and the sea of heads. After every correct answer, she would blush.

I had read this before my departure. But the words meant little to me until I stepped onto the distinct red soil and saw the consequences firsthand. As the grades get higher, the number of girls per classroom becomes smaller and smaller. Though things are changing, girls are still married off young or relied on at home, and they are thus pulled out of school much more frequently than boys. Those who finish primary school rarely move on to any formal secondary education, which isn’t considered necessary for women.

Knowing this is difficult. It means that despite Fatoumata’s intelligence, she may leave school early. Even if she stays in school, she will struggle, and her education won’t be of the highest quality. Mali’s education system offers few options, so many Malians dream of scholarships to foreign schools, although these are extremely competitive. In a sense, the difference between myself and Fatoumata is only a matter of where and when we were born. My education came by chance; she and others like her deserve it just as much as I do.

My experience at Ciwara solidified my belief that all children deserve a quality education and my desire to provide that education by teaching in Mali and places like it. While I don’t expect to transform the world, I do hope to improve it. Holding Fatoumata’s hand while she read aloud, I felt I was exactly where I was supposed to be. Maybe I’ll come across her again someday. Until then, in every class I teach, I will see her and others like her in my mind a small hand in the back, raised patiently, and think of her.

Few girls get an education in Mali. I had read this before my departure. But the words meant little to me until I stepped onto the distinct red soil and saw the consequences firsthand.

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Institutionalizing Core Values: Diversity, Ethics, and Civic Responsibility in the Curriculum

MARILYN KURATA, director of core curriculum enhancement at the University of Alabama at Birmingham

For the past three years, the Princeton Review has ranked the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) among its top ten institutions for diversity within the student body, and this year, UAB ranked seventh for interactions across race and class categories. These rankings reflect both UAB’s ongoing efforts to recruit students from underrepresented groups and its institutional commitments to diversity, ethics, and civic responsibility, which have been inextricably linked in the university’s vision since its founding in 1969.

Long before gaining notoriety in 1963 for law enforcement’s use of dogs and water cannons against nonviolent demonstrators, Birmingham was infamous for being a hotbed of anti-Catholicism and the most segregated city in America. From its origins, UAB represented a modern university that is now UAB.

Volker built on that success when he transformed the University of Alabama’s Medical Center in Birmingham into the modern university that is now UAB.

This commitment to diversity continues under Carol Z. Garrison, UAB’s sixth (and second female) president. Since Garrison’s appointment in fall 2002, UAB has appointed its first African American vice president to head the newly created Office for Equity and Diversity, required diversity training and certification for all employees, established a Commission on the Status of Women, and become the first university in the University of Alabama system to name sexual orientation as a protected category in personnel decisions.

UAB’s commitment to diversity is further reflected in the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) it developed as part of its 2005 recertification by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Using standardized tests, research studies, higher education literature, best practices, surveys, and focus groups with alumni, employees, students, staff, and faculty, the QEP development group identified a range of foundational competencies that all students should develop. These include competencies in ethics and civic responsibility (ECR)—areas that are essential for students’ success in the major and beyond.

The development group expressed “repeated concerns about students needing to explore the dimensions of ethical and moral choices, take personal responsibility, [and] give back to the community, nation, and world” (University of Alabama at Birmingham 2005, 21).

Thus the QEP called faculty and staff to make an institutional commitment to integrating ethics and civic responsibility across the curriculum. Through the QEP, UAB committed to creating a First-Year Experience (FYE) program that would introduce ECR and other targeted competencies to students. It also required UAB to enhance instruction and practice in ECR across the curriculum and to develop required capstones that would include a discipline-specific ECR component.

Cross-Curricular Enhancements

Since 2005, UAB’s First-Year Experience program has explored such topics as cultural competence, ethnic warfare, socioeconomic and health disparities, and immigration. The program requires all first-year students to read a common book (past selections have included The Spirit Catches You and You Fall Down, The Kite Runner, All Over But the Shoutin’, Field Notes from a Catastrophe, Mountains Beyond Mountains, and Outcasts United). Students then attend a presentation by the author or another relevant individual and participate in small group discussions that model civil discourse on controversial issues. Sustained discussion continues throughout the academic year with monthly Discussion Book Dialogues, essay contests or publications, and off-campus events cosponsored by community partners like the Birmingham Museum of Art and the McWane Science Center.

UAB’s new Freshman Learning Communities (FLCs) have provided additional opportunities for first-year students to explore ECR. In 2006–08, the first of two Difficult Dialogue grants from the Ford Foundation supported the...
development and implementation of two FLC programs grounded in UAB’s history. One of these Ford-funded FLCs explored how knowing about Birmingham’s history helps students understand the current city, its people, and its problems. Another focused on health disparities and other ethical issues in medical research. These and subsequently developed FLCs helped UAB identify a common academic foundation and introduction to university expectations, ECR competencies, and other learning outcomes that are now integrated into all FYE courses. While the FYE program was in development, a university-wide committee spent a year creating a process for courses to receive ECR designation. The committee developed fourteen ECR learning outcomes that fall into four broad categories of ideal student outcomes: Students understand and practice ethical reasoning and decision making. Students are knowledgeable about contemporary events and issues. Students understand civic responsibility. Students understand the role and value of diversity.

The committee then developed a process for programs to submit courses (whether new, enhanced, or existing) for ECR designation. Since January 2009, the committee has awarded ECR designation to seventy-six courses. All programs are responsible for ensuring that their majors take a minimum of two ECR courses between their FYE course and their capstone experience. Like all courses, ECR courses are subject to departmental or school review and must be approved by the appropriate curriculum committee. Programs and faculty retain control over course content and decide which courses will be submitted for ECR designation.

The final component of UAB’s QEP is the development of a capstone for each major. Although capstones can range in format or focus—including internships, fieldwork, experimental research, portfolios, performances, and theses—each capstone must reinforce some ethical issue related to the student’s disciplinary studies. Moreover, capstones must facilitate students’ successful transition from college to post-graduation civic engagement. A grant from the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Core Commitments project supplemented institutional funds committed to supporting faculty as they developed or enhanced the ECR components of mid-curricular and capstone courses.

Conclusion
UAB’s location, history, founding principles, and role as a research leader and major employer help explain the university’s commitment to integrating diversity, ethics, and social responsibility across the curriculum. In order to achieve its goals for undergraduate education, UAB needs to incorporate learning outcomes for personal and social responsibility within its goals for students’ disciplinary knowledge. By educating the whole person, the university best prepares graduates to enjoy productive, meaningful careers and lives that benefit a society that increasingly resembles a global community. For more information on how UAB has institutionalized ECR, visit http://main.uab.edu/Sites/DOE/ECR/

REFERENCES


Promoting ECR outside the Classroom
Even outside the classroom, UAB has implemented changes to educate students in personal and social responsibility. For example, after residential advisers noticed that students living in suites with multiple private bedrooms often retreated to their rooms to avoid interacting with suitemates who were “different,” UAB built a new first-year dorm that requires each student to share a room. This change promotes immersion in a university culture that values diversity and promotes active engagement as campus citizens.

Similarly, a second Difficult Dialogues grant in 2008–10 allowed UAB to create a cocurricular program called Film for Thought using short films produced by students in Digital Community Studies courses. Program facilitators use these ethnographic films to prompt dialogue about controversial social and ethical issues related to race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic differences. An archive of these films, which also help spark facilitated dialogues in classrooms and town hall meetings in the community, can be found at http://contentdm.mhsl.uab.edu/cdm4/browse.php?CISOROOT=%2FFILM.

—Marilyn Kurata
"What is a good society?" This question provides focus for general education at University of the Pacific, a private comprehensive university whose main campus is located in the ethnically diverse city of Stockton, California. Pacific’s general education program probes the question through three required Pacific Seminars (PACS) that serve as bookends to students’ undergraduate experiences.

Pacific faculty want students not only to understand diversity in the United States and around the globe, but also to engage, through personal interactions in and out of class and through other forms of experiential learning, with those who are different from them.

Students enroll in the writing-intensive, discussion-oriented PACS 1 and 2 sequence during their first year and take PACS 3, a culminating seminar on ethics, during their senior year. Together, these seminars provide context for students’ learning at Pacific and for their future participation in the world at large.

**Introducing Big Questions**

The seminars begin with PACS 1, a shared intellectual experience with a uniform syllabus and common course reader that introduces all first-year students to the question, "What is a good society?" Based on intellectual and moral development theories, the faculty-edited course anthology engages students in the topic through a progressive exploration that moves from local to universal levels. Chapters focus on five themes: the self and self-reflection, family and interpersonal relationships, the institutions of civil society, citizenship and the state, and the environment. The course’s principal goals are to develop greater awareness of and critical thinking about significant social and political issues, both national and global, and to promote social and political engagement. The course accomplishes this through extensive participation in the world at large.

One of PACS 1’s primary goals is to encourage students to develop perspective-taking on and empathy for many forms of difference (such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, disability, religious diversity, nationality, and species). The course often applies this perspective-taking to examine whether the United States is living up to the ideals of liberty and equality promulgated in its founding documents. Students read about and discuss a wide range of related topics, including the cultural and political forces that shape personal identity, the effects of internalizing racial stereotypes, perceptions of those with disabilities, non-traditional forms of family and the history of marriage (which we relate to a discussion of California’s Proposition 8), cultural differences in care for children and the elderly, religious pluralism in America, the roles of race and class in public education funding, the role of government in the economy, cosmopolitanism and nationalism, the treatment of nonhuman beings, and environmental racism. While the course’s central goal is to encourage empathetic and critical perspective-taking across difference, readings on the decline of civic engagement (coupled with targeted efforts by the civic engagement office in the College of Arts and Sciences) encourage students to get involved in their communities. Thus students have volunteered in such activities as working at the polls in the November elections.

**Exploring Greater Depths**

During their second semester, students enroll in a PACS 2 seminar, chosen from over forty different topical courses that examine one or more of PACS 1’s five themes in greater depth. Every school and virtually every department in the College of Arts and Sciences offers these seminars. The signature assignment in all PACS 2 sections is a research project, and many sections also have experiential learning components.

Diversity and civic engagement remain common themes in PACS 2’s provocatively titled seminars. The seminars explore topics like the social and political forces that shape income inequality (You’ve Got Class), the social creation of gender roles (Cover Girls and Guitar Heroes), mass media representations of different identity groups (Media and Pop Culture Critique), the role of religion in public life (The Religious Footprint), economic problems and solutions in a good society (Economics and Social Welfare), the role of the arts in promoting civic action (The Politics of Punk Rock), human obligations to nonhuman beings (Animal Rights and Wrongs), and the human relationship to the environment (Gaia’s Got a Fever). Some of the seminars explicitly encourage student civic engage-
The Pacific Seminars grew out of three "Mentor Seminars" that formed the core of Pacific's general education program in the 1990s. Taken in the first year, Mentor 1 examined "timeless questions," and Mentor 2 focused on contemporary issues and culminated in a research project. Mentor 3 was taken in the senior year and focused on ethics and ethical autobiography. As a result of a general education program review, the Mentor Seminars became the Pacific Seminars in 2006. With the shift in name, the seminars became connected by a common theme that would be compelling and relevant to today's students and faculty: the nature of a good society. Faculty also began to create their own topical seminars for PACS 2, resulting in greater faculty investment and improved quality of required research projects.

—Lou Matz

The Pacific Seminars use two common readers edited by faculty members. Pictured is the reader for PACS1.

The Pacific Seminars use two common readers edited by faculty members. Pictured is the reader for PACS1.

Editors note: Lou Matz was a coleader of University of the Pacific's Core Commitments Leadership Consortium team. To learn more about the Pacific Seminars, visit www.pacific.edu/x20945.xml or see Jhoanna Amigable's article on page 20.

Origin of the Pacific Seminars

The Pacific Seminars grew out of three "Mentor Seminars" that formed the core of Pacific's general education program in the 1990s. Taken in the first year, Mentor 1 examined "timeless questions," and Mentor 2 focused on contemporary issues and culminated in a research project. Mentor 3 was taken in the senior year and focused on ethics and ethical autobiography. As a result of a general education program review, the Mentor Seminars became the Pacific Seminars in 2006. With the shift in name, the seminars became connected by a common theme that would be compelling and relevant to today's students and faculty: the nature of a good society. Faculty also began to create their own topical seminars for PACS 2, resulting in greater faculty investment and improved quality of required research projects.

—Lou Matz

Reflecting on the Ethical Self

Students across majors reconvene as seniors in PACS 3, a culminating seminar where they develop capacities for ethical self-understanding and ethical reasoning. Using a second common course reader edited by Pacific faculty, students learn about different moral development and ethical theories and examine different perspectives on issues related to family, friends, work, and citizenship. In the course's centerpiece assignment, students write an ethical autobiography, drawing on theoretical material to examine and articulate the nature and sources of their own moral values.

In comparison to PACS 1 and 2, PACS 3 focuses less on issues of diversity and more on students' own ethical development. At the same time, students use the skills they have developed in engaging diverse perspectives and in exploring their own beliefs about a good society to examine different philosophical perspectives. Through the course, students identify, analyze, and evaluate their own moral values and frameworks, engaging in self-reflection that is both retrospective and prospective. The course's common reader includes chapters on ethical relativism, on the relationship between ethics and religious belief, and on different philosophical theories about the concepts of right and wrong. Students learn about Kohlberg's moral theory and whether moral reasoning is gendered or culturally relative. They examine different versions of marriage, learn about parenting approaches and children's moral development, read about the relationship between moral and civic development, and revisit questions of patriotism, cosmopolitanism, and their own and America's ethical identity. Many students report that the course is personally transformative and that by writing their ethical autobiographies, they gain important self-understanding that will help them navigate the world after leaving Pacific. The course illustrates how ethical engagement on a national and global scale begins with a critical understanding of one's own ethical commitments.

Engaging with Diversity and Democracy

The Pacific Seminars series calls students of all majors to engage with issues of diversity and democracy. Pacific faculty want students not only to understand diversity in the United States and around the globe, but also to engage, through personal interactions in and out of class and through other forms of experiential learning, with those who are different from them. Through the PACS series, Pacific students learn to build friendships and relationships with colleagues while becoming citizens who can make their differences a source of collective strength. 

Editor's note: Lou Matz was a coleader of University of the Pacific's Core Commitments Leadership Consortium team. To learn more about the Pacific Seminars, visit www.pacific.edu/x20945.xml or see Jhoanna Amigable's article on page 20.
In a sense, I did not travel far when I enrolled at University of the Pacific, less than a thirty-minute drive from my home. Yet at the same time, I entered another world, encountering for the first time people whose backgrounds, identities, and outlooks on life were very different from mine. As a first-year student, I enrolled in Pacific Seminar 1, What is a Good Society?, and Pacific Seminar 2, Is Religion Good for Women? Both seminars challenged me to engage across differences and apply critical thinking skills to current personal, political, and societal issues in the world at large, including sexual identity, marriage rights, and racial stereotyping. Pacific Seminar 2 additionally allowed me to choose a path of study and eventually a research topic that interested me. As a premed student, I decided to focus my research on the ethical debate over female circumcision.

My experiences in these two courses reinforced my decision to major in biological sciences. These classes helped me interact with students from different majors. They gave me insight into what students with different academic backgrounds studied and how their knowledge might apply to certain topics.

As a senior, I enrolled in Pacific Seminar 3, another discussion-based course that encourages students to speak their minds. In the seminar, I studied different ethical issues, pushing myself to consider various approaches to ethical problems and theories of moral development. I learned how to use the moral outlook I had developed to approach ethical issues that will arise throughout my life, such as lying and childrearing. As I reflected on my own moral development, I came to understand and refine the values that I hold today, while also becoming more able to relate positively to others. I learned, in short, to keep an open mind.

The seminar allowed me to reflect on what I would do in certain situations. It offered a space where I could engage with others over the personal and ethical consequences of life decisions such as physician-assisted suicide. The challenge of discussing ethical issues in medicine strengthened my aspiration to become a doctor. It provided me with insight from different viewpoints, as well as an ability to suspend my biases when encountering the problems we discussed. It thus strengthened my ability to make tough decisions—and, just as important, to respect how others respond to problems regardless of whether I agree with their choices. By opening my mind to multiple perspectives, I learned to carefully consider the consequences of my actions and how they may affect others.

I learned a great deal in the course that I expect to apply in the future, both personally and professionally. When facing problems that test my morality, I will be able to reason through my decisions and imagine their consequences. But I will also weigh my choices with the understanding that there is no single right or wrong, but rather a variety of different moral approaches—and that those who approach problems differently than I would still deserve my respect.

I plan to graduate this spring with my bachelor’s degree in biological sciences and eventually to enroll in medical school. I believe that what I learned in the Pacific Seminars will play a role when I am faced with difficult medical decisions and will allow me to respond with empathy to patients of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. The Pacific Seminars have taught me to keep an unbiased mind in making decisions with reverberating consequences.

For more on the Pacific Seminars, see Lou Matz’s article on page 18.
[RESEARCH REPORT]

Business Ethics in Undergraduate Education

One component of personal and social responsibility that has received ample attention over the past decade is the question of ethical reasoning, particularly as it is manifested (or not) in the business world. Colleges and universities can play a key role in preparing future business leaders for their ethical responsibilities in the workplace, but much remains to be accomplished on that front. Several recent studies have shed light on the ethical preparation of business students in particular, providing insight into how higher education might better prepare students for responsible action in an interdependent economy.

Students’ Perceptions of Business Ethics

A study published recently in *Business Education Digest* (Keith, Perrault, and Chin 2009) explores students’ perceptions of how prevalent and consequential ethical questions are in the business world. Surveys of business students at a midwestern university revealed that while 83 percent of students either “agree” or “strongly agree” that “situations where ethics may be called into question are frequently encountered in business,” students underrate the ethical consequence of several potential conflicts.

Students were particularly likely to indicate that “no action” was necessary in hypothetical cases of employee conflict of interest (such as granting contracts to family members, where 38 percent of students thought no action was necessary). In contrast, students judged misrepresentation of qualifications on a résumé as deserving of harsher penalties (with 32 percent saying this called for dismissal). As the researchers note, “the findings reaffirm the need for university-level ethics education for business students” (9).

Religious Education and Business Ethics

In an article recently published in *Contemporary Issues in Education Research*, Charles Comegys probes the possible connections between students’ beliefs about business ethics and their exposure to discussions of religion and ethics, either through their coursework or via their institutional context (2010). Comegys administered the Attitudes Toward Business Ethics Questionnaire to students at six institutions in the Northwest, two of which were religiously affiliated.

Comegys found evidence that both business students and non-business students at secular institutions expressed stronger agreement with unethical statements about business than their peers at religiously affiliated institutes (which may be a result of self-selection, as the author notes). He also found that business students who had taken ethics courses displayed more disagreement with unethical statements, while the same was true of non-business students who had taken religious studies courses. Comegys concludes that “ethical education and institutional climate may play a role in effectively shaping students’ attitudes about business ethics” (41).

Gender and Business Ethics

In a second study on students’ perceptions of business ethics, Keith, Perrault, and Chin (now joined by Megan Keith) explored whether a correlation exists between student gender and ethical beliefs (2009). A survey distributed to business students at a midwestern university revealed that female students’ views about ethics tend to diverge from those of their male peers in several significant ways.

The researchers focused their gender-disaggregated data on three categories: perceptions about “the need for congruence between corporate and personal ethics,” beliefs about “whether success in business depends on ethical behavior,” and perceptions about “which types of workplace misconduct deserve the most severe managerial disciplinary actions” (134–5). In the first and second categories, they found that women were more likely than men to believe that personal ethics and corporate behaviors should align and that ethics are essential to success. In the third category, however, women and men shared similar and relatively lax beliefs about what kinds of disciplinary action are appropriate, reinforcing the researchers’ beliefs that more ethics education is necessary for business students.

—Kathryn Peltier Campbell, editor

REFERENCES


In Print

Citizenship Across the Curriculum, Edited by Michael B. Smith, Rebecca S. Nowacek, and Jeffrey L. Bernstein (Indiana University Press 2010, $24.95 paperback)
This anthology provides useful examples of how faculty across disciplines have infused their courses with questions of citizenship. With examples from such diverse areas as communications, biology, and teacher education, the authors and editors reflect on the many places where education for citizenship could occur in today’s college classrooms. By including with each essay comments from colleagues across disciplines, the editors create innovative spaces for cross-disciplinary dialogues. This book is essential reading for anyone concerned with how higher education can prepare students across majors to engage responsibly with the world.

Social Justice Education: Inviting Faculty to Transform Their Institutions, edited by Kathleen Skubikowski, Catharine Wright, and Roman Graf (2009, $27.50 paperback)
This collection of essays on social justice in higher education is at once practical and inspiring. Editors Skubikowski, Wright, and Graf have selected essays that explore how faculty can work to infuse social justice goals at multiple levels in higher education, including the theoretical, intra- and interinstitutional, and pedagogical. The result is an excellent tool for faculty development around questions of social justice teaching—what are its purposes, and how can faculty accomplish it? Readers looking for ways to approach these questions across disciplines and sectors will appreciate this collection and its ambitious yet concrete approach.

The Political Responsibilities of Everyday Bystanders, Stephen L. Esquith (The Pennsylvania State University Press 2010, $54.95 hardcover)
This short philosophical volume intrigues, convinces, and compels as it explores how “everyday bystanders” can and should come to see how they are implicated in acts of systemic violence. Author Stephen L. Esquith (who contributed to this issue of Diversity & Democracy) offers cogent analysis of why it is so important for individuals to draw these connections—and how “citizen–teachers” can encourage them to do so. Esquith fills in the gaps between modern tragedies and their unwitting beneficiaries and calls readers to consider their own roles in perpetuating inequity. His focus on educational models that will instill empathy and reflection makes this book a key resource for educators interested in the ethical consequences of their work.

In this approachable volume, Nash and Murray tackle the ambiguous but essential task of helping college students create meaning in their lives. Drawing from professional literature and students’ personal reflections, as well as from their own significant experiences as educators, the authors offer practical resources for a “constructivist” approach to meaning-making that considers the student as a “whole person.” The resulting volume promises to help faculty and administrators as they work to assist their students in locating themselves and their values in the context of the greater society.
Resources

Core Commitments Promising Practices Resource Bank
The Association of American Colleges and Universities’ Core Commitments project has created a resource bank of practices that infuse five dimensions of personal and social responsibility into students’ educational experiences. The resource bank includes examples within each of the five dimensions: Striving for excellence, cultivating personal and academic integrity, contributing to a larger community, taking seriously the perspectives of others, and developing competence in ethical and moral reasoning and action. To access the resource bank, visit http://aacu-secure.nisgroup.com/core_commits/PromisingPractices.cfm.

Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE)
The CIRCLE website includes a variety of data on civic learning, with particular focus on young people’s political engagement. Resources include not only reports and fact sheets on topics like Concepts of Citizenship and Service Learning, but also raw data sets from previous studies on these topics. To access these and other resources, visit http://www.civicyouth.org.

The Democracy Imperative
Housed at the University of New Hampshire and directed by Diversity & Democracy board member Nancy L. Thomas, the Democracy Imperative offers a number of valuable resources on education for democratic engagement. The website’s useful content includes a repository of syllabi on courses that aim to teach democratic practice in the classroom, and lists of helpful publications. For more information, visit http://www.unh.edu/democracy/index.html.

Opportunities

NASPA Annual Conference
The 2011 NASPA (Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education) conference will focus on the topic “Educating for Lives of Purpose.” Participants will gather in Philadelphia on March 12–16, 2011, to “develop imaginative, future-oriented solutions to seemingly intractable problems.” To learn more, visit http://www.naspa.org/conf/default.cfm.

Continuums of Service Conference
The fourteenth annual Continuums of Service conference, hosted by Washington State Campus Compact, will take place on April 27–29, 2011, in San Diego, California. The conference will convene K–16 faculty and staff as well as students and community partners to focus on “Higher Education Strategies that Address Today’s Critical Issues.” For more about the conference, visit http://www.wacampuscompact.org/cosconference/index.shtml.

Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility Meeting
The Association of American Colleges and Universities will host its second meeting on Educating for Personal and Social Responsibility on October 13–15, 2011, in Long Beach, California. The conference’s call for proposals is currently available online at http://www.aacu.org/meetings/index.cfm.
AAC&U Associates

Enrollment in the Associates program provides an opportunity for individuals on AAC&U member campuses to advance core purposes and best practices in undergraduate education and to strengthen their collaboration with AAC&U’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives. Associates pay $60 per calendar year and receive the same benefits as AAC&U Campus Representatives, including subscriptions to our print publications, Liberal Education, Peer Review, and Diversity & Democracy, electronic copies of On Campus with Women, invitations to apply for grant-funded projects, and advance notice of calls for proposals for institutes and meetings. For more information, please visit www.aacu.org or call Renee Gamache at 202-884-0809.

About AAC&U

AAC&U is the leading national association concerned with the quality, vitality, and public standing of undergraduate liberal education. Its members are committed to extending the advantages of a liberal education to all students, regardless of academic specialization or intended career. Founded in 1915, AAC&U now comprises more than 1,200 member institutions—including accredited public and private colleges and universities of every type and size. AAC&U functions as a catalyst and facilitator, forging links among presidents, administrators, and faculty members who are engaged in institutional and curricular planning. Information about AAC&U membership, programs, and publications can be found at www.aacu.org.

From AAC&U Board Statement on Liberal Learning

AAC&U believes that by its nature... liberal learning is global and pluralistic. It embraces the diversity of ideas and experiences that characterize the social, natural, and intellectual world. To acknowledge such diversity in all its forms is both an intellectual commitment and a social responsibility, for nothing less will equip us to understand our world and to pursue fruitful lives.

Upcoming AAC&U Meetings

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