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# New Aspects of General Education
# Curricular Development as History not Autobiography: A Case Study in General Education Reform at Portland State University

Michael Reardon*
Portland State University

*Abstract* — Curricular change in American Higher Education has often been approached as a political negotiation between faculty representing disciplinary prerogatives or by faculty reflecting their own experience as undergraduates. Either of these approaches or a combination of the two, fails to recognize the curriculum as a social and historical construct. A more effective approach requires that faculty conceive of the undergraduate curriculum as an intentional design for learning developed by the faculty in light of their specialized knowledge and in the context of social expectations and student needs. This concept of the curriculum captures essential elements that must be kept in mind: that the curriculum should be not only the substantive knowledge that is organized according to our current disciplinary structures but also the formal arrangements into general education, majors, and electives and it correctly emphasizes that the curriculum should be designed by the faculty to reflect both history, the larger collective experience of higher education, and the convergence between the educational and occupational systems. Using the recent experience of my own institution, I will offer a case study of this concept of curricular change and I hope illustrate the larger issues as they are reflected in a particular institutional case.

It is a great honor for me to participate in this conference on the New Horizon for Higher Education sponsored by Hokkaido University. We at Portland State University have had the opportunity to work with Hokkaido university over many years and it has been a relationship that has brought many benefits to us. My topic this afternoon is curricular reform, and particularly the reform of general education.

In his recent book, We Scholars, Changing the Culture of the University, David Damrosch writes:

> Considered as a field of study, academic life is a subject in which every young scholar is forced to develop a kind of expertise while still in graduate school. There is even a danger that people who are moved to write on academic issues have developed such strong opinions, and such a fund of telling experiences, that they never realize the value of studying literature on academia. A surprising number of recent contributions to debates on scholarship have been written in the mode of a busman's holiday: people who would never think of writing an article in their own field without first reading most of the literature on the subject will produce entire books that reflect only the most cursory attention to the work of specialists in the several fields that include academic life and work within their purview.
>
> At times, a professor administrator will even renounce reading the literature on principle, lest it tarnish the authenticity of direct experience(Damrosch 1995).

Damrosch's observation underscores the title and theme of my paper. Too often faculty approach the reform of undergraduate education as an autobiographical reflection on their direct experience as students not as scholars studying a problem that has its own history, complexity, development and thus a body of literature that is essential to our understanding of it.

The profound difficulty with the situation Damrosch very accurately describes is pointed out by Mary Douglas in her book, How Institutions Think. The overwhelming tendency of faculty, I include administrators, is to speak on issues and to act on issues related to their own culture and institutions based upon their experience as faculty, rarely on their knowledge of themselves as faculty. Douglas points out:

> Institutions systematically direct individual memory and

*) Correspondence: Portland State University, P.O. 751, Portland, OR 97207-0751, U.S.A.

> channel our perceptions into forms compatible with the relations they authorize. They fix processes that are essentially dynamic, they hide their influence, and they rouse our emotions to a standardized pitch on standardized issues...The solutions they proffer only come from the limited range of their experience. If the institution is one that depends on participation, it will reply to our frantic question: "More participation!" If it is one that relies on authority, it will only reply, "More authority!". Institutions have the pathetic megalomania of the computer whose whole vision of the world is its own program. For us, the hope of intellectual independence is to resist, and the necessary first step in resistance is to discover how the institutional grip is laid upon our mind(Douglas 1886).

I ask you to reflect on almost any faculty discussion about institutional mission, the curriculum, the structure of the academy, or faculty roles in the light of Douglas's analysis. I further suggest that her conclusion is absolutely the correct first step to effective engagement. We must discover how the institutional and cultural grip is laid upon our mind. We must make ourselves objects of our own study. What might such a course of study look like: Certainly it should include the development of higher education both in the European-American tradition but also other than that tradition, the development of different types of institutions. It should include the faculty as a scholarly community which has created our current structure of disciplinary knowledge, the faculty as it has developed as a profession within professional culture. This is the first foundational stage but a critical one because any specific issue that arises and that should be approached also as a scholarly issue will have these foundational elements embedded in it. So if the task is to bring faculty into a process of curricular design, of general education or of liberal education, or of majors or of developing professional service or community based learning, or of designing and implementing assessment processes, all of which are necessary to align faculty with more specific institutional missions, then the degree to which a faculty has many of its members already cognizant of the foundational issues will enhance the possibility of moving more of the faculty to look at specific issues and realize they are best approached if the preparatory study of the issue is the first step. The course of study then moves quite obviously from foundations to specifics but at every stage the approach is the same: define any issue that needs to be considered and that requires faculty action as a scholarly issue.

Perhaps an example is appropriate. At one of the roundtables we held as part of our participation in The PEW Higher Education Roundtable process, we were discussing the issue of general education and as such discussions frequently go we were taking postures often based on autobiography. One of our participants, a member of the science faculty, they always seem to be in the science faculties, said with much exasperation, "I don't know why we have to talk about this, after all students should have a liberal arts education." When asked to describe what such an education might be, he replied, "Like I had." As we continued to ask for elaboration and more participants joined in it became clear, we were, for a group of academics, remarkably uniformed on the origins, history, and philosophy of the concept of a liberal arts education. Posturing autobiographically was easy and informed discussion and debate was beyond us. The example leads back to my argument.

It is essential in attempting to transform any aspect of the curriculum that we understand the historical process that has produced that curriculum. Further that the historical development has at least three layers, a long term development in which the curriculum is a reflection of larger socio-economic relationships, the development of a more specific history of higher education, and finally how both of these more general developments provide the context of a specific institutional development. I would like to begin with the first layer and move to the specific event in the history of my own institution, our change in our general education program.

Beginning about 1870 a whole series of structural changes thoroughly transformed the major European educational systems, creating institutional patterns that have endured in their outlines right up to the present. The rate of change was probably greatest during the 1880"s and 1890's, a period shaken by acute social conflict in education, by furious public debates over the accreditation of competing curricula, and by renewed and more insistent complaints about a supposed excess of educated (or inappropriately educated) men. Major reorganizations of education were undertaken in Germany and France between 1900 and 1902, while decisive rearrangements in higher education took effect around the turn of the century. A thorough structural transformation of the two major educational systems of the European continent was thus largely completed by 1910.

One way to describe the changes of this critical period is to point out that they brought secondary and higher education into closer interaction with the occupational system of the high industrial age. Primarily involved on the side of the educational system were certain younger and less prestigious institutions and curricula that were considered modern, technical, and applied and thus potentially fruitful contributors to economic and technological progress. Primarily affected on the side of the occupational system was a range of younger professions that came to be more educated than their earlier industrial precursors, yet arguably more relevant to commerce and industry. The partial and sectoral convergence between the educational and occupational systems that began in this way during the late nineteenth century and produced our organization of contem-

porary disciplines and concepts of general education, has continued, through recurrent crises down to our present situation. Our present issues are still defined by the need to understand the convergence between educational and occupational systems (Ringer 1992).

We can achieve a better understanding of the current concern about undergraduate education and to assess the strategies to transform and improve it, if we see this current situation against the background of how the undergraduate curriculum developed in the United States over this century.

The challenge for American higher education at the beginning of the twentieth century was to deal with a rapidly increasing demand from students whose backgrounds and ambitions were different than the traditional student bodies of the previous periods and the need to apply the resources of higher education to a new national and international order. The curriculum needed to respond to new student needs and new social needs. One response was the new general education movement of the 1920's and 30's which grew from the humanist approach of the classical tradition and the culture movement, reflecting Irving Babbitt's 1908 work, Literature and the American College. A second response derived from the instrumentalist approach that came from the progressive education movement and John Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism.

Three innovations in the interwar years manifested the humanist program of general education, the contemporary civilization program instituted by President Nicholas Butler at Columbia University, the Experimental College founded when President Glenn Frank brought Alexander Meiklejohn from Amherst to the University of Wisconsin, and the Great Books Program that Robert Maynard Hutchins established at the University of Chicago. As the United States entered WWI, the War Department asked Columbia University to develop a War Issues Course to be taught at Student Army Training Corps Centers. The aim was to help officers in training to understand the background and meaning of the war and to deal with the complex relationships that underlay the war. Carol Gruber describes the genesis of the General Honors (Great Books) and Contemporary Civilization courses at Columbia in 1919:

> The introduction of the required course in contemporary civilization at Columbia illustrates clearly the relationship between the War Issues Course and curricular reform. While the course was in progress, Dean Woodbridge, who was its director and had been chiefly responsible for preparing its syllabus, indicated that the course was beginning to be viewed as a prospective basis of a "liberal education for the youth of today". In the face of the confusion of ideas and standards left by the demise of classical education, he said, the War Issues Course seemed to afford the "opportunity to introduce into our education a liberalizing force which will give to the generations to come a common background of ideas and commonly understood standards of judgment." A required course in contemporary civilization, offered by members of the departments of history, economics, government, and philosophy was introduced at Columbia in the fall of 1919. Its purpose was to survey the historical background of Western Civilization and to acquaint the students with current world problems. Its promotion as a bulwark against radicalism betrayed its origins in the patriotic War Issues course. Dean Herbert Hawkes, of the founders, described it as being intended to silence "the destructive elements in our society" by preparing students to "meet the arguments of the opponents of decency and sound government" and thus to make the college student a "citizen , who shall be safe for democracy" (Gruber 1976).

The courses that composed the Contemporary Civilization Program became two of the most influential and widely imitated general education courses in the history of modern higher education in the United States.

At Wisconsin Meikeljohn's Experimental College provided a common coherent curriculum for the first two years of study. The study of two disparate cultures, Classical Athens and Contemporary America constituted the course of study, to allow students an acquaintance with the Greek mind, a sense of Greek intelligence at work on its situation and of the modern, the American mind at work upon the situation in the midst of which the student was to live. At Chicago, Hutchins directed two major reforms, one structural, a self-contained undergraduate college that would accept students who had completed their sophomore year in high school and which had a four year common curriculum. His second reform was the course of general education that would be "a course of study consisting of the greatest books of the western world and the arts of reading, writing, thinking, and speaking, together with mathematics, the best examples of the processes of human reason."

The new humanist general education encoded history and literature as the important knowledge for an educated person and in an ironically conservative turn, Hutchins' vision merged the History of Western Civilization with that of its great books, texts took over History. As he stated in his book, The Great Conversation:

> The Western ideal is not one or the other strand in the conversation, but the Conversation itself. It would be an exaggeration to say that Western Civilization means those books....But to the extent to which books can present the idea of a civilization. the idea of Western Civilization is here presented. These books are the means of understanding our society and ourselves. They contain the great ideas that dominate us without our

knowing it. There is no comparable repository of our tradition(Hutchins 1955).

It is Hutchin's belief that still inspires most of those who are nostalgic for some lost golden age of the undergraduate curriculum. More importantly Hutchins illustrates the view that Edward Said has revealed to be the Humanities contribution to the Western attitude of Orientalism, which, as he points out, defines other cultures on the basis of their great but alien texts.

Alongside the Humanistic programs, other movements reflected the influence of Deweys' pragmatism and instrumentalism and its underlying ideology of education for a democratic society. For Dewey the ultimate aim of education is continued capacity for individual growth, an aim that implies continued expansion of an individual's experiences, since only experience can result in situations in which growth is possible. Experience is also the means of education, since the experience of solving problems is how growth is achieved and how new situations for future growth are created. From these ideas, the progressivists and instrumentalists derived a highly individualized approach to education. The method of such an education was based on the reflective situation-- define a problem, the collection and analysis of data, projection and elaboration of suggestions or ideas, and the experimental application and testing of the resulting conclusions or judgments."

Contrary to some critics, Dewey and his followers did not have only a method and no subject matter. The difference was rather between the more traditional curricula in which the subject matter history, chemistry, accounting whatever, lies outside of the immediate experience of the students. It is selected, organized and presented to students by adults for their use sometime in the future. Teaching as activity works upon the passive students. To the instrumentalist, subject matter is a resource available to help the student solve problems of immediate concern. The knowledge that exists becomes a means for understanding the present and creating the future. Certain premises followed from these assumptions. General education is concerned with a specific society at a specific time and place. General education has a fundamental commitment to education through direct experience. General education is concerned with the present and the future rather than with the past. General education is an ongoing, lifelong education.

While the major aspects of this paradigm reflect the instrumentalist perspective , the continuing problem of acculturating immigrant populations, populations who were seen as bereft of any understanding of the foundations of the western tradition, continued to make the study of world and English literature, western civilization and United States History essential to the aim of advancing democracy. World War II and its aftermath would shift the balance away from the progressive concept of general education. It can be argued that for the followers of Dewey education for a democratic society was a concept in which democracy was primarily seen as a process, a way in which individuals in a community solve problems and create their culture. General education was for them a means to assure the continuation of this process. In the 1940's and 50's with the memory of the depression, the experience of the war, the Cold War and its concomitant anti-communist ideology, democracy was not a process but an institution and preservation of that institution became the goal of education.

Undoubtedly the most well known venture in curricular definition in the post war years was the commission of twelve senior faculty selected by the politically active president of Harvard, James Bryan Conant. Charged with developing a General Education In a Free Society, the faculty committee produced in 1945 what has become known as the Harvard Redbook. Frederick Rudolph (Curriculum 1977) describes the report as:

> A landmark document in a way, the Harvard Redbook was an effort to put back into the curriculum certain qualities and values that fell out (when President Eliot instituted the free elective system). It represented an effort on the part of the nation's greatest university to confront the social and political forces of mid century America and to write a prescription for sustaining the liberal tradition with a curriculum that recognized the legitimacy of individual interests and talents while it at the same time established a common bond of general learning.

There is much irony in this endeavor on the part of the Harvard Committee. To some degree Harvard was warning that American democracy and social stability were threatened by a shift in political power from the educated few to the unenlightened many. The report offered a coherent general education program as a solution, a program that called for the development of three core courses as requirements, one each in the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. The humanities core was to be a version of the Columbia Civilization course. The Harvard faculty never implemented this program. Harvard moved to the distribution model.

Other universities, particularly public universities, which Harvard intended to be guided by this program, found it easier to imitate Harvard's own cafeteria approach to general education and emulated the distribution model. Columbia's core course model was rarely followed. Though erosion began there in a few more years. While some programs were able to survive and periodically some institutions would seek to achieve the goals associated with general education, the major tendency of the post war years was to allow the forces of specialization, departmentalization, and the impetus to research, further fueled by the in-

fusion of federal money, to be the overwhelming characteristics. Liberal arts colleges were in many instances able to resist these forces but public universities facing growing enrollments and expanding rapidly were not. The race to emulate the research university model and the increasing careerism of the Academic profession marked much of American Higher Education since the 1950's. Even the upheavals after 1968 and the protests of the Vietnam era did not effect the curricular structure of higher education. Women's studies and Black Studies, two of the most obvious innovations in the curriculum were fitted into the departmental structure and the distribution model.

The issue before colleges and universities was stated over and over again. As Rudolph points out: "Breadth of learning, distribution of subject fields, and general education were the hobby horses of new presidents, ambitious deans and well-meaning humanists of the sort who were appointed to special curriculum committees by colleagues as a gesture of token support for the idea of liberal learning. When the gesture collided with the interests of department and the major field, only occasionally did the general prevail over the special."(Rudolph 1977) The distribution model involved faculty in a sort of open academic deceit since no consensus has ever emerged on what the educational value or aim of distribution requirements is. In general, we are not certain about why we demand what we do of our students. Asking them in the name of free choice and breadth of learning to select a set of courses listed together and shaped at best by a few common requirements and sequences cannot suffice as an answer. In defense of our curricular structure we cite the student who chooses to become an academic, who will mirror ourselves, our careers, and the inherent logic of a curriculum in support of disciplines. But our purpose is not only to educate future scholars and faculty members. In fact they are a minority of those who pursue undergraduate education. What the distribution model has achieved is a reduction of general education to insignificance and continued replication of an historic division of inquiry whose last significant stage of development was in the late nineteenth century.

The distribution model has proliferated course offerings and student options to a point that is fiscally damaging and academically suspect. We now are confronted with a bureaucratic and academic curricular structure that reflects the extreme stages of departmentalization and prevents students from encountering a vital and important dimension of intellectual life, the debate between the various fields of knowledge. I have found Gerald Graff's recent book Beyond the Culture Wars very useful in articulating this problem in our current curriculum. Graff points out:

> Insofar as controversy is the life and soul of an intellectual institution, the consequences of avoiding or muffling it could only be harmful to the curriculum, which was left without a means of connecting subjects, perspectives, and courses and thus of confronting its own most urgent disagreements. Instead of becoming centers of continuous intellectual discussion, universities quarantined the intellectual life within the hours of class time, creating a deep disjuncture between the intellectual intensity of the classroom and the social life of the campus. It was not the existence of the bureaucratic fields in themselves that was the problem, or even the idea that these fields should be covered, but the failure to develop a principle of connection that would have opened up a dialogue among them.

One of the advantages of the field coverage principle of organization was that it made departments and curricula virtually self-administering. Once the conventional spread of the fields was fully staffed and the courses were accordingly distributed and assigned, larger questions about the aims of the humanities and sciences and the relations of disparate periods, methodologies, and values seemingly took care of themselves. Such questions might come up in a course here or there, but there was no need to debate them collectively, and no arena for doing so....Buried in the departmental turf wars...was a set of conflicts that were far from trivial, conflicts about the very nature of knowledge and its place in modern society: Was the most important knowledge scientific or humanistic, or in some measure both? What did these terms mean, and what was their relation? Was the increasing professionalization of knowledge good or bad? How should one sort out the often sharply conflicting claims of pre and post 1800 worlds? What about the social functions of science, art, and criticism?

The university contained a host of conflicting answers to these large questions, but it did not engage them. And this evasion of conflict, which structured the relations of faculty and its courses, was reproduced in the curriculum and passed on to students. Students covered a sampling of research fields without being expected to be aware of the struggles and alliances which underlay and to a large extent defined the field divisions.

What is the current situation in American Higher Education, particularly as it relates to general education? Just as the brief historical survey I have offered is highly idiosyncratic and has left out many aspects and developments, any attempt to delineate the current context will also be unavoidably partial and reflective of my perspective. Certainly the available literature on this topic is vast. Today we look with dismay at the formlessness of undergraduate education, which in most instances is a disorganized collection of electives, a minimal number of required courses, and a major area of concentration. Some among us would correct this situation and regain quality by reviving some variant of a core curriculum. This is certainly an option for liberal arts colleges with homogeneous student bodies. But

the social imperatives of the immediate future impose on the majority of educational institutions, particularly public institutions, the need to serve multiple student constituencies with very diverse curricular expectations. Faculties must assert their responsibility for curricular definition, but their judgments must recognize such social determinants as the diversity of student ages, economic backgrounds, race, gender, and the requirements of industry, labor and government. These imperatives will require not a single fixed curriculum but a diversity of alternative curricula--each coherently related to students' educational objectives and life requirements while being equally responsive to intellectual imperatives for quality and for rigorous educational standards. A classic case of easier said than done.

On the eve of the Second World War, in spite of differences between and among them, the humanist and instrumentalist programs had produced what Gary Miller has described as the General Education Paradigm in American Higher Education. He sees the most fundamental assumption being the conviction that there is a direct relationship between education and democracy and that general education is concerned with developing the relationship of the individual to the community in contemporary democratic society.

There is an increasing consensus on the need to provide multicultural education and to address human diversity, needs that continue a basic strand in our national experience that higher education is called upon to respond to the interests of groups that heretofore it has not served. In addition we recognize the need to continue to try to provide the knowledge and skills required of an educated citizenry to understand, analyze and respond to changing social, environmental, political, and international realities. What should drive all discussion and all action around the issue of general education, or liberal education, or disciplinary education is not the urge to realize an abstract ideal and its derivative strategies but the specific purpose of whatever it is, educationally, that we are trying to do. What is any academic requirement, or set of academic requirements whether for general education or for a professional area of study, or for a disciplinary major actually for? If faculty collectively and within their areas of specialization and within the context of their particular institution will honestly engage this question, then progress and improvement is possible.

Before speculating on the ways in which liberal education can be adapted to the needs and circumstances of the end of this century, we must be clear about where higher education in the United States is now. 1) We really have no "system" of higher education, since our education institutions are so vast, sprawling, markedly varigated, and extremely decentralizeed, and includes public and private, secular and religious, single-purpose and multi-purpose schools of all sizes. 2) The number of students actually attending institutions of higher education (and the percentage of the relevant age cohort) has increased at an unprecedented rate--unprecedented not only in the Unted States but worldwide. It might also be noted that the average age of students has risen sharply, as the number of non-traditional (part-time and adult) students has increased. 3) Nationally the student population is strikingly diverse with respect to religion, social class, gender, age, ethnicity. 4) Although the object of increasing criticism, higher education has been remarkably effective in responding to these developmental shocks and institutions have responded with a variety of organizational and pedagogical efforts. 5) The principal unacknowledged factor in the transformation of U.S. higher education has been the knowledge explosion--the exponential increase in the range and quantity of new knowledge in all fields that must be covered in curricular plans and research programs.

The rapidly expanding quantity of knowledge causes problems enough, but these are in turn made more difficult by our inability to reorganize the structure of universities to cope with the intellectual challange of new knowledge. Departmental and school structures encode disciplines founded on the sociology of knowledge that predominated during the latter half of the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century. While the traditional disciplines continue to have analytical and methodological power, they no longer constitute the organizing principles for much current research. Similarly, they no longer constitute the divisions of thought most important for drawing undergraduates into the excitement of the new knowledge.

The new pluralism in American society intersects with the expansion of knowledge and the need to reorganize the taxanomy of knowledge. We are now aware of the global context of knowledge in all fields, especially the humanities and social sciences. It is less feasible today to focus almost exclusively on the European or North American context, both from the point of view of student and faculty demand and from that of intellectual rigor. The world is smaller and our need for global understanding is greater. There will not be simple or universal solutions in the next century, for each institution will have to work out a program that is suitable to its own circumstances but that recognizes the complex changes that have and continue to occur and that require that we transform both our curricula and our organizational structures.

Professors Toombs and Tierney (Curricular Transformation, 1991) point out three different approaches to curricular change: modification, integration, and transformation. The first is the long familiar approach of adapting new knowledge, techniques and practices to existing disciplines and professional fields. This mode is, in and of itself, debilitating since it requires constantly increased financial resources and by its nature drives up costs. The current state of financing for higher education makes this mode of change very difficult. The second, integration,

responds to the laudable desire to provide students with a sense of the unity of knowledge, a larger scope of study, and the connections between the disciplines and throughout the curriculum. While providing more coherence in some areas of the curriculum, the integrative approach is partial in its impact, frequently creating marginalized interdisciplinary programs that are only suffered to exist. These interdisciplinary programs can play a more important curricular role if the third mode of change is enacted. The third approach, transformation, also encompasses elements of modification and integration, but it is different in its recognition that there are new issues the curriculum must cope with, and that many of these issues are not yet fully defined. In our current situation gender equity, ethnicity, globalism, multi-culturalism, and ethics, as well as environmental, health, and educational policy are issues of profound importance. Social engagement is needed to appropriately address them and should become an important component of the curriculum through activities such as service learning opportunities. The issues and opportunities together pose questions and make urgent demands that current disciplines and professionalized programs of education only partly engage. They compel the university toward activities that departments and schools currently are not organized to support.

If transformation is the most effective type of change for the curriculum, then a concept of what is being transformed is necessary. The term "curriculum", while the correct marker, is a vague term carrying diverse meanings. For the purposes of our analysis a useful definition of what the curriculum should be is provided by Toombs and Tierney when they write, "The curriculum is an intentional design for learning negotiated by faculty in light of their specialized knowledge and in the context of social expectation and students' needs" (Toombs and Tierney 1991). This definition captures essential elements that must be kept in mind. The curriculum should be not only the substantial knowledge that is taught but also the formal arrangements of classes, sequences, programs, majors, etc. Further, this perspective properly emphasizes that the curriculum should be constructed by faculty, that it must reflect both history and the larger collective experience of higher education, but that it necessarily does so as the construction of a unique faculty for certain students at a particular institution.

I would like to describe what we have done at Portland State, first in the area of General Education. I hope our experience will serve as a specific example of the type of change that is occuring in American Higher Education but I wish to emphasize that our design has been specifically related to our students and our institutional mission as a public Urban Research University.

In order to identify where we are in the process of curricular change and how we might proceed, it is helpful to reflect on our actions to this point, placing them into perspective based on the development of higher education over the last several decades. What is clear from much of the recent research is that our undergraduate curriculum has developed with three major components, general education, liberal education and professional education. Each component has had its own particular origin and history and has undergone transformation in relationship with the other two. At certain points attempts have been made to clearly define each component and keep them distinct and points at which attempts to integrate them have occurred. Although there are important distinctions between the concepts of liberal and general education and although the origins of each are quite distinct, the tendency after WWII was to combine in a single curriculum the goals and objectives of the one with the means and procedures of the other. Since the underlying assumptions of the two components are different, the mix has often been dysfunctional. This very issue lies at the center of much of the current discussion about undergraduate education. In the most complete analysis available to us on the nature and history of general education, Professor Gary Miller in The Meaning of General Education, points out that from its inception general education was intended to be:

> ...a comprehensive, self-consciously developed and maintained program that develops in individual students the attitude of inquiry; the skills of problem solving; the individual and community values associated with a democratic society; and the knowledge needed to apply these attitudes, skills, and values so that students may maintain the learning process over a lifetime and function as self-fulfilled individuals and as full participants in a society committed to change through democratic processes. As such, it is marked by its comprehensive scope, by its emphasis on specific and real problems and issues of immediate concern to the students and society, by its concern with the needs of the future, and by the application of democratic principles in the methods and procedures of education as well as the goals of education(Miller 1988).

It is this concept of general education that is the foundation of the program that we have recently instituted.

## THE PSU UNIVERSITY STUDIES PROGRAM

Portland State University adopted a general education program which marks a significant departure from the current distribution area requirements. University Studies serves the contemporary student with a more coherent and cohesive program, in which the ultimate goals will yield graduates with the attitudes and skills to pursue life-long learning. In addition to an overall enhancement of the under-

graduate experience, this research-based program is designed:

- to develop collaborative ability in, and provide teamwork experience for our students;
- to address this University's low retention and degree completion rates;
- build coordination with secondary schools and community colleges; and
- significantly improve relationships with the community through a required community learning experience.

Our research and discussion in the field of general education scholarship led us to identify several key attributes of a program responsive to particular needs of Portland State's students:

- team-teaching;
- inter-disciplinary programs and course clusters;
- integration of academic skills within course content;
- inclusion of diversity and multicultural themes across the curriculum;
- student community service and learning; and
- enhancement of student-student and faculty-student interaction.

Four elements are expected to be common to all courses in the program, with an emphasis on four educational goals;

- Communication
- Diversity and multiculturalism
- Inquiry and critical thinking
- Ethical Issues and social responsibility

During their first year of study all students take a year long course entitled Freshman Inquiry. They may choose between five different topics. Freshman Inquiry begins the general education Program with interactive theme based courses taught by faculty working in interdisciplinary teams. Classes include lecture and group dialogue on course content, student led discussions based on class assignments, and opportunities to challange and expand thinking. Mentored inquiry sections, led by student Peer Mentors, meet twice a week. In mentor sections students learn basic computer skills, advanced research and writing skills, and techniques for working together on class assignments.

In the second year students take three Sophmore Inquiry courses which provide an opportunity to explore topics that are different from yet complementary to the students major field. Each Sophmore Inquiry course is a gateway to a cluster of Upper Division courses.

In the third year, students choose a cluster of upper division courses that expand one of the the themes from Sophmore Inquiry and pursue it in depth. These themes are again outside of the students major field.

In the fourth year a student chooses a Capstone Experience consisting of inter-disciplinary student teams, led by faculty, conducting community-based projects. The intent is to provide an opportunity for students to apply their skills to problems emanating from the metropolitan community and for them to experience problem-solving in a team setting. This requirement means that every graduate of Portland State University will have at least one community-based learning experience as part of their undergraduate education. This is a significant innovation for this University. Portland State University annually awards some 1,900 undergraduate degrees. This means that each year somewhat more than 2,000 students will be participating in some 250 different Capstone projects. This is a major undertaking and reflects this University's commitment to fulfilling its urban mission.

The three main objectives of the senior capstone experience required of all Portland State graduates are:

- To provide an opportunity for students to apply the expertise learned in the major to real issues and problems;
- To give students experience working in a team context necessitating collaboration with persons from different fields of specialization;
- To provide the opportunity for students to become actively involved in this community.

Some faculty raise questions in relation to the general education program that are legitimate concerns but indicate a confusion about the distinct purposes of general and liberal education. For example, it is important to address the issues of whether an undergraduate education should contain courses in mathematics, or basic science, or foreign language, or history, or philosophy. These are appropriate to the question of liberal education. These are not, however, the courses that are designed to accomplish the goals of general education, and we, like other institutions around the country, are coming to recognize this distinction. We, as faculty, need to decide what courses outside the major should be taken by students to assist them in the achievement of the goals of liberal education and/or enhancement of their understanding of the major. This requires that we provide more direction to students in their use of the hours now available to them as electives.

As an example let me trace path a student might follow through this program. We would advise a student in pre-law or pre-medicine, or engineering to select a Freshman Inquiry course, for example, Values in Conflict: Knowledge, Power, and Politics. This would be followed by three Sophmore Inquiry courses, for example, Professions in Society, Environmental Sustainability, and Freedom, Privacy, and Technology. From one of these gateway courses they

would then select upper division clusters, for example, Understanding the Environment (Biology), Environmental Chemistry, and Fundamentals of Environmental Design. Finally they would select a Capstone such as The City and the Environment. Selecting a different topic they might choose a course on a specific profession, such as Health Care, Law, or Engineering, a course on Professional Ethics, and a course on Socialization Across the Professions. This would be followed by a Capstone course.

For a more detailed description of the University Studies Program, I have provided materials that descirbe the range of courses available for students.

In conclusion we can ascertain that there are now six developments occuring in curricular change:

- multiculturalism and globalism
- greater emphasis on values and service or community based learning
- teaching interpreted as learning and inquiry
- collaborative learning and research at undergraduate level
- clarifying liberal education as achieving breadth in basic domains of knowledge
- clarifying general education as achieving skills and competencies for lifelong learning

In the United States, we are seeing numerous responses to these developments and I hope that my example from my own University is illustrative of these new directions in general education.

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