

General Education Discussion

[Notes from tables A-J at discussion August 2002]

Page A

1. Assess current students, be in touch with alums: are we educating liberally educated women? Where are the problems?

-Educate parents and students about what a Saint Mary's liberal education is

-Clarify the distinctive qualities of a liberal education at Saint Mary's, including connecting disciplines, active listening, a sense of team cooperation, finding one's own voice and being able to use it professionally, preparing women for a culture of organizations that's still primarily male

2. -Liberal learning at Saint Mary's is currently sequential and so loses the chance to integrate general education with the major and allow students to engage gen. ed at the deeper level they attain as they progress in their studies in the major

-Consider capstone courses that bring students from different majors together to address a societal/ethical problem

-Remember we're not just preparing students for work but for life, and that their lives during their time here are also of value

-Integrate cultural studies, including geography and study abroad

-Throw out the whole curriculum and start over, (a somewhat monumental approach!), e.g., looking at how many classes students take at a time, sequencing of gen. ed courses

Linn Vacca, Alan Vlach, Phil Boys, John Pauley, Bill Shannon, & Anita Houck (sec.)

Page B

-What does it mean to RECLAIM THE LANGUAGE of lib educ? "Get out of the way" save & savor

-Transition/DO learn ex. Public speaking what do we do to get them there? We don't have a public speaking course-but all disciplines have requirements/expect learning

-Tandems work well often can't take time away from program to teach; have to cover 2 #'s of students

-Don't work: courses that do "everything"-not disciplined based taught by "gen. ed faculty" defeats purpose of bringing expertise to a course

-Works: everyone knows everyone else's specialty so could invite them to __ *moves pieces around-to have sense things extend beyond classroom

-Demonstrate being in gen. ed by relating what taught in class to broader topics-not deep discourse about the topic to demonstrate inter-connectedness of disciplines

-Get to know expertise of other faculty communicate with one another what particular expertise is-sense of community-broader understanding for students

-Expertise does not represent all interests!

-Are "core courses" such a smorgasbord that no one understands

-Timing of courses, student discovery of interest exposure to broad span, lose lots of “intents”-after first year, opportunity to take wide variety of courses 1st year, students don’t appreciate what they’ve learned at the time-so can’t go by student responses to benefits

-Dichotomies/reality comments

-Might argue lack coherence in our gen. ed, arrive at coherence, when try to mature, but we lack way to define process (of how students accomplish achieving coherence), alum-USA today-lost job Arthur Anderson (evidence)=what we do works =exposure to ways of knowing you see different man than I do

-Not just one way to do it, common courses may not be needed because we all have commitment to gen. ed interested in inter-connections so many requirements in some majors-blocks out =Mof programs

MJ Regan-Kubinski (sec), Tom Plat, Don Miller, Laurel Thomas

Page C

-Service learning might be an opportunity for working interdisciplinary

-Students have a deep commitment to their major but they don’t necessarily see the value of “liberal arts”

-We need to help students make connections between disciplines

-Being a comprehensive college is an advantage in that it keeps everyone more honest

-The task forces are already structured & they only include the people teaching the gen. ed courses

-How do we embed in our students a sense of self?

-**We shouldn’t add a course!!!!

-We could rearrange courses

-We could restructure courses

-We could drop a course & make everyone take a women’s studies course but...

What do we think a Catholic women’s college ought to be?

-The potential exists for using the “W” program to-

1. Review how it came about
2. How it REALLY works, not in theory
3. How it did not infringe on territory
4. How it might work
5. How could “gender” raising be modeled on it

Kitty Green

Page D

1. Are we doing enough to convince parents and students of the benefits of a liberal education?
2. Work on our language regarding requirements, liberal arts endeavors. Never, never, never say, “Take this, get it out of the way” ADVISING is the key. We need to review, perhaps revise how its’ done. Advisors must see the purpose of the liberal arts requirements.

3. Are gen. ed and liberal ed the same thing? Would it help to avoid “gen. ed” and embrace “liberal ed” in the interests of coherence?
4. Are we involved enough in informing students about liberal arts programs, or do we leave it up to students (e.g. Choose a major night?)
5. Develop a sense of which courses support particular aspects of liberal learning in terms of advising. We need to know what courses do in gen. ed, no matter what the discipline.
6. Culture depends on LEISURE. How do we restore that sense to our education, so process is as important and product? Are we too geared to Business Model: product/quantity? Where is mere room for conversation?
7. How do we assure diversity of pedagogical methods? Who oversees that balance? Do we converse in disciplines about how we teach and why?
8. Try to identify “classics” across disciplines and within them so we can help guide students to shared liberal learning.
9. How can we maximize the effects of lectures from outside? Can we better prepare students by choosing fewer but in common?
10. Could the connections theme be better advertised, used, chosen? Its’ one way of giving a common experience.
11. How to integrate SKILLS with liberal approach/language/advising?
12. Where is active engagement occurring in our liberal curriculum: DOING. The ethical, social, communal engagement.
13. How to help students be aware of what’s going on in the world? Get them into newspapers? Conversations about the world today?
14. How do we get past “grades” to learning? Is our system of evaluation our enemy? Consider the “W” which can liberate us from emphasizing the grade over the learning.
15. Evaluation/ assessment: we need long-term tracking. Stars can’t be seen for years—true of liberal arts ed, too!
16. How do we convince students that religious studies is a liberal art and not indoctrination?
17. In language, long-term assessment won’t work unless its’ used. Need to look to cultural attitudes.
18. What do we do that honors the enjoyment of learning and assesses it?
19. Need a historical sense that offers a framework for liberal sensitivity
20. Let’s restore Latin (and Greek?) to primacy of place among foreign languages! Says Cy Pallapilly, He’ll teach them to faculty first, says Deb McCarthy. Keith Egan nods sagely, having mastered medieval Latin earlier in life. Julie T., Mana D., Annette J., and Gail M. remained (wisely) silent.
21. Can we institutionalize “conversations” across classes and disciplines to leave students to discuss learning /current events? For credits? Per semester?

Gail Mandell

Page E

How should Saint Mary's College respond to the major issues?

-Depends on how you formulate question—these questions are too bland. Those who have been here: are we already doing this, or to what extent what are we doing already?

-Many disparate pieces—core creates shared reference point.

What is the value of core—basis of liberal ed—common base that can be referenced?

Continuity in core that we had—gives a framework

-Saint Mary's College distribution problem: in '56—everybody took same courses—write in relation to what you'd ready00 initiative, but always knew where you were going

-If there is a required course, but prof. Concentrates on strength, not common

-Mosaic of courses still gives continuity

-No coherence, but doesn't mean not good courses

-Univ. of Chicago—"common plumbing principles".

-Demise of Western Civ. Core course—threw out baby with bath water, gives all equal values

-Have to start somewhere—find a really good provocative film—questions asked to get everybody talking at a dinner, ask faculty to touch back in classes—come from non literate culture—give questions, direct attention before, afterwards formulate questions—find ways throughout year

-Series of events to form basis of common questions:

-Some prefer plays to films—we have done that, but there are lots of ways—art exhibit, poetry readings

-Used to require cultured events—give direction so would know which concerts, etc to go to—has to be good, evocative

-Next day in class, event is referenced

-First Year: First Year Experience

-St John's: Fri night lecture by major intellectual figure, all go built it up by faculty—faculty has to learn something new—must disabuse faculty that they know everything so they can enter into experience—spent much time thinking of best one or 2 questions for group to discuss

-Prof can be inquisitive about multiple disciplines—chem major asked to read something outside chem.

-North American students rather insulted—students will go into world and need to learn

-Another thing about American students: don't have sense of history that lib ed gives—

whose voices not heard in history written by conquerors—America has short history—students don't know

—Now generation of students who don't know own history, only thing real is on TV

-Where you're coming from determines where you're going—need to learn from history, not to repeat same mistakes

-Have to start where they are as in theatre, without are on condensation

-Students are product oriented—have to be connected with what matters to them

-You can tell when students are interested: Build on that

-So much peer pressure- looks for teachable moment---*can come when walking down the hallway, informal

-Past: built in that everyone got to know everyone else—assigned tables, for instance, forced people to learn how to talk to people you had nothing in common with—lifelong skill

-Can't stop because students will complain, but economic reality—we want them to enroll

-Upperclassmen are role models:

-Nativity plays involved everyone: play competition, given theme. Each class would decide which play—students decided, given help

-People involved in doing, not just watching

-Breaks down barriers if everyone involved—no cliques

-Can't talk in present dining hall, hard to meet new people

-Junior were big sisters to incoming freshman

*Students crave community but whole social system mitigates against it

-Genuine Lib ed builds connections

-Structure of lib ed: want students to look to each other as resources, as faculty should—requires structure

-Students want to get to meal ASAP—don't want to wait

-One of nursing students one of best—interested in ultimate questions: how do nurses talk to family of dying patient—all interrelated

-Medical professionals need compassion that can be encouraged

-Great clinician still needs to be able to talk to people

-Doctor said med students taught to deal with diseases, not people who have diseases, used films, novels to teach med students about people

-MANY professions think more about discipline than the people

-Exciting-not necessarily subject, but discussion stimulating

-Other places, colleagues would die to even be in conversation like this—interrupted by prayer

-We can reference life of the spirit here—positive

-Another college had bunch of faculty and dean every week—most important thing- faculty had the opportunity and talked about what really mattered, didn't waste—good ideas resulted

-About “what really matters” bunches- P-lunches can be emphasized in energetic ways:

-Mindset- requirement or opportunity

-P-lunches great, but would like something sponsored by the institution

-Mechanism for informal conversation necessary—study before where consultant said “need outdoor space” but what is needed is an indoor informal meeting space. Notre Dame has put coffee shops in each new building—he claims has no tables, so students bring food to class

-Tandems good- but not enough time

-Not always a matter of money, but people aren't available

-We are small, every time students do something; they're being pulled away from another thing

-Why did colleges switch from core courses?

-What makes a student who wants a nursing degree come to St Mary's? Probably is the lib arts slant

-There are education fads: give students more freedom to choose what they want, but still cover bases

-Indulgent Philosophy

-People here always say strength is our departments- 2 sided- hard to change because depts. Band together—sciences always oppose, say they have to cover and cant spare time, think they will betray their discipline if give up any class time

-One day when couldn't teach-had to be flexible

-Science mistakes might have worse consequences if mistakes, more tangible

-In Japan, more research- oriented, this conversation would only be private, not open—this is wonderful—different culture is how you define it

-Students have to look at own culture, esp. from outside—students could use this experience

-Asking 18-21 year olds to think about death, responsibility, pressure, and Major responsibilities

-Lib ed's intangible qualities

-Tandem: Nursing and great literature dealing w/ disease look at discipline by discipline—make lib arts relevant to each—each major should show relevance, connection, not just memorization, but relevance, discussions to show connections to reality.

-Way to suggest moving into autobiog.—recognize commonality of experience that the book offers—ask questions

-Healthy way to relate to where they are, not ego-centered character—ask 'what would you have done?'

-Has anybody surveyed graduates to see what they think of their lib ed? Yes—random samples of alums—faculty evaluations different answers 10 years after graduation—give sense that this is valued

-Yesterday's speaker: long term value of education here--- groundwork is so important

-*Electives

Page F

- Get copy of speech
- Perception of SMC affected by “comprehensive” designation?

- Professional programs feel marginalized when SMC called “liberal arts”
(*This commendation responded well to speaker’s urging **ALL** discipliners to think of themselves as playing a key role in liberal education)
- Faculty in those programs might not feel “on board” in the same way students might who are earning those degrees.
- SMC grad became head of graphic design at Disney because of liberal arts, “graphic design training” too narrow. (When students arrive at SMC they have a narrow idea of job options and tend to think of “vocational” training.)
- Liberal education courses are not defined by content but by “thought liberating metrology”; e.g., not all English courses are taught = liberal arts vein, but more technical, likewise Math, which can be technical or liberal.
- Language: are “general education” and “liberal arts” to be understood as synonyms?
- Give **FACULTY** the primary voice in general education.
- If faculty choose not to be engaged, it won’t work
- Advising crucial: more emphasis on common goals.
- Also, student being coached into feeling confident that SHE CAN PRESENT her education the way she wants and needs.
- Maybe spread job of advising 1st-year student across campus, we need to take ownership.
- Spread out general education courses throughout all four years.
- Not use language of “getting” them out of the way.
- Advise training for 1st-year faculty.
- Get back to broadening emphasis of capstone; make it reaching outward as well as a summing up.
- A general education requirement treated as a CORE experience not by having all 1st years (e.g.0 take a semester long course, but by having a campus wide experience for one week (or _ week) that ALL 1st year courses would require and approach from their own disciplinary perspective. (Keynote, festival is “liberal learning” seminar and won’t run into turf wars and 1st year courses aren’t so content driven as to be unable.)
- OR, a requirement for satisfying a certain number of cultural/ intellect events over their four years.
- Leverage campus events so that the maximum of departments can benefit from it (e.g. Mary Robinson’s talk).
- Beware of adding to already heavy burden on faculty (more to deal with outside of class, strategies planning, etc....) “Let’s do some more stuff...!” (groan...) -it does take more energy
- Use the annual CWIL fellowship (e.g.) to plan an event and be able to show the departments how the event can be fitted in and NOT put the pressure on each faculty member to figure out how to “connect” to the event.
- “Expanding horizons”? Requirement? Made part of general education?
- Women studies a model of netting courses for being included to satisfy this or that requirement.
- Service learning incorporate as a kind of “W”? along same lines as WPP?
- Does it competence figure into a grad’s being a citizen of world? -Best left to major?
- Some “give” (in zero-sum game of adding here, subtracting there) might be found in different credit requirements for different degrees (B.A., B.B.A., B.S., B.F.A....) within a range (say 120-128)
- Idea of liberal learning best served by encouraging/advising students not to use electives to take more courses in major than necessary.
- Again, use courses wisely, discourage students from burning them up getting 2nd major just because “I’m only two courses away from...”

Page G

Q: Is part of our problem that General education early in students’ tenure-
Are they ready for crossing disciplines?

- Upper classman tend to do better
- Should we put a limit?
- If we encourage students of coming back “to play” in general education courses

- Mind set on campus is to advise students to take general education courses first two years.
 - Don't we want the students to have to bring general education knowledge to major
- Key problem is how to integrate courses in general education?
- Students don't connect at end of semester
 - We need to hold students accountable for what we know they've gotten in other courses
- We've introduced base concept test in beginning of course so they know we'll build on it.
 - Tandem is best-
 - Tandems good model but work best for stronger rather than weaker students
 - Too busy covering core concepts.
- Key challenge letting go what you think are core courses.
 - Processing is key
 - But it takes an entire institution to accomplish a liberal art education.
 - What do you think about our dest. of courses?
 - Key question is how to make it better.
 - Certain disciplines lend themselves to certain requirements [e.g. Chemistry (classes are content driven)- external review]
 - Does it matter to faculty whether a program is accredited?
 - Education really matters
 - important for science
 - Association for Professional Accredits
 - Working (W) students to help them understand what we're about
 - How can we integrate them?
 - Are disciplines really separate islands?
 - There is a tension between disciplines and liberal arts education

Page H

- We are already responding—need to raise level of awareness & reflection
- The importance of student's perception—need for P.R. effort
- Need to signal faculty support for general education & respect for other discipline—bring into courses
- Importance of designing mechanism for communicating importance of general education requirements
- Course (1 credit) to introduce the meaning and importance of general education vs. need to actually DO general education
- Discuss nature of “hurdle” between general education and professional departments.
- Model of “Aftermath” and using alum's to show value of general education
- How do we communicate the joy of learning—faculty modeling?
- Find ways to expose students to faculty from various disciplines discussing and interacting a given problem or issue
- Need to address gaps between work of SPAC, etc. and rest of faculty. Also problems with language and terminology
- Need to deal with student's insecurities about various disciplines—it colors how they approach general education courses in those disciplines.
- Wellness requirement?
- Integration of students activities and involvement of faculty
- Busyness of students as obstacle

Page I

1. What are the distinctions between gen. ed and major courses of study?
 - establishing the social context?
 - narrow intros to various fields?

- integration of learning?
- 2. What is the goal?
 - to think broadly and differently?
 - must include content
 - making connections
- 3. What is the task at hand?
 - Is gen. ed going to be reorganized?
 - What is wrong with the current model?

BIG IDEA FROM OUR TABLE

- 1 Course i.e. "World War I"
- 7 guest teachers who teach 2 wks each (for free, \$ or course reduction)
- Object: integrative & "fuzzy-lined" approach
- upper level, small numbers of students make it appealing to professor participating
- economic, historical, chemical, art, inter-cultural, sociological, political, HUST

Notes by Vince & Katie

Page J

Why adva---- of Liberal Learning?

-student centered

teaching to liberate-? Radical?

Not servile-how does education contribute to freedom to liberal education?

Citizen as goal (half citizenship and leadership)

fuller personal goal, appreciate the full richness if the individual

liberal ed-line offer leveling anybody; anywhere public spender equal with leader??

The language of the document is the language of Saint Mary's, but is the action of Saint Mary's this document-talk the talk-walk the walk-Do we have a different deep understanding of this?

DT- how did MSU two year foundational core-4 one year courses?

Change better for the students

We share these goals, is there a better way until we ___ no change? What has happened to the student?

When will student be aware? Ask the students questions through which we will know ___ they have achieved?

Holes-tandems there and then we drop

*difficulty-EVERYTHING has to change at once- SEA CHANGE

COMPREHENSIONS and other pails of liberal art have content we don't talk to talk-we need to do!

-"competent, faith, filled women of integrity"-do we resemble women of integrity?

(heart and spirit) (outward and inward)

external and internal leader

What about a gen. ed where the CORE- is the covert price

Covert-What it means to know?

CORE-The course why we study this and how we know this

Photoemy in physics? Maybe we need to think about different ways of doing that show knowing or show the evidence of knowing. Expanding the sensory tools of education

Quantitative literary

Team teaching-does this get to the integration we need?

Travel in learning-moving about peripatetic

Do these curricula effect the changes in students that we want to see happen? And do we know what their changes are?

We do wonderful transformative things

How much of this is due to general ed or major?

Liberal education as process of education to reach this major

How much of this gen. education is introductory gen. ed? Would all have a conarion subtext? Do we need to make this covert or overt?

The self-assessment pierced any part of education I have changed

Ron do you feel that you are different after taking the class?

How does the experience?

Look at Kathleen Dolphin's formulation for SMC purpose "Educating s new generation of women's leaders "competent, faith-filled, women of integrity."

Secretary Patrick White