CURRENT TRENDS IN LIBERAL EDUCATION

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PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING TO REMEMBER:

“A program for reforming general education should be designed around each institution’s character, the strengths and interests of its faculty, and the needs of its students.”

--Jerry G. Gaff

“Avoiding the Potholes: Strategies for Reforming General Education” 1980
### Breadth Models

- 2 Social Science
- 2 Arts and Humanities
- 2 Math
- 2 Natural Science
- 2 Foreign Language
- 2 PE

(Possible additions: Writing 101 and 102)

### Integrative Models

- Common Core
- Learning Communities
- Interdisciplinary Courses
- Integrative Courses
- Team-taught Courses
- Capstone Courses
- Campus-wide themes
- ePortfolios
- Service Learning
REASONS FOR THIS SHIFT:

1. Making meaning in a complex world

2. The exponential growth of knowledge in our fields

3. A WICKED world requires WICKED competencies
   • Work
   • Citizenship

MEANING-FULL EDUCATION
## GROWTH OF KNOWLEDGE IN OUR FIELDS

### English:
- Traditionally: The Cannon—Chaucer, Dickens, etc.
- More Recently: Multiethnic/World Literatures
- And also: Critical Theory

### Psychology:
- Traditionally: Social, Clinical, Developmental, etc.
- More Recently: Evolutionary, Neuroscience, Socio-cultural, Positive
- And also: Industrial Organizational, Environmental, Sports . . .
THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF THE WORKPLACE

• New challenges
• New technologies
• New markets/new clientele
• New regulations

CITIZENSHIP

Wicked Problems

• FBI vs. iPhones
• Immigration
• Terrorism vs. civil liberties
• 2016 Election/Fake News/Current Events
A BRIEF PAUSE . . .

• Of the four rationales, which do you think is most important to your students?
  • Complexity of their lives
  • Exponential growth of knowledge in our fields
  • Workplace changes
  • Demands of Citizenship

• Questions? Thoughts?

SO WHAT DOES INTEGRATIVE LIBERAL EDUCATION LOOK LIKE?
**A “STRANDS” MODEL**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Sciences</th>
<th>Nature &amp; Technology</th>
<th>A Purposeful Life</th>
<th>Globalization</th>
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<tr>
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A “STRANDS” MODEL

Social Sciences
Arts and Humanities
Natural Sciences

Nature & Technology
A Purposeful Life
Globalization

A Core-Distribution Model

First-Year Seminar(s)
Social Sciences ↔ Maths and Sciences ↔ Arts and Humanities

Capstone Course
A CORE-ONLY MODEL

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Term One</th>
<th>Term Two</th>
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<tr>
<td>The Contemporary Situation</td>
<td>The Modern World</td>
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<tr>
<td>The Roots of Civilization I</td>
<td>The Roots of Civilization II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humanity in the Universe I</td>
<td>Humanity in the Universe II</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intercultural Studies I</td>
<td>Intercultural Studies II</td>
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<td>Capstone I</td>
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WAGNER COLLEGE

- Three learning communities (1\textsuperscript{st}, 4\textsuperscript{th}, and ? years)
- Learning communities have experiential component
- Distribution requirements overlay learning communities
WORCESTER POLY

• Initial Qualifying Project
  • Come from external sponsors
  • Interdisciplinary in nature
  • Students work in small groups
  • Often international
  • Counts for three courses

• Major Qualifying Project
  • Small groups
  • Within the major
  • Counts for three courses

A GENTLE REMINDER:

• These models are merely descriptive. Every institution should begin this conversation by asking: “What kind of graduates do we wish to produce?”

• Once they’ve answered that question, the curriculum should be designed to meet those aspirations.
THAT SAID . . .

• Take a moment and jot some notes:
  • What models as a whole do you think might work well at Western Oregon? Why do you think so?
  • What bits and pieces of various models interest you? Why?
  • How might some/parts of these models be adapted to fit the particular mission/student population/needs of WOU?

A FEW KEY IDEAS:

1. GE spread throughout a college curriculum will lead to greater learning and a better chance of integrating the values of the program into life-long learning
2. Very few complex ideas/skills can be taught in a single shot
3. GE courses should not necessarily be “basic”
4. GE courses provide an opportunity for strong pedagogy
5. Spreading the responsibility for GE amongst a greater number of instructors will lead to a stronger program
Final questions or thoughts?

Thank you for your patience!

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