A Festschrift for Catherine Cater

Liberal Learning in the New Century

Essays by...

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Faith Gabelnick
Jim Herbert
Carol Kolmerten
Diane Levy
Anne Ponder et al.
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Editorial Policy

Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council is a refereed periodical publishing scholarly articles on honors education. The journal uses a double-blind peer review process. Articles may include analyses of trends in teaching methodology, articles on interdisciplinary efforts, discussions of problems common to honors programs, items on the national higher education agenda, and presentations of emergent issues relevant to honors education. Submissions may be forwarded in hard copy, on disk, or as an e-mail attachment. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to: Ada Long / JNCHC / UAB Honors Program / HOH / 1530 3rd Avenue South/Birmingham, AL 35294-4450 / Phone: (205) 934-3228 / Fax: (205) 975-5493 / E-mail: adalong@uab.edu.

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Contents

Call for Papers .................................................................................................................. 4
Submission Guidelines ...................................................................................................... 4
Editor's Note ...................................................................................................................... 5

Catherine's Plenty, Samuel Schuman ........................................................................... 7

Introduction to Section One: Collegiate Instruction, Anne Ponder ......................... 9

Books, Books, Books, Ted L. Estess ........................................................................... 10
Leading a College as a Liberal Arts Practice, Leon C. Malan, Judith Muyskens,
        Anne Ponder, and Ann Page Stecker ............................................................... 18
Empathy and the Questioning Spirit in Liberal Education: Reports from the
        Field, Sara Varhus ......................................................................................... 32

Introduction to Section Two: Styles of Learning, Anne Ponder ................................. 41

Leading and Learning in Community, Faith Gabelnick ........................................... 42
Liberal Education and the Challenge of Integrative Learning, Bernice Braid.......... 53
Learning and Research with Students: The Example of the Tilton/Beecher
        Scandal, Carol Kolmerten ............................................................................ 59
On Discourse, Jim Herbert ......................................................................................... 73
The Shock of the Strange, the Shock of the Familiar: Learning from Study
        Abroad, Diane Levy ....................................................................................... 75

Introduction to Section Three: Work and Play, Anne Ponder ................................. 84

Labors of Love, Samuel Schuman .............................................................................. 85
Serious Play, Paul Strong ......................................................................................... 91

About the contributors ............................................................................................... 98

SPRING/SUMMER 2000 3
Call for Papers

The fall/winter (2000-01) issue of the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council will focus on the broad theme “Science in Honors,” which the editorial board construes to include articles dealing with the natural sciences, mathematics, and/or technology education as they are related to Honors courses or programs. We are interested in innovative ways of presenting these subjects in an Honors context. We also encourage articles on interdisciplinary efforts, including the integration of science, mathematics, and/or technology with disciplines in the arts and humanities or the social and behavioral sciences. Articles dealing with the design and implementation of laboratory and/or field-based projects, especially in the context of small Honors classes, are also welcome. Please do not submit articles reporting the results of original research in these fields or student honors projects and theses unless they relate directly to pedagogical matters in Honors education.

THE DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS SEPTEMBER 1, 2000.

The subsequent issue of JNCHC (deadline March 1, 2001) will be open to all topics relevant to Honors.

Submission Guidelines

1. We will accept material by e-mail attachment, disk, or hard copy. We will not accept material by fax.

2. The documentation style can be whatever is appropriate to the author's primary discipline or approach (MLA, APA, etc.).

3. There are no minimum or maximum length requirements; the length should be dictated by the topic and its most effective presentation.

4. Accepted essays will be edited for grammatical and typographical errors and for obvious infelicities of style or presentation. Variations in matters such as “honors” or “Honors,” “1970s” or “1970’s,” and the inclusion or exclusion of a comma before “and” in a list will be left to the author’s discretion.

5. Submissions and inquiries should be directed to:

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JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL
Editor’s Note

Ada Long
University of Alabama at Birmingham

Volume One, Number One of JNCHC resumes an important strand of conversation within the National Collegiate Honors Council. From 1969 through 1995, NCHC’s refereed journal, Forum for Honors, provided scholarly and theoretical perspectives on the national honors movement. Many of us have felt the absence of these perspectives as a lost voice within the multiplicity of conversations that take place at our conferences, in our newsletter (The National Honors Report), within our committees, and on e-mail. Picking up on the fine work of Dr. Sara Varhus, former editor of Forum for Honors and contributor to this first issue of JNCHC, we hope to provide again the opportunity for scholars in the field of honors to exchange research, reflections, and insights within the more formal context of a national refereed journal.

JNCHC will appear twice a year in fall/winter (with a submission deadline of September 1) and spring/summer (deadline: March 1). The fall/winter issue will center on a particular theme, and the spring/summer issue will be open to all topics related to honors. We are now accepting submissions for fall/winter 2000-01 on the topic of “Science in Honors.”

Our inaugural issue is, fittingly, a festschrift in honor of a most distinguished leader in the field of honors education, Dr. Catherine Cater. No one has contributed more—and more meaningfully—to all our conversations about honors than Dr. Cater, who has been helping us to explore and define and improve higher education for the past fifty-five years.

Two other stars in the honors galaxy—Dr. Anne Ponder and Dr. Samuel Schuman—inspired, gathered, and edited these first essays on “Liberal Learning in the New Century,” essays that represent the combination of tradition and innovation that honors education contributes to higher education.

With Dr. Cater as our “genius of the place” and Drs. Ponder and Schuman as our guides, we hope that the Journal of the National Collegiate Honors Council will dignify and enrich the new century with excellent conversation; and we hope a multitude of voices will contribute to this conversation in future volumes.
This volume grows out of a session at the Fall, 1999 annual conference of the National Collegiate Honors Council (NCHC) in Orlando, Florida. There, surrounded by the delightful distractions of theme parks and tropical autumn weather, a group of academics with strong ties to the Honors movement in American higher education offered a diverse and stimulating range of perspectives on liberal learning as we move into a new century, a new millennium. The presenters included Honors faculty and directors, college presidents and deans, an important official of the national Endowment for the Humanities and the past editor of the NCHC’s scholarly journal. Their presentations were as diverse as their positions, but seemed to most of us in attendance united in their thoughtfulness, originality and insight.

The occasion which brought together these presentations and presenters was a chance to pay tribute to a long and beloved leader of the NCHC, Dr. Catherine Cater. We begin the collection with a brief biography of Dr. Cater’s career of extraordinary contributions to teaching, scholarship and Honors education in the Upper Midwest and nationally. Many of the essays herein explicitly testify to the authors’ respect and affection for Catherine. The depth of that affection and the
height of that respect is well documented by the sincere passion of the paragraphs which follow, both those which overtly praise Dr. Cater and those which honor her indirectly through serious thought about issues which have been central to her illustrious collegiate career.

One of the most striking features of these essays, given the provenance of this volume, is that not one of them is entirely about Honors per se, and many of them are not explicitly about Honors Program issues at all. As the National Collegiate Honors Council and its member programs have matured and developed over the past half century, there has evolved an individual and organizational conviction that the Honors movement has much to contribute to the general well-being of American post-secondary education, well beyond providing enriched academic programs aimed at superior students. This collection of essays marks an important step forward in that evolution and, hopefully, contributes to it. Many of us believe that Honors is at its best when it focuses upon the larger challenges and chances in our colleges and universities, when we ask ourselves how Honors Programs can nurture academic excellence across our institutions and not just within our own programs and centers. If the core of Honors in America is the cultivation and "honoring" of devotion and achievement in undergraduate learning and teaching, then that is an enterprise which needs to pervade every aspect of all our schools.

This collection falls very roughly into several clusters of approaches:

First, three authors present three very different perspectives on issues of collegiate instruction at the turn of the century. We begin with a personal narrative by Ted Estess, which focuses upon one particular academic’s entanglements in "Books, Books, Books." There follows a dialogue in which a college seeks to re-define itself for a new millennium, a conversation between several members of the Colby-Sawyer College community led by Anne Ponder. Then a survey by Sara Varhus highlights the evolution of themes and issues which have surfaced in the dialogue within NCHC as revealed in its publications.

The second group of essays focus upon approaches to styles of learning. Faith Gabelnick and Bernice Braid mull communitarian and integrative approaches to the undergraduate experience. Carol Kolmerten re-calls our attention to one-on-one individualized learning; Jim Herbert offers a stimulating new look at the classroom; and Diane Levy speculates about international education, the world as classroom.

We close with two English professors and administrators, Sam Schuman and Paul Strong, musing about the importance of work and of play, respectively, in the undergraduate learning process.

Reflecting on the range and quality of these pieces, it is almost impossible not to cite Dryden’s assessment of Chaucer: “here is God’s plenty!” Here, certainly, are a range of stimulating and highly individual voices, speaking thoughtfully about a topic of central importance to our nation’s future. That they do so in praise of a beloved colleague is a reminder that Honors, college education, and life are at their best when they are about the way in which the isolation of the individual consciousness can be bridged by the power of human love.
Introduction to Section One:
Collegiate Instruction

Anne Ponder
Colby-Sawyer College

Just as Catherine Cater's intellect has never been bounded by a single discipline, field, or approach, these three of her colleagues move well beyond Honors in their contributions to this volume. Wherever Honors flourishes within a college or university, the whole institution is improved by its presence.

And so it is with Ted Estess’ personal narrative. With a light, comedic touch, Ted revisits the super seriousness with which he first encountered his field through books, while studying in places not Mississippi. This “other” view gives him the distance and perspective to celebrate his rightful identity as the deeply and well read scholar from Mississippi that he is. Though he says he’s read too many books, his generous conclusion would persuade me otherwise.

In conversations over the years with Catherine, I acquired the notion that, if the best habits of intellectual inquiry could be harnessed with respectful and hospitable discourse, we’d have something quite fine indeed. My colleagues and I at Colby-Sawyer College are attempting to realize this, as a way to move a college forward. We suggest that "leading a college as a liberal arts practice" may offer similar advantages to other colleges and universities.

Sara Varhus, in her erudite essay, shows us how our own voices speak to each other in past pages of the Forum for Honors. Many of those voices come from the issues that Sara Varhus edited while Catherine Cater chaired the Publications Board for NCHC. Our voices argue passionately and, thus far, inconclusively. Is the essence of what we do intrinsic or extrinsic in its value? Is it a private or public good? Sara’s essay makes it clearer to me why and how our eclectic approaches speak to each other.
Books, Books, Books

Ted L. Estess
The University of Houston

Just after 9 p.m., I climbed aboard a Continental Trailways bus and stared through green glass as my parents watched the second of their two sons head off to college. Leaving the station, the bus moved into the bayous of southern Louisiana along old Highway 90, then over the swamps and across rice and sugar cane fields and on through a night of small towns, finally climbing the Sabine River bridge into Texas, where a mileage marker announced New Mexico 878 miles. That should give any young man enough room.

The bus stopped at 5 a.m. at a larger Trailways station where I was to get the seven o’clock to Waco. After a modest breakfast, I examined the racks of paperback books, thinking this the proper thing for an aspiring young scholar to do. I overcame my shyness to make two purchases: Dale Carnegie’s How to Win Friends and Influence People and another august volume, author unknown, entitled Sex and the Adolescent.

Bought for fifty cents each in the Trailways bus station in Houston, Texas, the two new books doubled the size of my library. Stowed in my trunk in the belly of the bus was a Webster’s dictionary that had lain, largely unused, around the house for thirty years; and in a black plastic folder at my side was a handsome Bible, red letter edition, a leather-bound high school graduation gift with my name embossed in gold on its flexible cover.

There were not many books in my house in Tylertown, Mississippi. My parents prized education but didn’t buy books. But as I was soon to learn, I had somehow managed to read about as many as most of my Baylor University classmates, which, in the fall of 1960, was not saying a great deal.

Settled back into the Trailways seat, I glanced first at Carnegie, who, I quickly discovered, had nothing whatsoever to teach me about winning friends and influencing people. Whatever deficiencies I was carrying to the halls of academe, I was not lacking the capacities requisite to endear myself to others. All you have to do is say Hello and ask a question or two, and people will take you to be a lodestone of generosity and goodwill. Sit me down by a stranger on a bus bound for any place, and, in no time, I’ll win a friend and influence a people.

But sex is another matter. It was from a state of some wonder that I expectedly turned the pages of Sex and the Adolescent as the Trailways moved through Waller and Hempstead deep into the heart of Texas. A curious woman in the seat opposite leaned over to see what I was reading, but I shielded the book from her. I didn’t want to hurt my reputation. Long before I had heard of Evelyn Woods and speed-reading, I read fast.

When I stepped out of the yellow cab and stood for the first time in front of Kokernot Hall on the campus of Baylor University, I could not foresee that four years hence I would drive away from that place, alone in my first car, a ’58 black Custom
Ford with overdrive, and that there they would be—on the seats and in the trunk, surrounding the spare tire, and in the glove compartment, stuffed in every crevice—there they would be, hundreds of them, books, books, books on every subject, but especially novels and plays and poetry, theology and philosophy, history and comparative religion.

And in September of 1960, neither could I foresee that four years hence I would have read nigh all of William Faulkner, and would have spent days with King Lear, and would have found I could not understand philosophers named Duns Scotus and William of Ockham, and would have been kept alive by a theologian named Paul Tillich and a storyteller named Eudora Welty, and that I would have taken a liking to Eastern stuff, would even have fancied myself becoming a Zen Buddhist and meditating for fourteen hours a day.

And when I drove out of Texas in the summer of 1964, I could not then foresee that four years later, I would drive away again, this time from Louisville, Kentucky, and this time with a beautiful young wife named Sybil, who by then had taught me considerably more than I could ever have hoped to learn from that slender volume I purchased in 1960 in the Trailways station in Houston, Texas, and it wasn’t about winning friends and influencing people either.

But driving away from Kentucky in 1968, the new Chevy Nova couldn’t hold them all. I had to call up Mayflower. It was with some pride that I responded to the fellow who was loading the dozens of boxes onto that moving van when he said to me, Son, you got more books than any man I ever seed. Whada you do wid all des books?

And I replied, I read ‘em, Sir.

And he said, Son, don’t mess wid me. Ain’t no man gonna read des many books.

Arriving at Syracuse University, I wasn’t sure why my teacher in Kentucky had told me to go north to study. Maybe he thought it would be good for me to meet people who were different from me, to encounter, as we say now in the university, difference, to live awhile with diversity.

To tell the truth, going to Syracuse in 1968, I tried not to be different. I sometimes tried to disguise where I had come from. I took up pipe smoking with a vengeance and started trying to talk right. I had bought my first pipe a few years earlier in Louisville. My philosophy teacher there, an Englishmen named Eric Rust, had studied at Oxford and had read everything I wanted to read, and he smoked a pipe. He could also talk right. I went out to his house one day and we talked about my paper on Tillich. Surrounded by books in several languages and sitting in a room filled with the incense of sweet tobacco, he was just the kind of man I wanted to be. All I needed to do was to buy a pipe, read lots of books, and change the way I talked. That seemed easy enough to do.

So I bought a five dollar pipe at a store on 4th Street in Louisville, and sat out under the great maple tree that shaded Sybil’s and my balcony at our apartment in a grand old house on South Peterson Street, reading books and smoking my pipe. The nice thing about a pipe is that you can spend the best part of an afternoon just getting ready to light the thing.

After a year or two, I got pretty good at smoking that pipe, and I read a lot more books, but I still didn’t talk right. I tried to remember to add g to words like talking, fixing, reading. So instead of saying, I wuz talkin’ to my teacher, and I told him
I wuz fixin' to do sum readin' this summer, I tried real hard to say, I wuz talking to my teacher, and I told him I wuz fixing to do sum reading this summer.

Trying to talk right was one of the hardest things I ever tried to do. Living in Syracuse, New York, was a benefit in that regard, because in Syracuse, everybody talked right, except me and Sybil, and we were trying to. After a few weeks, I stopped saying thang and Fridee, and started saying thing and Friday. It’s amazing how much better you feel when you talk right.

I was doing pretty well until one night in Atlanta, Georgia. I was there for a meeting and heard a theologian named Tom Altizer give a speech. Back then Altizer was pretty famous and I knew him a bit, and at the reception after the talk, he introduced me to his sister. She was, as I recall, a linguist who taught at the University of Hawaii. We were talking pretty good, and I thought I was sounding all right when she stopped right in the middle of the conversation and asked, Where in the world are you from?

Well, originally I’m from Mississippi, I mumbled. Back then, I always said I was originally from Mississippi, just to show that I had come up in the world. But I quickly added, I’ve lived four years in Texas, four in Kentucky, and a couple in Syracuse, New York, speaking more clearly the further north I went on the list.

Well, you really have messed up the way you talk, she said. You speak with a little of this accent and a little of that one. It’s terrible, and very unpleasant to listen to. I think you should talk like people talk in Mississippi. It’s a beautiful way to talk.

I didn’t hear anything else she said the rest of the night. Here I had bought a pipe and was getting along toward talking right and this little woman from Hawaii was suggesting I was on the wrong track. She probably wouldn’t have liked my pipe either, but I didn’t tell her about that.

Perhaps, then, I needed to go north not to encounter something different, but in order to see myself as different, and to see the place I had come from as different, maybe special. Getting away from my own place, perhaps I would be able to see it as the place it is, and see myself as well.

But, frankly, I went to Syracuse, New York, trying hard to become something else. Whatever I was, was not enough. Perhaps it was not even good. I didn’t talk right and everybody on TV seemed to think that my kind of folks lynched Blacks folks and were ignorant. I was Ross Barnett and George Wallace and Bull Connor.

Do you know any people who kill Negroes? a woman asked me one day at a gift shop in Cazenovia, New York. I was browsing in the shop, and she was making small talk with a stranger whom she had just met. She wanted to know where my accent came from. I had said originally from Mississippi, and she asked her question just to make conversation. The question just popped in her mind. No insult intended.

I felt accused and guilty and didn’t know quite what to say. Not more than two or three hundred, I said. I walked out, feeling worse for having gone to Cazenovia on a beautiful spring day.

But as is often the case, you don’t really know why you go to a place until you’ve been there for a while. You go for one reason, only later to discover the real reason. The real reason—at least one of the real reasons—I went to Syracuse, New York, was to become a Mississippian. There was nothing else for me to be in Syracuse, New York.
All this reminds me of the trips that Sybil and I made to Mississippi from Syracuse. Whenever we got back to Syracuse after a couple of weeks in Mississippi, folks would want to have us over for dinner. I thought this was mighty nice until I realized our hosts wanted not so much to see Sybil and me, but to hear us talk about Mississippi. They wanted to see us because we had been to Mississippi and had returned. To them, Mississippi wasn't the planet Pluto, but it was in the neighborhood.

Take our friends Tom and Ellen Ewens. They would plan for weeks to have Sybil and me to dinner as soon as we got back from a few weeks in the South. Tom would lay in plenty of food and drink, and put on a fine meal. For three or four hours, Sybil and I would tell Mississippi stories, and Tom and Ellen would listen as though we had just arrived from outer space.

Tom, I said one night, trotting out my best Mississippi drawl, Sybil and I wuz coming up from Poplarville the other day, and we decided to stay off the Interstate. Decided to come up on old Highway 11.

Is dat the same highway 11 dat cums to Syracuse, Tom asked, trying himself to talk with a proper Southern accent, but he should have known a man from Wisconsin can't talk right.

The very one, I said. It starts in Nawleens and goes right through Poplarville, not a hundred yards from Sybil's house. Well, anyway, we wuz moseying along Highway 11, and got up above Nashville, Tennessee, headed toward Bristol and Kingsport, and it wuz getting along toward dark, and we wuz getting worried about finding a place to stay. So I stopped at this old garage to ask if there wuz any places to stay at on up toward Bristol. "Howdy," I said to the mechanic in the garage. "I'm driving north on Highway 11. Can I get a place to stay at on up the road?"

"Why, man," the mechanic replied, "that-air road runs all the way to New York City. You can git a place to stay at wherever you wants to on that-air road."

And at that, Tom and Ellen Ewens fell out laughing.

Now, you tell me, why would my friend Tom Ewens and his wife Ellen, he from Wisconsin, a philosopher and a psychoanalyst, and she an accomplished Montessori teacher from Rhode Island, nigh split their sides laughing when I told them that story? It's not that funny. Tom got up to get something else for the table, repeating the very words to himself as he walked to the kitchen, Why, man, that-air road runs all the way to New York City. He went on laughing just to hear the words, That-air roads runs all the way to New York City.

Perhaps the real reason I went to Syracuse was to meet Tom and Ellen Ewens, and obviously I couldn't have known that before I went. Meeting them did not make me something else, but it did change me. It made me more truly what I am. At least I started paying attention to my place and people. For me, it was going north toward home.

It reminds me of a story, a Jewish story. Rebbe Zusia once said, When I die, the Celestial Judge will not ask why I was not Abraham, or Isaac, or Jacob. The Celestial Judge will ask why I was not Zusia.

But I didn't go to Syracuse, New York, with all that in mind. I went to do serious research in religion and literature. To tell the truth, being serious was more important than religion and literature. They were only the vehicles by which I exercised what was most important: my seriousness.

Perhaps that is why Steve Langfur and I became good friends. Like me, Langfur
had a terminal case of seriousness. He looked like a refugee from a Bergman movie or a Samuel Beckett play, gaunt and somber, dark and isolated. He was a man floating alone on an iceberg in the middle of the North Sea. Repeatedly, he narrowed his eyes, which were hardly visible beneath his black and bushy eyebrows. He was a philosopher on leave from the Schwartwald—the Black Forest—and he had overdosed on that book by Martin Heidegger called *Being and Time—Sein und Zeit*.

Later, Langfur would take his new wife, a Sabra from Israel and a bundle of Middle Eastern passion if there ever was one, up to a Vermont mountain shack and stash himself away to read nothing but Martin Heidegger. Sorge—concern, care—that was one of Heidegger’s big words. Langfur was full of *Sorge*, serious *Sorge*, ultimate *Sorge*, as Paul Tillich would have it.

And so was I: full of it. It was hard to tell which of us was the fuller of it. Langfur’s German was better than mine, but I was as full of *Sorge*.

Back then I had the idea that in order to say much of anything about a thinker I needed to read everything he or she had written. Not a bad plan for an eager young scholar, I suppose, but such a plan ill fits a man for ordinary life. You don’t have time to take out the garbage or be a decent husband or vote if you set about to read—as I did—all of Paul Tillich, Martin Heidegger, Samuel Beckett, William Faulkner, Emily Dickinson, Wallace Stevens, and many lesser lights, including W. H. Auden, Harold Pinter, Jean Genet, Albert Camus, Eugene Ionesco, Eugene O’Neill, John Updike, James Baldwin, Joseph Heller, Tennessee Williams, Ralph Ellison, William Styron, Philip Wheelwright, Suzanne Langer, Hannah Arendt, Norman O. Brown, and Herbert Marcuse, with Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx thrown in for good measure. And that is not to mention the Bible, Luther, Augustine, Schleiermacher, and, the best of the lot, Miss Eudora Welty.

What surprises me now is not that I was captive to such a program of study, but that I was so successful, if that is the word, in following it. But I couldn’t keep it up.

Looking back, I see I made a fundamental mistake with regard to books. For one thing, I probably read too many. In that, I wasn’t much different from most eager young scholars who get hooked on books. Even Voltaire said he read too many books, Nietzsche, too.

Now I’m all for reading. I spend the best part of my waking hours cajoling my teenage son and my students to read books, and I still read a fair number myself. But too many books can pretty near ruin a man, or a woman for that matter.

Some people suggest that women are somehow inoculated against the mischief that too many books can cause. They say that women are less inclined to abstraction, that they are more connected with others and more, as they say, *relational* in their way of thinking and living. I don’t know about all that, but I do know that too many books can ruin a good woman as fast as they can a good man. Too many books—at least too many books read in the wrong way—can distance a person from ordinary life. Too many books read in the wrong way can take you clean out of the space and time of your own life.* After ten or twelve years of doing little more than reading books, you will hardly be able to find your way around a city block and will barely know the time of day.

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Take my friend Steve Langfur. Langfur took his hearty young wife off to a shack on the side of a mountain in Vermont with little more for company than a potbellied stove and a stack of books by Martin Heidegger, in German, too. Langfur spent the best part of two years reading Martin Heidegger and chopping wood. After he moved to Israel, Langfur wrote me one time that he had discovered his element. He said his element was the sun.

That’s what locking yourself up in a shack in Vermont and reading Martin Heidegger will do to you: you’ll be thirty-five years old before you notice the sun.

But reading too many books was only part of the problem. I read books in the wrong way. I thought that reading books is like climbing Mount Ida. Mount Ida is a 12,000 foot peak just north of where Sybil and I spend time in the summer in Colorado. When I am out there, I sometimes think I might climb Mount Ida one day. I could drive up the road about 10 miles, hike up Timber Lake trail, and after five hours or so, I would be at the summit of Mount Ida. A strenuous walk, but possible for a paunchy man like myself.

In Syracuse, I thought that reading Paul Tillich, or anyone else, was like climbing Mount Ida. You get on the trail; walk up the slope; reach the summit; smoke your pipe; and come back down. Then you move on to another mountain. There are always more peaks in the distance. They are like scoops of ice cream on an infinitely high cone.

But we know that reading Paul Tillich or William Faulkner or Emily Dickinson is not like climbing Mount Ida. Doing x-ray crystallography or working out a computer-aided design are, in many ways, not like climbing Mount Ida either.

They rather are like getting to know a face. There is no summit to a face. You cannot conquer a face. I can never say I am finished and done with Sybil’s face. It changes day to day, hence my knowing of her is always partial, incomplete. My teacher Stanley Hopper, following Nietzsche, would call my knowing of her perspectival.

Now my teachers Stanley Hopper and David Miller could have taught me all this, and I suppose they tried. But, in fact, I was doing precisely what they had done. They too had worked, and nearly succeeded, at reading every book that had been written in about five fields, theology, psychology, philosophy, literature, mythology, and so forth. And when I was studying with them, they added Eastern texts to the list, so I set about to smoke my pipe and read the Dhammapada, the Rig Veda, the Tao te Ching, and The Analects of Confucius. You can add the Bhagavad-Gita and parts of the Upanishads as well.

My mind was like a garbage can. I was tossing everything in as fast as possible. It’s a wonder I got out with an ounce of sanity left. Sybil says I didn’t. I tell you what I was. I was a Laputan. You remember the Laputans. They are those folks who live on that floating island called Laputa in Gulliver’s Travels. The Laputans are so taken up in excessive speculation that they are like their island home, floating above reality. In fact, they are so engrossed in thought that they forget where they are; and if they are not careful, they’ll fall in a hole or walk right off the island. Gulliver says that they can neither speak or hear the speech of others “without being roused by some external action upon [their] organs of speech and hearing.”

The Laputans need the help of a Flapper. The Flapper holds a stick to which is attached a slightly inflated balloon filled with peas or pebbles. When the Laputan falls dangerously deep into thought, the Flapper takes the little balloon and flaps it.
against the eyes and ears of the Laputan. The Flapper brings the Laputan out of thought and back to his senses. For a while, the Laputan recovers himself in the space and time of his own life.

For a few years in Syracuse, New York, I was a Laputan and Sybil was my Flapper. Unless she roused my organs of speech and hearing with some external tactions, I was mostly deaf and dumb as a fence post.

Perhaps that was why my teacher in Kentucky told me to go north to study: he knew I needed to learn to pay attention to things right before my eyes—to learn more fully to inhabit the spaces and times of my own life.

To tell you the truth, I've spent the best part of the last twenty years unlearning a good deal of what my teachers taught me, but maybe that's the way it always is between good teachers and their students. A teacher teaches and the student learns; and then the student must unlearn what the teacher taught in order to teach someone else.

Is it necessarily the case that we must spend a good part of our life recovering from our education?

One afternoon I went out to Professor Hopper's house for a little conversation about Martin Heidegger. It was an oral exam. I was not up to Heidegger, but I had slogged up the mountain and was ready to expound on his concepts of Da-sein, Geschicht, gegenwartigen, existenzial, and existenziel. Hopper favored the later Heidegger, so I was ready to talk about poetry and the poet's special capacity to step into the clearing of being and to make present the four-fold—mortals, the earth, the sun, the gods. That which you seek is near and is already coming to meet you. I could quote that line from Hölderlin if need be, but I didn't know whether he wrote it before or after he went mad.

Professor Hopper met me at the door, dressed, as always, in gray suit, white shirt, and tie. We were downstairs, and there they were, everywhere. I stared at them. Books, books, books, thousands and thousands of books, covering the walls from floor to ceiling in three large basement rooms, and that was only part of his library. I stared and wanted to run out the door and go away to a shack in Vermont and smoke my pipe and read some more books before taking that exam. Ted, Dr. Hopper said, would you like a cup of tea before we talk about Heidegger?

That would be fine, Dr. Hopper, I said. We got to the kitchen, and my genial teacher started opening cabinets doors one after the other. He reminded me of Mr. Magoo looking for his glasses.

Now where does Helen keep the tea? Let me see. Ted, where would you suppose that Helen keeps the tea?

I really don't know, Dr. Hopper. Maybe there above the oven, in that little cabinet there.

Ted, you're right! Here's the tea! Now, Ted, Professor Hopper asked me, how did you know that Helen keeps the tea above the oven?

I don't know, Dr. Hopper. That's where Sybil and I keep the tea at our house, I guess.

Well, Ted, now let's see. Where do you think Helen keeps the kettle?

It's there, Dr. Hopper, there on the stove.

The reluctant light of the Syracuse winter came through the huge living room windows, and we talked about Martin Heidegger and poetry, and the death and rebirth of the gods. It is the time of the god that is no more and the not yet of the
I said, quoting Heidegger who was writing of Hölderlin.

I think so, Ted, Professor Hopper said. It’s like Wallace Stevens says, we live under a new dispensation of the sun. But to step into that new dispensation, we must first step back. We must step back, and then down. We must step barefoot into reality.

And I, quoting Hopper quoting Kafka, added, It’s like what Kafka said: the positive is given. The task that is laid upon us is to accomplish the negative.

Yes, Professor Hopper replied. That reminds me of the story that Nishitani Sensei told me when I saw him in Kyoto. You know the story. The student goes to the Master and asks, How can I be enlightened? And the Master offers him a cup of tea and starts to pour. And the student impatiently asks again, Master, How can I be enlightened? All the time, the Master is pouring tea. And the tea starts to overflow the cup. It runs out on the tatami mat. Finally, the student interrupts. Master! he says, the tea is overflowing the cup! The Master replies, You must empty the cup before it can be filled.

There’s Helen! Professor Hopper exclaimed. Helen. Helen! Ted’s here. Come here, Helen, and say hello to Ted.

It was good to see Helen, this former church organist now displaying the first signs of what was to become severe Paristan’s. Helen! Dr. Hopper said, Ted had to help me find the tea! I couldn’t lay my hands on the tea, Helen.

I’m not surprised, Stanley, Helen replied. I’m really not surprised.

Professor Hopper said I did OK on the exam, but I doubted it. I wasn’t sure anything I was seeking was coming near.

When I got to our apartment that afternoon, I found myself in the kitchen, getting out the coffee grinder. I poured some of the dark, redolent Colombian beans I had bought down on Marshall Street into the grinder. I was surprised again at how much noise a coffee grinder makes and at how good fresh ground coffee smells. I got the water boiling in the kettle and fitted a filter into the pot and poured boiling water across the coffee. I watched the grounds soak up the water and heard the slinpk, slinpk of the coffee hitting the bottom of the carafe. I got out our best china and poured two cups of fine coffee. With sugar and cream and napkins on the tray, I went up to the living room just as Sybil was coming in from work.

Here, Honey, I said. I thought you might like some coffee after your long day.

Why thank you, Ted, Sybil said. This is the nicest thing that’s happened to me all day. That coffee smells delicious.
Leading a College as a Liberal Arts Practice

Leon C. Malan, Judith Muyskens, Anne Ponder, and
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Colby-Sawyer College

A common and rather prevalent model for leading and planning in higher education is a contest of wills optimizing local, current matters. In contrast, at Colby-Sawyer College, we are explicit, careful, and collaborative about working together respectfully on qualitative and institutional and long-term matters. We hope that the model for leadership that we have provided below, one that demonstrates how we make our decisions and conduct our business in a style that differs from academic political business as usual, will serve as a model for other institutions.

Recent articles in Change magazine and Liberal Education point to difficulties in preparing institutions of higher education to change. Frank Newman mentions that one of the present concerns in higher education is “that faculty have gradually acquired the ability to block changes that are seen as not in the faculty interest or, sometimes, simply seen as change” (Newman, 7). Richard Edwards describes the difficulties of our present administrative structures in providing the flexibility needed to be “responsive, focused, innovative, and entrepreneurial (Edwards, 20). At present, collaborative leadership is being held up as one solution to higher education’s woes. Jo Ellen Parker provides some suggestions on how to restore faith in academic management through collaboration. Furthermore, D. Bruce Johnstone, Nancy S. Dye, and Ray Johnson provide examples of collaborative leadership in a Spring 1998 article of Liberal Education. They note that the “challenge is to develop a culture of collaborative leadership focused on the effective accomplishment of institutional mission” (Johnstone et al., 19).

At Colby-Sawyer College, we assumed that the organizational and cultural character of a college could mirror the transformative change we see in individual students. We have been working together for four years to move this particular college forward, expansively and creatively. Our contribution to this volume appears below as a conversation, because that is the way we have been achieving our vision. A fully engaged, intellectual conversation on crucial matters renders a much higher quality college than any one of us might imagine alone.

The conversation at Colby-Sawyer College includes Anne Ponder (AP), president of the college; Judy Muyskens (JM), vice president for academic affairs and dean of the faculty; Leon Malan (LM), associate professor of business; and Ann Page Stecker (APS), associate professor of humanities. Leon and Ann Page represent the faculty to the board of trustees, in an unusual manner, about which more later. Anne is a literature and film expert, who also served as academic dean and as a chief information officer at another college before coming to Colby-Sawyer four years ago. Judy’s field is second language acquisition and French literature and language. She was a director of honors at a university before coming to Colby-
Sawyer College. Leon’s mind brings a lively combination of expertise from international business, labor relations, and organizational development. Ann Page, currently writing a history of the town in which the college is located, connects the fields of history and narrative as if they always overlap.

LM

One way we can approach the task at hand is to apply an ecological metaphor to the organization. Certain species require the right habitat to grow and prosper. In the case of a college, the habitat may be related to a steady growth pattern in student numbers, visionary leadership, financial stability, and evidence of success. Once the right conditions are in place, we can then look at the morphology, i.e. what is it that we find in this environment? Examples of collaborative success, committed faculty, engaged students, and a climate of healthy discourse may all be the result of the just the right conditions being in place at the college. Staying with the ecological metaphor, we need to explore and understand the interconnectedness of elements and we also need to see the college community in its larger ecosystem. Internally, the various college constituencies need to be aligned along the same strategic direction and externally the college needs to respond appropriately to external opportunities and threats.

Given this metaphor, I would say that Colby-Sawyer College has tremendous potential. If the right leadership, governance, examples of success, and opportunity for innovation and growth exist we can truly be the “best of kind.” It can be a place where curricula are fresh and cutting-edge, pedagogy is exciting, students are challenged to reach their potential, and faculty are freed from obstacles in their abilities to grow personally and to create the most exciting learning environment for students.

APS

Isn’t it interesting that the four of us have been or are classroom teachers, having had that experience first in our careers. We write syllabi for our courses and we describe, analyze and articulate the problems we want to examine and the goals for the course. But, colleges don’t always take a similar approach—assuming that an institution would have to have a syllabus too. And if a syllabus is “subject to change” and a good syllabus, it is able to react to both internal and external pressures on it. All of us revise our syllabi I believe every semester, while still refining our goals. We sometimes forget what we know in our classrooms when we walk into an institutional meeting.

LM

What I think is useful in most of these conversations, discussions, discourse and also disagreement is to have an agreement of the common goal. Not all organizations are fortunate enough to have that and I don’t think we have always had that. Our common goal is illustrated so well in the visual image of the strategic plan. The cover of the strategic plan is a collaborative model with eight different points of a compass all pointing in one direction. That direction is students in the center with three very simple goals: achieve academic quality (i.e. being the best of
our kind as a learning community), being financially healthy, and focusing our niche. Once we had a common understanding of that, we could frame all of our conversations and our perspectives in the same direction.

AP

When I arrived as president, I asked for a copy of the strategic plan and no one could give me a complete, current version. I met with everyone at the college in multi-constituent group conversations. We assembled those ideas and winnowed them to the most important priorities, reporting back with drafts to the internal community and the Board of Trustees.

LM

What I think will be interesting to hear, since you did a similar exercise three years later, is your perspective on not only how the content of the discussions changed, but also how the culture, climate, and flavor of the institution had changed.

AP

It was different. We revisited and updated our strategic plan just a year ago to help prepare for our next capital campaign, and to refresh our sense of whether we were looking at the right things and whether we were working on the right goals. The difference was that the first time through, people were listening but were somewhat tentative. Three years later we already had a sense of what it means to know what the institutional priorities are.

So, when I come to work every day, of the dozens or hundreds of things that present themselves for my attention, any one of which is important for Colby-Sawyer, which of those things do I do? So, I actually use the strategic plan on a daily basis to make decisions, and others in the institution have done that. One of the most frequently mentioned needs in the first strategic planning conversations was—for the health of the academic program and the quality of our learning community—that students needed a place, 24 hours a day, seven days a week that was theirs. In the time between the conversations, we built one.

LM

During the first strategic planning meeting I attended, I asked what the vision for the future was. Anne said that she did not have a preconceived vision and that she was allowing these meetings to form the direction. Three years later, the college has a much clearer vision. Anne used a process that cultivated a shared imagination and she gave us a way to talk about the college in common. We have deepened the extent to which, “We are all in love with the same college.” So, did you feel that the first time around the conversations were far more tentative and guarded than the second time around?

AP

Yes, more tentative, but not hugely guarded. People were tentative with each other, people were tentative about whether there would be significant outcome. That, of
course, was our common obligation to deliver. We are respectful about our complementary roles, and we trust each other ever increasingly, as we continue key conversations.

**APS**

I think that is a good point, and I think that it is also interesting that you keep using the word “conversations.” I think each of us has used it frequently and carefully. Rhetoric can be public posturing for the purpose of persuasion. One of the things we have been doing in the last two years and through the development of our new major, Community and Environmental Studies, is to privilege conversation over rhetoric. In conversation, we import into the public the value of looking at our neighbor directly, having to listen as actively as we expound. I think the new major will work because we are privileging conversation over rhetorical posturing and that fascinates me. That is a shift for any institution and it is interesting for me to think about as I remember and measure the larger goals of the college’s strategic plan.

**JM**

As leaders, no matter what our position, we are models of discourse. We need to set up situations where true conversation can happen rather than just rhetorical posturing. I recently heard Robert Kegan of the Harvard Graduate School of Education talk about leadership discourses at the Council of Independent Colleges—Chief Academic Officer meeting. For one, he talked about developing a discourse of ongoing regard for people. I think that many folks on our campus are good at that. I also try to understand how what they are saying is different from other people. Kegan also talks about establishing a discourse of public integrity. We are practicing and modeling this style of discourse in our liberal education conversations. We can show our own integrity by speaking our true mind. As leaders we need to provide people the space where they can express their true feelings and beliefs. At the same time people should expect that others will be honest with them. It is important that we can exchange ideas and see that, in fact, there are no winners and no losers.

**AP**

You are really good at that. You are a wonderful listener and people will speak with you in a quiet but confident way. You are better at it than I am because you listen longer for difference than I do and you try to reconcile the difference only after you have understood that particular vantage point. I can leap too soon to listening and hearing what we have common which may be an advantage in my role.

**LM**

I remember during the interview for a new Dean of Faculty there was a question from one of the members of the faculty—an angry question. The person basically wanted to know if the Dean would be one of “us” or one of “them.” This was obviously not an easy question to answer. You can imagine a candidate hedging and thinking: “So I’m in a faculty environment if I’m saying I’m one of you, and members of the search committee will say, well we are looking for an administrator; if I’m saying I’m an
administrator, the members of the faculty will say, well she's one of them." The problem lies with the question. The separation of "us" and "them" is an obstacle to understanding and consensus about the overall direction and objectives of the college. And I think I now know that you couldn't answer the question because in your model there isn't an "us" and a "them."

APS

And you listened very carefully and you listened for difference. I remember also that you introduced yourself by speaking French and giving us a way of thinking about you as a scholar. You suggested right from the beginning that we should think metaphorically, which for me means thinking ahead with vision and holding contrast as a creative way of thinking, the way of the poets.

JM

I remember that meeting very well. It was important as a possible future leader at Colby-Sawyer that I listen carefully and begin to build trust. Open communication was important even in those first meetings.

LM

I think as a result of your style that you will find that you probably get a lot more disagreement or negative comment than what you might have because people feel comfortable to do that. They know that Judy will listen even if she may not agree. I have heard folks say, I can tell her this and I know that my head will not be lopped off or something bad will not happen to me. So, you probably end up getting some of those criticisms or negative comments that otherwise may not have surfaced. It is important in any organization not to assume that, if you do not hear anything negative here, everything is okay.

JM

I agree, I think it is important that I hear those negative things. I have a little sign on my computer where I remind myself to assign people responsibility. After they have complained to me and discussed something with me, I like to ask them to take steps to solve their problem and to talk directly to the person with whom they are unhappy. To me that is the discourse of public integrity. I believe that this is the way that Kegan uses that term.

APS

As Leon describes your style and as you describe your style, I am reminded, Judy, that our search for a new chief academic officer led us to you because everyone who met you saw and heard your ability to balance opposing points of view—warmly. When we started that search, we worked from a job description and set of expectations, which sounded generic; used what I will call "institutional-ese," well-intentioned but "institutional-ese." As the search continued, we changed the original language, privileging a more conversational, colloquial style that came directly from faculty and staff voices. We dared to use the phrase "the warmth we crave" to describe a collegial administrative style. We thought that unorthodox
words and phrases coming from the community's collective voice and imagination gave us a “living” set of criteria that could help us avoid projecting superhuman expectations. Now when I am thinking about creative ways to redesign our cumbersome governance structure, I try to remember how we changed the search process by listening and creating a process which could not only find the leadership we desired, but set the stage for that person to lead.

We are really talking about the balancing and sometimes competing goods of accountability and hospitality. Scholarly hospitality is not a habit one learns in graduate work. One learns to be inhospitable because we have such odd ideas about originality in our culture. A good institution, on the other hand, has to have reciprocity as the key to the way it operates intellectually. On the other hand, no institution can run on the “anything goes” scenario. But good liberal arts practice creates ambiguities, creates balancing needs. Those are two for me—hospitality and accountability.

I would like to see a governance structure (to use Anne Ponder’s words) “authorizing work groups” (like the dean search committee) and letting the ineffective structures atrophy (like dead metaphors.)

AP

We either assign appropriate people a task, or we create the right work group and then tell everybody about it and when it will report out and how to get involved with it. What we have discovered is that the un-lively parts of the governance structure are going dormant and may be starting to atrophy. We are governing the institution and leading the institution around specific opportunities for the college to become a better place. People are learning how to get a topic or an agenda or an idea on the table and it is different than getting it on the agenda of a committee, or getting air time before a particular governing body. It is much more animating and much more lively.

LM

You mentioned leadership style early on and I really wanted to bring our discussion around to that again. It is a different way in which leadership is being defined. Leadership is normally defined by title. You are a leader only if you are the chair of a committee or department. This is no longer the case here. By recognizing each individual’s unique contribution, and by allowing that individual enough space to make his or her contribution as innovatively and creatively as possible, we have redistributed leadership. So now we don’t have leaders only as those individuals that are leaders by title; we have now allowed individuals to be leaders in whatever they may feel best qualified. So, instead of counting the number of committees that someone is on or counting the number of times somebody has been chair, we say “this is your opportunity, how did you realize it?” I think by shifting that definition of leadership, you have allowed the institution to be far more creative, far more innovative, and more forward thinking than going along with traditional and hierarchical structures.
JM

Power becomes less the issue and authority becomes more the manifestation because there is a reliable assumption of kindness about our discourse. I think it is really interesting the way we have changed, and the way the present liberal education conversations are an example of what you are talking about, in terms of changing the governance structure. Faculty and staff have been talking together. We really do mean to listen to one another. At one meeting, Mike from Information Resources talked about liberal education and at another meeting Mark from Safety listened in on the conversation. Janet, a member of the support staff for student development, reminded us of what we are doing, kept us all on track. So it is really a sign that the governance is very different here. I think those conversations will lead to a very different kind of governance structure and community.

LM

That is really good modeling. What you are really doing in those conversations, you are modeling to the entire community that there is a way to participate. Your voice is just as important as everybody else’s voice. Maybe, it is happening this way because we are in an area that we don’t know an awful lot about.

AP

Isn’t that humility important for every intellectual? Even in one’s own field?

JM

I think William Cronon would say that is a mark of a liberally educated person—to be humble, to empower others.

APS

I think it is also an attribute of the imagination since we have been talking about collective imagination. If I think back to Coleridge’s description of the power of the imagination, it is to be able to “willingly suspend disbelief.” Not forever, but for the moment, allowing the possibility of a new idea to come in. I was at a meeting recently where I heard that phrase misused, suggesting that to be willing to suspend one’s disbelief meant to let go and let something else take over. No, that is not what Coleridge meant. He believed in willingly suspending one’s own point of view long enough to imagine someone else’s. That would be called empathy by a psychologist. But, it is an intellectual power that is vital, and institutions that don’t have that vitality will be taken over by any fly-by-night idea.

AP

It is what is permitting us to outsmart the competition, which is what we must do. It assumes, to use one of your examples, that a staff member in student development really understands the organization. Or that the weekend safety officer might have some insights in terms of what students are learning that are as valuable as those of a senior faculty member.
If we keep privileging conversation over rhetorical posturing, this becomes the style of the institution. We are seeing this in the liberal arts conversations that Judy and the faculty/staff team have so beautifully designed. Voices rise, volume goes up and volume goes down, and there is not an attempt ever to flatten out thought and make it conformist. It is interesting, we talk about being uni-vocal. That doesn't mean saying the same thing, it simply means hearing the same way and vocalizing in a way that is as full of listening as it is of talking.

I was thinking of how your comments on the liberal education conversations also related to the work of the Environmental Team, the group which brought forward a new major in under two years, from initial idea to implementation. I know we will talk about preconditions in a moment, but I was wondering whether it might have something to do with the fact that when we were discussing the Community and Environmental Studies program we weren’t experts. None of us were in our field of comfort. Everybody had to operate in an area out of their comfort zone. By being forced to think beyond our area of specialization, we were automatically forced to think institutionally. If we couldn’t think institutionally we had nothing to hang on to. Maybe that is one of the reasons why that whole exercise was so energizing.

We are also getting a little better at letting the right person do the right job. We needed all of those voices inside the conversation but we wouldn’t waste people’s time in the Environmental Team’s conversations. Other people have administrative roles and can do things like figure out when to cut the grass and what color to paint the classroom and how the money ought to be invested—the administrivia required to make an institution run. So, part of what Judy and I have been attempting to do as administrative leaders at the college is not to waste your time. We have been extremely respectful and have asked you for your engaged conversation only when it really matters.

I think coming around to the ability to risk something is certainly one of the qualities of a vigorous mind and a vigorous institution.

The new Community and Environmental Studies program is a great example to illustrate just that. Let me recapture what I think happened. You had a junior member of the faculty taking a risk, saying, “I have an idea, it doesn’t fit 100% in my department, I don’t see any space for it yet in the curriculum, but I have this idea.” You encouraged him to work on it in light of the strategic plan. This preliminary thinking then attracted a group of individuals that were interested in the topic and were prepared to bring their intellect to this particular idea. And it also brought the particular leadership style from the President of the college to say,
"Don't confine yourself. You have permission to think big. Think about how we could do something distinctive and tell me what comes up."

So, that to me is a great example of empowering (although the word "empower" is becoming a bit of a tired buzzword) by giving individuals the necessary freedom and the necessary space and allowing them to flirt with their creative abilities. Then in a period of eighteen months to have a program that is not only a great program but has already attracted an awful lot of goodwill and financial resources for the institution: that I think is a very powerful example of the leadership style that will allow for truly innovative and creative things to happen.

AP

We listen better than most institutions. For example, our Community and Environmental Studies major has grown far beyond the original notion of the aquatic toxicologist who brought the idea forward. On the occasions when I participated with the E-team, the designers of this program, you were flying intellectually about the caliber of the discourse.

What we did not incorporate were appeals for political expediency or for personal preference. Those arguments don't really carry very much weight in a liberal arts argument, as we found them peripheral rather than central to what we had in mind. Any frustrations we had with peripheral arguments did not prevail, because we entered the conversation at the right intellectual level. We are developing some confidence that, if we discuss something, we will be able to come to not only a modest agreement, but we will be able to invent something new and better. We can conceive what will be optimal, not just adequate for an institution.

APS

I think that is part of the key too; thinking institutionally is an acquired habit in academia because some of us have been narrowed into disciplinary areas so early on in our young and foolish lives. Even though we were uncomfortable with that, it takes a while to think beyond our discipline and some of our colleagues might say, well, thinking institutionally means thinking with the enemy. But we know that thinking institutionally means that if my program is vital then the whole institution becomes revitalized.

And at the fall 1999 meeting of the Board of Trustees, Leon and I tried to re-create for the Board the kind of conversation about curriculum planning and development you observed and have just described. We revisited the type of conversation (Leon talked from the business management perspective, I talked from a historical and literary perspective) that led the Community and Environmental Studies planning group to design an innovative interdisciplinary addition to the college's curriculum.

JM

In the future, I hope the college can continue to work on leadership development of faculty, staff, and students to help us in our discourse with each other. I think that as an institution we can do even more to help people think outside their disciplines
or groups. I'm convinced that we will find even more ways to talk together as liberally educated folks.

The revision of the honors program will develop an even stronger academic ambiance on campus and be another way to liberate learning conversation. We are already using a collaborative model to discuss the program. This program should be another way to encourage the campus community to think beyond disciplines or beyond local matters.

**APS**

I think collaboration, real collaboration, requires practice—the kind of sorting and creative critique which the liberal arts teach us. For me the study of literature, for instance, requires disciplined close reading and awareness of the cultural contexts which create the text. So, another illustration for me of the sort of collaboration you are talking about, Judy, would be the collaboration Leon and I invented when we stood for election successfully as ONE member, with ONE voice as the faculty representative to the Board of Trustees. I initiated the idea because I felt some divisions, you know, that old sort of "wills optimizing local/current matters." In approaching Leon, I knew if he agreed to collaborate we would be breaking some dearly held views. At the beginning it was assumed that our collaboration would represent different factions of the faculty. Now I think we have learned by speaking with one voice, while listening to all voices, how much more richly we can "read" the texts and contexts in the faculty culture.

**AP**

I do think that integrity requires that one show up with one's view and speak one's mind. If you withhold that, at the point in the conversation when it can be fruitful, and complain later, that is unacceptable in terms of intellectual integrity. It is bad scholarship to let something go forward that you do not think is clear-headed. So, it does require a higher order of academic connection from everybody in the institution. If someone stands apart without that integrity then I am, after a certain point, not willing to listen.

**LM**

I think we have reached the point where we can quite safely say that no one will be penalized for disagreement.

**JM**

Leon, I'm glad that you think the environment at Colby-Sawyer is a safe one in which to disagree. The key to good disagreement, in my opinion, is the way that people respond to each other. If they converse at the level of ideas, concepts, or principles, they do not take the disagreement personally. By that I mean that they do not feel personally attacked. Each person in a collaborative community needs to take responsibility for framing the discussion in a constructive way so that the community can talk at the level of issues and ideas.
LM

Yes, I do believe that we are moving from a place where conflict and disagreement were not tolerated to a place where we appreciate the different interests and perspectives of groups and individuals. How we tolerate that disagreement is important. If we are true liberal arts scholars, we will appreciate that there are multiple perspectives and paradigms and we will be open to listening to and trying to understand those views that may not conform with our own and try to learn from them. We will also know when and how to question the underlying assumptions of some views and perspectives. When we engage in dialogue and disagreement at this “scholarly” level, we are bound to find suitable accommodations.

AP

That is the best definition of academic freedom I have heard. Academic freedom is not something that the organization grants to individuals, it is something that is practiced by the whole institution and extended to all the individuals in it. So we have come back around, I suppose, to a political point, a little sooner than I thought we might.

Well, I think that Leon helped to model that when you and Ann Page both stepped forward. Ann Page is protected by tenure and you are not. So, you put yourself at some risk. But I have often thought that institutions are made better and colleges are made better not only by the intellect of the people involved but by the courage of the people involved.

APS

I did want to mention another example that really builds on what you just said. Last year the faculty proposed an expansion of our sabbatical leave policy. When the first proposal came to the faculty at a very fractious meeting, it was amended in a way that you and Judy found unacceptable. Several years ago that would have put us in a logjam that might have lasted for years. Instead, the phrase that came to us was, “think it over,” “think what you have done, go back and look at what you have done and come back to us.” Not “see you next year,” but “come back to us.” I think that the conversations that developed in the several months after that resulted in a happy outcome, a policy that changed, but changed reasonably.

LM

With the sabbatical leave policy, we made real progress in finding an appropriate solution when we reminded ourselves of what we all agreed our common objective is. Our common objective is to make sure we achieve academic quality for the student in the center of our strategic plan. Given that, we could work on a sabbatical leave policy that would allow the best possible way to do it.

AP

The balance of continuity of continuing faculty members could be over-stretched if too many people could be on sabbatical, so all of us had to weigh competing goods.
It was a thoughtful and articulate conversation. I don’t know about Judy, but the final solution was not precisely what I would have preferred. But it was quite well reasoned and met our objectives, not just adequately, but well. So, I was comfortable.

JM

For me, as someone new to campus, those conversations were very important. That issue was my first difficult one on campus. The resolution proved to me that we could work through a conflict. We didn’t agree, but we could exchange ideas and accept what others were saying.

LM

That is a lot different from saying, “no, and this is what I am going to do.” It is a case of saying, “no for these reasons, and let’s talk about that, let’s engage in a discussion about this.” I think it was very clear from the beginning that we had the opportunity to talk and we had the opportunity to make convincing arguments one way or the other and that everybody was given that opportunity. So, the process I think was also very good, not just the outcome.

APS

I think maybe, Anne, your use of the phrase “competing goods” is a really interesting way of thinking about how we, as scholars, bring whole intellects to institutional imaginings. Framed that way people started thinking about a future, started thinking about wanting to stay affiliated with a college that planned thoughtfully and coherently.

AP

The conversation when I used that term, “competing goods,” was one of the best conversations we’ve had. It was complicated and was intriguing as a conversation. I had prepared, in order to dignify the importance of both the topic (the capital campaign) and the occasion. I think that I mentioned to you that everything that I had planned to include, possibly, came into the conversation during the meeting, plus some. So, as an institution we really moved that conversation so that I think the faculty understand the basic structure of a capital campaign and what it will and what it won’t do for our college.

APS

We’ve certainly tried to make it clear to our colleagues not that we had been part of pre-planning but that we knew when we were listened to.

JM

The present conversation reminds me of a review of Neil Postman’s latest book that I read recently in the New York Times. In that review, Lind mentions Postman’s description of a community. To quote from him, “I have the impression that ‘community’ is now used to mean, simply, people with similar interests, a
considerable change from an older meaning: a community is made up of people who may not have similar interests but who must negotiate and resolve their differences for the sake of social harmony." So, even though we're all focused on the students, we do have different interests and roles. If, however, we can talk about how we are different, share our ideas, and resolve those differences, we can build a stronger college and keep moving in a forward, positive direction.

AP

Postman's challenge invites us to sum up. Thank you for this glorious conversation. Would each of you be willing to sum up, in your own words? Let's offer several versions of the meta-argument.

APS

I believe institutions, our institution and others unlike ours, can become vital and remain vital when they employ the liberal arts practices of creative and critical thinking, connected learning, and collaborative problem solving. The vehicles for this include employing collectively imagined strategic goals, lively conversation, and active listening.

LM

Let me return to the ecological metaphor. The question is whether these wonderful examples were just luck or whether they will only occur under certain conditions. I am not sure that you will find such a consistent and coherent message without certain preconditions. Examples of creative innovation, distributed leadership, constructive disagreement, and even this very dialogue we are having, are no accident. In our case, there was a conscious effort to introduce a vision that did not exist before, to lead in a way where people feel inspired, and to infuse the whole institution with meaning. Colleges that do the same are bound to experience similar results.

JM

We're really fortunate to work in an environment that is collaborative and dynamic. I'm sure that other institutions can develop the same ambiance by finding settings where all members can come together to practice the best principles of a liberal education. By that I mean thinking creatively and critically together, understanding multiple perspectives, practicing respect and humility, nurturing freedom, and empowering each other. If all of us in higher education work from the base created by a liberal education, we can build a context where individuals have the right and responsibility to speak with integrity. We will then be creating respectful environments that will help each institution identify its best practices.

AP

We have been learning from one another. For example, I have honed my own ideas about how organizations can be led with Leon, whose field is more nearly pertinent. Leon has adopted the use of metaphor, a contagious idea he probably got from Ann
Page, to describe the changes he sees at the college. We have all learned about
collegeship and leadership from Judy.

Colby-Sawyer employs some leadership strategies used in the most forward looking
for-profit companies, creates a climate for conversation where collective
imagination is invited and rewarded, and makes changes in programs and policies
which reflect everyone's best thinking. Current results from our case study of one
college are extremely positive. Colby-Sawyer did not begin this era with any
particular advantage, but we have made "leading a college as a liberal arts practice"
an institutional advantage. We think this experiment is safe to try at home, and we
invite your consideration of our approach. In this context and by keeping students
at the center of all plans, we can build vital colleges and universities that will sustain
themselves into the next millennium.

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Empathy and the Questioning Spirit in Liberal Education: Reports from the Field

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Current justifications of liberal education usually take one of two tacks: itemizing the applicable skills that students derive from a liberal education, or asserting that it is liberal education that society must look to for the capacity for community or citizenship. The former is an argument probably worth making because it appeals to the preoccupations of students, parents, and employers, but it is the second that reveals the relevance, for our time, of liberal education. Bruce Kimball argues that this latter focus on the virtues instilled by education de-emphasizes rational inquiry and the individual pursuit of truth in what he calls the "philosophical" tradition in liberal education and reasserts the "rhetorical" tradition, which with its sources in classical rhetoric and Christian humanism emphasizes the cultivation of the powers of persuasion and civic skills and virtues (6). This identification of two traditions in liberal education provides one context for understanding the academic preoccupations of recent decades: the possibly futile and potentially oppressive nature of rational inquiry; the challenges to values and beliefs posed by cultural, ethnic, and national identity; and the fact that the academy is now the most influential institutional conveyer of values.

From another perspective, it appears that this recent urgency to define and instill values through education challenges liberal education in both the rational, philosophical tradition and the rhetorical tradition: it challenges the philosophical tradition to reclaim the fundamental connection between truth and values, and it challenges the rhetorical to center its precepts in commonly accessible understanding. Like the latest generation in an ancestral home, in taking up the cause of liberal education we adapt to and renovate an earlier architecture to suit our needs and aspirations: preoccupied with the divisions and tensions among groups and individuals and doubting enlightenment models of rationality, we seek in liberal education the equilibrium between commitment and empathy on the one hand and the critical habit of mind on the other. William Cronon's "Only Connect: The Goals of a Liberal Education" is a recent, compelling statement of the characteristics of liberally educated people that joins intellectual acuity and general knowledge with such characteristics as humility, tolerance, and an ability to empower others: "Education for human freedom is also education for human community. The two cannot exist without each other. Each of the qualities I have described is a craft or a skill or a way of being in the world that frees us to act with greater knowledge or power. But each of these qualities also makes us ever more aware of the connections we have with other people and the rest of creation. . . . " (79). Parker Palmer, who delivered an influential address at the 1987 AAHE conference entitled
“Campus Values: From Competition and Individualism to Cooperation and Community,” and another at the 1999 conference of the same organization, “Education as Resistance: The Fate of Values in Hazardous Times,” is another eloquent voice urging that higher education renew its commitment to the cultivation of social and personal values. Although one persistent definition of a liberally educated citizenry has been the possession of the knowledge and critical skills to make good judgements in a democratic setting, Cronon, Parker, and others posit broad benefits of liberal education that encompass the heart and soul as well as the mind.

The many essays published in the Forum for Honors in the late eighties and nineties—when I edited this journal—span the theoretical and practical issues that confront honors educators in the liberal arts. Among these, a core of essays explore the equilibrium between values and rational understanding in an academic setting from the vantage of both theory and practice, exploring questions about the ultimate goals of learning (most famously engaged by Allan Bloom), teaching and learning—especially collaborative learning models grounded in theories of the social construction of knowledge, the relationship between epistemology and academic disciplines and community, the canon, the promise and threat of technology, and education’s contribution to democratic processes. Eva Brann has described much of the theorizing about liberal education as “flabby beyond bearing,” and she asserts that “liberal education has its concrete seat in institutional communities, and it is they, severally, who have to achieve a brisk, clear, persuasive language about themselves” (175). These authors, although they represent a variety of colleges and universities, constitute such a community, defined by high academic aspirations for students and a commitment to the connections between theory and educational practice, and among their diverse voices and subjects is a common drive to mediate between the claims of truths and the claims of commitments.

In “On Being a Partial Bloomer,” Jim Hill isolates the central theme of The Closing of the American Mind: “There are in each of us two fundamental needs, best expressed as polar opposites since they are often in conflict: the need to be rational versus the need to be passionately committed to something or other.” Hill observes that Bloom recognizes that, as “schools of thought,” these two impulses have given rise to an array of polarities: “detachment versus commitment, objectivity versus subjectivity, . . . individual rights versus the common good, liberal tolerance versus the sacred roots of the community” and so on. And he goes on to assert that Bloom attempts to mediate between a respect for “both the need to be rational and the need to belong” (22-23). Responding to Jim Hill, G. Hewett Joiner observes that Bloom’s adherence to Enlightenment rationality (as opposed to passionate commitment) is rather more dogmatic than Hill would have us believe (29). Nevertheless, the polarities that Hill identifies as emerging from the tension between these two “fundamental needs,” and Bloom’s perhaps debatable desire to find a resolution of these conflicts, can be seen as keys to the studies of teaching, learning, and theory in these pages of the Forum. The degree to which our knowledge is objective or contingent, the extent to which our ways of knowing carry values and have implications for our ability to sustain community, and the role of education in sustaining a democratic society are issues that underlie the ways in which we structure our classes and programs, imagine new ways to prepare our
students for their responsibilities as citizens and community members, and define our roles as educators.

It is important to note that members of NCHC and Forum contributors have made significant contributions to the national discussion of academic programs with theoretical underpinnings in the premise that knowledge is socially constructed and that learning takes place in knowledge communities. Specifically, Honors Semesters have been the occasion for the exploration of the theoretical issue of the social dimension of learning, and models for structuring classes and activities to exploit this connection. In a special issue of the Forum devoted to Honors Semesters, Bernice Braid, organizer and primary theoretician of Honors Semesters, describes their "underlying reflexivity"—students "come to see themselves, in some fashion, as another one of the texts-in-context that their program provokes them to examine" (15). Transported to locations where they confront their own preconceptions, students come to recognize the knowledge contexts from which they emerged and to which they contribute: "As Semesters participants confront themselves-as-viewers, and reread their own writing, in itself illustrative of just how movable a feast human interaction is, they inch toward seeing themselves as members of an interpretive community" (16). In the words of a Semesters participant, they undergo a "transformation from a group of scholars to a community of persons" (16).

From the perspective of theories of group development and models of experiential learning, Faith Gabelnick, coauthor Learning Communities: Creating Connections Among Students (1990), comes also to the conclusion that "a vibrant Honors Semester and any learning community honor those differences, those challenges, and help them to find a voice" (25). Yet the momentum of the Semesters, and the clear focus of Braid's analysis of the learning process for students who participate in them, is that this process of "decontextualizing and recontextualizing" in the end generates, within these small communities of learners, common meanings. In Braid's words, "Many eyes and ears sharing impressions can construct meaningful interpretations that are consensually acceptable" (17). In contrast to the "Blooming" polarities cited by Hill, Braid demonstrates that, through painstaking practice, examined subjectivities can lead to mutual understandings, integrating both experience and values.

In a passionate and sometimes recondite essay, On the Image and Essence of Honors: Student, Professor, Program, David Patterson focuses sharply on the definition of the individual student's learning, and seems when compared to Braid and others to occupy the opposite pole with respect to the definition of knowledge and learning. Defining education as "an embrace of the highest and dearest, not only in higher education but in life as well" (4), he clearly is an exemplar of the philosophical strain in liberal education. Inspired by Kierkegaard, Buber, and others, Patterson asserts that the essence of learning is, significantly, not simply the search for truth, but, in Kierkegaard's words, "the truth" (6). This quest for truth is relational: "The urgency that characterizes the honors student's learning process arises from a quest not only to understand something about the world but about oneself in relation to the world. The truth of the world and the truth of the soul are of a piece; deciding something about art, history, or physics, we decide something about ourselves" (5).

Like Braid, Patterson sees education as a process of self-recognition and
becoming, of attaining value through knowledge. However, the context here is transcendent, and the ultimate goal is unabashedly spiritual rather than social. Citing Buber's identification of education as a surrender to the "primal potential might" of the child, Patterson asserts, "As an embrace of this 'primal potential might,' education is tied to the very foundations of meaning in human life. Its purpose lies not in getting more out of life but in imparting more to life; its object is not to acquire knowledge for its own sake but to engender a life examined and intensified by the light of knowledge." Braid sees the process of the Honors Semester as an interaction of texts-in-progress, with increasingly subtle approximations of meaning embedded in community; for Patterson, the always yet-to-be-final process of defining the self in relation to knowledge points to an essential being that transcends the specifics of location and time. The courses and academic programs implied in these two perspectives are strikingly different. Braid assumes a group of students interacting with each other; Patterson a student and teacher in dialogue. But both bring subtlety to the dichotomy between openness and truth.

This dichotomy also shapes the arguments of the Forum authors who address the personal and social values which education serves. For example, William Daniel—invoking Alasdair McIntyre's description of the evolution of social virtues from social definition, through qualities that contribute to the good of a life, to incorporation within a social tradition—draws a connection between the structure of Honors Semesters and the virtues that they cultivate in participants. He observes that on college campuses and even in most honors programs where the creation of a community of scholars is a goal, "the primary orientation is on individual achievement in a competitive atmosphere. Thus the virtues that emerge are those based upon standards that emphasize comparative individual excellence within the peer group." But in Honors Semesters, "while individual talent is recognized by semester students, it is those shared experiences and tasks that provide definition and meaning to their efforts" (8). On the other hand, Ted Humphrey, in an essay entitled "Educating in and for Democracy," attempts more directly to mediate between the claims of the individual and the group in defining the goals of education. Indeed, he asserts that democracy is defined by a balance between "personal and collective completion." He argues that it is to our peril that in defining our values the metaphysical and moral are separated; on the contrary, values emerge through an interplay between the factual and conditional on the one hand, and the ideal on the other: "The concomitant goals of education must be diversity and harmony. Both are necessary conditions for being able to conduct and enjoy life. But they always exist only in dynamic tension. For diversity without harmony is cacophonous; and harmony without diversity is tuneless. If we fail to understand the necessary connection between each person's right to actualize her unique potential, and the foundation that social harmony provides for such pursuit, we will see diversity and harmony as conflicting" (11).

It is interesting, given the strong involvement of many honors faculty and programs in learning communities and collaborative learning models, that the Forum contributors who responded to the call for papers on "education and social equity" raise serious concerns about the values implicit in multiculturalism, a "philosophy" that ultimately places knowledge and meaning within the context of groups defined by circumstances of time and place. In their view, "multiculturalism" as it is popularly received is not sufficient to mediate between local identities and...
fundamental human values. David Patterson, again citing Martin Buber, asserts that multiculturalism is fundamentally anti-communal. He observes that social equity is merely a transitional goal, but it should not be confused with true freedom; that a political or cultural group falls short of a “transcendent center” that is by definition beyond the interest of any individual group. He summarizes, “The uniqueness of the group as a group, on the other hand, undermines the singularity of the individual. . . . Rather than place its accent on the yet-to-be of what I might become, the politically correct curriculum derives its value from what has already been established, from what is given beforehand: race, gender, ethnic origin” (“Politically Correct” 22). Similarly, Hugh Mercer Curtler, who carefully distinguishes between the fact of cultural pluralism and multiculturalism as a formulation of cultural and social values, argues that multiculturalism separates cultures and people. He further argues that education should seek human freedom, not the freedom of individual groups, and that this freedom is attained through a recognition of commonality: “We can survive our current crisis only by recalling what the academy can do that no other social institution can do, and that is to free young minds from the captivity of impulse, passion, preoccupation with self, and ideological myopia” (7-8). Certainly the latter is the goal of most programs in the liberal arts; the controversy, however, revolves around the group as the locus for constructed meanings as opposed to the individual. As John Wilson points out in his Forum essay, “Loaded Canons: The Battle for Culture in the University,” the debate about multiculturalism is not about the “furniture of the mind” but about “the discipline of the mind”; it is a debate about truth versus openness and relativism (13). But he goes on to argue for a pluralism in curriculum that does not lose sight of the higher values of education: “In an age when many new students in college receive an almost exclusively technical or pre-professional education, multiculturalists and traditionalists may have much closer ties than they believe. Between them, we must find the future of culture, or face the threat of universities devoted to empty specialization and vocational training with no culture at all” (16).

In addition to the essays that address a variety of models of learning, and the values that are implicit in educational models, yet another group of Forum essays describe in concrete terms the ways in which an academic program can prepare students for citizenship. And, like the more theoretical essays that I have discussed, these articles strive for a complex understanding of the tension between the claims of the individual and the group. Responding to recent discussions of the “eclipse of community” and the roots for this eclipse in the objectivism and individualism of American education, Phyllis Betts and W. Richard Janikowski argue that, while they accept that “a strong concept of community depends on the legitimacy of subjective epistemology,” students must also be empowered to effect social change, and they are empowered by “mastery” of social issues, “agency”—knowledge of how change has been effected, and “vision”—an ethics based in “sustained discourse about the common good.” Betts and Janikowski, making a distinction between objectivism and “an objective state of mind,” conclude that “subjective understanding simply is not enough in the absence of more objective problem solving skills” (20). While these authors locate the attainment of genuine commitment in knowledge, Mary Stanley argues that it is only in a “living” setting that students can derive values from knowledge and experience. In an essay on a project at Syracuse University (Community Service in an Educational context), she observes that students

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36 JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL
themselves “appear to have neither a committed belief in a priori truths nor in the extreme relativism of a full scale sociology of knowledge.” She asks, rhetorically, “What happens, then, if students are invited to return to the . . . living communities within which problems, hopes, and material nature invite or goad us to think?” She reports that, when students participate in seminars that immerse them in both the perspective of academic disciplines and the reality of decision-making in the local community, they learn not that theory and practice are separate, but that these are mutually influential in a dynamic process through time: “theory and practice are everywhere in a tangle; philosophy and literary theory invite us to decenter the narrator in all our stories and despair of any grand narrative to guide those who wish for a more universalistic text” (27). Stanley, like Braid, finds a center in participation in community itself.

These authors offer a map for the future of liberal education. In fact, they reflect two of the most compelling current prescriptions for higher education. One is posed by Bruce Kimball, who suggests that the pragmatic philosophical tradition provides a response to the widespread dissatisfaction with an assumed duality between fact and value, theory and practice (88). Specifically, he suggests that “certain themes of pragmatism are now resurgent: fallibilism or anti-essentialism; the equivalent status, if not identity, of value claims and knowledge claims; the view that inquiry is a continuing, self-corrective process common to all persons; and the idea that belief is dependent on the intersubjective warrant provided by a community of inquirers” (56). The other project for liberal education is advanced by Martha Nussbaum, who in Cultivating Humanity: A Classical Defense of Reform in Liberal Education argues that “Reason, in short, constructs the personality in a very deep way, shaping its motivations as well as its logic” (29). In this regard, it is important to observe that she offers in this important book both an elaboration of cosmopolitanism as the cultivation of an ability to recognize and identify with universal human traits and conditions, and a description of the incremental process of questioning and discovery in numerous college classes—what W.B. Carnochan, writing contra pragmatism in education, describes as “reason’s narrower capacity to make midcourse adjustments” (182). Understood with precision and implemented with care, both of these prescriptions are models that resist systematization: the cultivation of the empathic yet skeptical mind occurs through iterative processes that do not grasp prematurely at universals.

Recently, a third group of commentators, focused primarily on academic practice and clearly in the pragmatic tradition as described by Kimball, have synthesized what has seemed to be a ferment of innovation in higher education in recent decades. Robert Barr and John Tagg’s vision of the “learning paradigm,” Robert Angelo’s description and means of effecting a “campus as learning community,” and Dale Coye’s gathering of the late Ernest Boyer’s thoughts about human commonalities and the principles of a “strong campus community” almost self-evidently are contributions to the same discourse that has occupied the pages of the Forum in recent years. However, each of these essays goes further to recommend sweeping change in the structure and goals of education. Barr and Tagg advocate a restructuring of institutions of higher learning around student learning rather than teaching, with success measured not by academic credits and other functions of time, but by student success as ascertained by outcomes assessment. Barr and Tagg assume that classrooms structured around group efforts would be
essential in this new order (16-17). Angelo underscores the crucial role of learning communities in this "paradigm shift," where competition would be de-emphasized, inquiry would be emphasized, and the well being of all and not the accomplishments of individuals would be the goal. He, too, sees assessment as a significant "lever" to move learning to the center of our work (3, 5). Coye, who addresses the need for a more focused liberal arts curriculum, connections between the classroom and the world beyond it, and campus community, summarizes, "A New American College. . . must be a place where responsibility and character are taken seriously. From freshman orientation to commencement day, the institution consciously strives to connect its members by stressing the importance of shared values" (25).

From the perspective of the Forum essays on questions of community and individuality, and on objectivism and its impact on social values, I find the almost automatic prescription of learning communities embedded in the academic—at times almost technocratic—schemes presented by Barr and Tagg, and Angelo, to be unsettling. Collaborative learning seems to have become a device, rather than a way of proceeding that raises in the classroom itself significant issues about how and what we know. While Forum authors, and Kimball and Nussbaum, offer perspectives on learning that recognize ambiguities and competing models, Barr and Tagg and Angelo are confident in their definitions of learning. For example, Barr and Tagg rely on Howard Gardner's formulation: "a sufficient grasp of concepts, principles, or skills so that one can bring them to bear on new problems and situations, deciding in which ways one' present competencies can suffice and in which ways one may require new skills or knowledge" (22). Several of the authors I have discussed would say that this begs a number of questions. Angelo, too, seems almost complacent in his acceptance of "research in psychology, cognitive science, and education" (5). Without rejecting what is to be learned from educational research, I believe that this summary is at the least narrow in its disciplinary range and probably not tentative enough in light of the serious and difficult questions that relate to the definition and goals of learning.

It is perhaps "corny" to conclude this article with reference to Dudley Wynn's "Gerontian Speaks," the first essay in the first Forum issue that I edited. Wynn, at least a generation older than the rest of the Forum contributors with whom I worked, rejected the systematizing or even rationalizing of educational practice. In 1989, I considered him a genuine but idiosyncratic voice, in that he did not value the careful planning and reporting that was the stock in trade of the rising generation of faculty and academic administrators. However, when I consider the terms of these more recent discussions of higher education and the way in which they both elaborate on the academic models and yet deny the questioning spirit of most of the essays that I have summarized, I am convinced of the value of what Wynn said. In an Emersonian vein, Wynn warns, "What we in the honors business have to watch out for is that we will be wooed as pillars of the system, and our function as critical evaluators of that system and of all values in general will be played down and even forgotten" (7). It seems to me that the questions that Forum authors and others have raised about community, knowledge, and education have become in the larger forum formulaic, bereft of their recognition of values maintained in a bewildering process of learning and understanding. Nevertheless, I remain confident of the subversive aspect of those who continue to think and write precisely and
passionately about education, and I believe that they can continue to question and bring new perspective to what seem to be received opinions about our work. In Dudley Wynn’s words: “Studies, Programs, and systems will not and cannot go very far in easing our sense of the loss of community. Studies, programs, and systems will never provide the solutions to the paradoxical inner anxieties and uncertainties in our era of illusory material comfort and, for a relatively few at the top, increasing affluence” (5).

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Introduction to Section Two: Styles of Learning

Anne Ponder
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The National Collegiate Honors Council has redesigned its national conference periodically, and one of those metamorphoses in the 1980s introduced sessions with "master teachers". The session I remember now, years later, was led by Catherine Cater. This "master teacher" modeled most of what the rest of us have spent our careers emulating. And so, it is fitting that this central section of this volume takes up key topics in teaching and learning. Gabelnick, Braid, and Levy were not available to attend the October, 1999 panel in Orlando; their work appears here for the first time.

An expert in learning communities and currently leading a learning community, Pacific University, as president, Faith Gabelnick exhorts us to move learning communities from the periphery and make them instead a primary design of academic culture and community. She quotes Jaworski, Wheatley, Vaill, and Senge in her persuasive essay, beginning and concluding with Senge, "Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human."

Bernice Braid's essay explains that even very fine students are, "adept at separating out, but impoverished when it comes to pulling together." Then, using the City-as-Text model, she offers some exceedingly useful suggestions about how we should respond pedagogically.

Individual research with students, long a primary instructional mode in the sciences, can be achieved in the humanities a well, Carol Kolmerten explains. She outlines her own progress from solitary scholar to a scholar whose understanding is credited to collaboration with another scholar, a student. Carol and her colleague discover that in the Beecher/Tilton scandal of 1874-75, neither the prevailing, inherited understanding of what happened or the assumption Carol began her work with would suffice.

The erudite Jim Herbert is at work on a larger project on this subject which we eagerly anticipate. Resting on the work of the philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, Jim recommends that there should be implicit rules of procedure in optimal circumstances for teaching and learning which he calls, "discourse' proper". "Discourse in this sense—it can be plausibly be argued—is the very structure for human knowledge and morality."

Using the world as her classroom, Diane Levy writes reflectively, as she would have her students write after travel abroad. She reviews the learning inherent in the movement into and back from the strange and the familiar in a thoroughly engaging and informative way.
Leading and Learning in Community

Faith Gabelnick
Pacific University

Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human. Through learning we recreate ourselves. Through learning we become able to do something we never were able to do. Through learning we reperceive the world and our relationship to it. Through learning we extend our capacity to create, to be part of the generative process of life.

...Senge, The Fifth Disciple

When faculty and administrators confront challenges of student persistence rates, cross-disciplinary learning, faculty roles and rewards, student needs for professional and civic education, they often look for “solutions” through curricular innovation. Learning communities, although no longer a “new” response, continue to be initiated as a kind of “silver bullet” because they seem to offer a complex approach that can stimulate or promote a variety of transformations on a campus. Still, learning communities continue to occupy privileged space at colleges and universities. While programs such as Freshman Interest Groups (FIGS) find wide residence and application at large state universities, other types of learning communities that involve linking or clustering courses or that provide a full immersion experience for a student for a quarter, semester or even an entire academic year are relatively few in number on any particular campus. They often reside in special programs or focus on special student populations. In some ways, therefore, the acknowledged versatility of learning communities in a wider institutional setting is compromised by their particular location on that campus. Paradoxically, as the great popularity of the term “learning community” increases, the real sustainability of vigorously constructed learning communities is being challenged. Some faculty and administrators, rushing to get on board a late 20th century initiative, almost turned the idea into a fad, making the concept and its implementation so general, that it ceased to have much potency.

Who takes the lead in establishing and sustaining learning communities is still an issue for discussion nationally. Administrators and faculty, as campus groups, are attracted in almost equal proportions to learning communities, and therefore learning communities continue to enjoy surprising support among both groups (although not necessarily both groups at the same time on the same campus). Sustaining learning communities, however, usually falls to the administration or faculty administrative committees, such as the curriculum committee. Often, learning communities are tied to personalities on campus, and when other priorities or opportunities beckon, learning communities may not claim the type of support that they once had on that campus. Leadership and leadership’s understanding of the role of learning communities as a subsystem in organizational transformation
efforts thus become central factors in establishing and sustaining learning communities.

In this paper, we shall examine factors that influence the change process and qualities of learning that contribute to transformations on our campuses. We live in a dynamic world of change, but our ambivalence toward this world can serve as an impediment to the very programs or agenda we claim we want to accomplish. In thinking about this phenomenon of change, we offer these ideas about learning and leading in community and link them to the variable successes of learning communities, an acknowledged vehicle for change on our campuses.

Creating and Sustaining Change: the Challenge for Leaders

Joseph Jaworski, in his book, *Synchronicity*, explores the many themes, patterns and synchronicous events that led him to leave his profession as a trial lawyer and pursue a path as a creator and enabler of change. Founder of the American Leadership Forum, Jaworski and others designed a program which brought together a group of young and/or emerging leaders and built them into a community of learners. Using experiential learning, didactic content, professional development seminars, and collaborative projects, Jaworski and his associates purposefully structured a learning experience and environment that fostered an enduring learning community. Those who have completed the ALF program stay in contact with each other, and the “reunions” are opportunities for these lifelong learners to continue to share and learn from each other and to keep track of how they are making a difference in the world.

Jaworski never mentions the phrase “learning community,” but he writes about three important elements for creating change in organizations that are directly applicable to creating and sustaining innovations such as learning communities. He notes that three important shifts need to occur in order for us and our organization to change. These shifts are 1) how we see the world; 2) how we understand relationships, and 3) how we make commitments.

How we see the world

We have been taught to look for predictabilities in our world. We like to label or name the elements of our world, and we like certainty. At the same time, campuses are filled with conversations about future possibilities: how and where we will teach; who will comprise the faculty; what the university or college of the future will look like—structurally and physically; where it will be located; how our students will become engaged in a broader society. Listening or observing these dialogues we conclude that colleges and universities at one level are all about change and development and at another level are conservators of century-old practices and attitudes about the nature and content of knowledge. On the one hand, the traditional academic organizational and governance structures, such as majors or other curricular programs, tenure or even the architecture of universities carry a sense of authority and permanence akin to religious belief. Attempting to tamper with these structural “certainties” is sometimes akin to heresy and carries with it the same types of “deadly” consequences for the leader who introduces change. Yet on the other hand, academics will transform general education or create new
interdisciplinary programs or link community service with academic courses or will invent extraordinary ways of teaching and learning using technology as a tool; they will vigorously pride themselves on their creativity in the classroom, in the research labs, in the administrative halls—so long as the perceived basic philosophy and core values of the institution remain intact. Therefore, whenever an innovation, such as learning communities, is introduced to a campus, the “buzz” is usually about how much of a change is likely to be introduced. Ironically, one of the most common ways to accomplish change is to claim that the innovation is not an innovation; that it is being accomplished at other institutions and that this innovation will have little or no impact on university resources.

Underneath the discussions about change or the processes that resist change is a deeply held common belief that the educational system as we know it is fundamentally Valuable and Good and that those who work at these institutions serve a Higher Purpose whose general task is to Make the World a Better Place. Discussions of outcomes assessment, distance learning, anytime/anywhere education often perturb academic constituencies because they appear to challenge this bedrock set of beliefs in the fundamental validity of the academic enterprise—in other words, how we see the world. How can you demonstrate that what you are doing is producing the results or outcomes you claim, asks the educated public? This question unsettles academics because responding to it leads us to examine open-mindedly why we do what we do. The fear is that we may discover that some of what we do has little educational impact and ought to be stopped and that some of what we do does not make a great change in the lives of students but perhaps ought to continue in a different way. While we want to believe that most of what we do has high correlates for producing the type of educated citizen we claim we want to graduate, the reality is that we are not often prepared organizationally or psychologically to validate that belief. Can there be transformational change without challenging some of these dearly held basic assumptions of academia? Probably not. Can there be transformational change without some type of “cost” to the institution? Probably not. Can leaders inaugurate change without also transforming the culture in which the change is to occur? Probably not.

Change at institutions is often driven by external factors. Because students are changing and coming to our institutions with different life experiences, we begin to adapt. As students came with superior technology skills, we moved toward using technology in our learning environments. As students came with different attributes, especially age, we began to change the times and types of class offerings to accommodate adult learners. As the market place has become the most competitive for higher education institutions, we have learned business strategies and fund-raising skills. Even as we have tried to hold on to our traditional beliefs and ways of learning, the world has become more plastic, less predictable, more open-ended. And so, as we move into a more contingent, mediated yet unpredictable century, the world of learning and leading is changing. Questions and questioning, learning about learning, become a way of being. One inquiry opens up a set of new questions to think about, and possibility becomes a partner to creativity. On many campuses, change is occurring and resistance to change is occurring. Many predictions about the end of education as we know it abound in journals and newspapers as if once we make that first step to change, we leave everything else behind. Making this first shift in how we see the world is experienced by many as akin to walking off the edge
of a cliff. It is the most extraordinary first step in any type of transformation, because the perceived world truly changes and once that happens, many possibilities appear that were never before considered.

Not surprisingly, people defend against looking at the world in different ways because they fear that they will lose a series of comforting and long-lived assumptions about how they are to live and thrive in that world. For example, if one questions the nature of the academic major, the catastrophic fear is that “someone” might eliminate the concept of the major. After eliminating the major, we would wonder about what would become of the thousands of faculty who “practice” in these majors and the hundreds of graduate programs who prepare them for this practice? A vista of unemployed academics would loom. Even framing hypothetical questions publicly can flood a campus with fear and uncertainty. And so, while there are endless discussions on campus about revisions of majors and even elimination of some majors that are not drawing students, there is very little discussion on most campuses about whether or not we should be organized around majors. Similarly, while faculty spend years working to achieve tenure and then serving on tenure review committees, for the next group of aspirants, there is relatively little open discussion about the contemporary purpose of tenure and how the professorate will and must change. Discussions about change are framed in the least disruptive ways, and when faculty votes occur, most times, tradition roars back into the room. This is the way that the academic industry preserves the status quo.

Suppose we envision a world that is more open, dynamic and interconnected. Suppose we see our universities, not as a series of small countries or territories but as a landscape of learning communities, interacting and leveraging resources and sharing a set of common values about learning, civic engagement and professional development. We might have a different budgeting process, a different way to understand faculty achievement, a different way to learn with and from our students, a different way to structure our campuses. Might we not frame this shift in terms of possibilities for enrichment and not as scenarios for loss and desperation?

Ultimately, how we see the world in the 21st century will have a major impact on how we teach and lead in our communities of learning. The continuing tension in higher education and American society between individuality and community lies at the heart of the matter. Future educational paradigms will be based fundamentally on openness and the ability to learn and to use that learning in a variety of work and living environments. If we hold on to a particular way of seeing the world, we keep ourselves locked inside our fears of change and miss the tremendous opportunities for generativity that lie ahead.

How we understand relationships

Margaret Wheatley’s book A Simpler Way portrays a world that is interconnected in every way possible. Her photos show the repeated patterns in nature, and her text reveals a natural world that is a dynamic, interconnected system. When one reads this book, one wonders how it could be any other way. The connections, at all levels of our consciousness, abound, and we are suffused with a sense of wholeness and well-being. Why then do we spend so much of our lives breaking down these connections and setting up barriers to communication?
In academia, we chop up our knowledge base into schools, colleges, divisions, departments; we provide hierarchical titles and roles for faculty and staff; we distribute funds on seniority bases, or criteria of sufficiency. We give awards and endlessly find ways to separate people into “the Good, the Not-So-Good, and the Stars.” Classes that actually foster the connection between learning and living are few. Students sit in classes as anonymous participants. Faculty often do not know each other outside of their departments or divisions. Everywhere there is separation not connection. Learning communities purposefully attempt to connect some of these single courses through thematic linking of traditional studies. They often break down the barriers of 50 minute classes to engage students and faculty across a broader time span. They challenge the academic structure by encouraging learning to span several disciplines; and they can build a different way of learning together that values collaboration not competition to accomplish assignments. Leading and learning in community mirrors the natural world that Meg Wheatley describes because the world is perceived as both chaotic and orderly, variously patterned and endlessly changing, alive to possibilities and honoring connections.

Martin Buber’s classic text, I and Thou, speaks to the importance of developing mutuality as a way of enhancing our humanity. If we experience the world as fundamentally connected, then our views about relationships reflect this unity and connection. Our understanding of relationships then moves away from power and competition towards collaboration and vulnerability. As learners, we begin to understand that we do not/cannot learn alone. If we are in the role of teacher, we begin to see that we can work with our students in ways other than as an authority figure. We begin to act like a mentor and coach; we facilitate our students’ learning; we begin to speak to our own areas of ignorance and then we begin to see ourselves as learners, too. If we are in the role of students, we begin to understand that knowledge is not finite, that information can be found in many places, and that learning with other students and other faculty does not have to produce a grade. Relationship becomes the basis for learning, and we understand that unless we establish strong relationships, our learning will be compromised.

An important part of this shift in the nature of relationship involves a capacity to experience, tolerate and speak to disappointment and loss. The end of an academic term can be experienced as the possible end of a special set of relationships, not simply the end of a class where a grade is given. If we do not provide a space for reflection and grieving, we thereby try to protect ourselves from acknowledging loss in order to maintain a more distanced, utilitarian view of our education. Grieving and reflection on one’s experiences thus become an important element of growing and changing and therefore need to be a part of a learning community’s culture. It is our flight from death, our wish not to grieve that fundamentally blocks change. Change must involve loss. We ask our students to change every semester, every class. We ask them to learn in different ways regardless of their preferred learning style and yet subtly, pervasively, we try to keep our world predictable and orderly.

Truly confronting how we develop and sustain relationships is very difficult because of the natural tendency to avoid the pain of loss, and this is one of the fundamental reasons why institutional change is so difficult. Human beings are changing every moment; their lives grow and contract; possibilities at 20 years old may be past accomplishments or missed opportunities at age 50. Students are the
main drivers of change: they come to an educational institution in order to change. Faculty, especially tenured faculty, have made a commitment to their institution and to a set of relationships that form the academic community. Administrators, especially senior administrators, are often viewed as transients by the other two constituents. Nationally we know that administrators are more mobile than faculty—and probably students, who, by and large, tend to attend schools within a 500 mile radius of their homes. Change implies mobility, and when the most mobile group tries to implement change, the campus can react to these initiatives as an administrative fad and dismiss them. Even though many learning communities are started by faculty, the institutional commitment is interpersonal and relational. When the supportive administrator leaves, the learning community is at risk. Taking up innovations thus implies their loss unless the assurances for institutionalization are great. A campus community comprised of changing human beings embraces any change very carefully because the university must continue beyond these innovations and the custodians of the institution, the faculty, feel a deep obligation and responsibility to preserve their idea and ideal of an traditional community of scholars.

Once we make a shift in how we see the world, however, some of these resistances also shift. Now we see that the world is contingent upon the relationships in that world, and if we work differently with our colleagues and students, our expectations of the kinds of relationships that are possible also change. This is clearly the case with learning communities: students and faculty report deeper learning, more complex relationships when the roles, the relationships, shift. Because the learning is contingent and connected, the possibilities for teaching also enlarge; the opportunities to work together expand; the assignments are more imaginative; and the baselines for expectations for teaching and for learning rise. Those who become members of a learning community are able to establish deeper relationships with one another and approach learning from multiples perspectives. If a shift truly occurs, if faculty and students complexly understand what learning in community means, then they will use that knowledge to institute other changes and they will change themselves.

**How we make commitments**

In these dynamic times, the idea and experience of commitment is a vital but fleeting concept. We can remember a time barely 10 years ago when workers or potential workers (college students, for example) might have had the expectation that their careers would be fairly stable and that the employer would continue to have an investment in the stability of its work force. In the 21st century, this assumption of continuance is disappearing. Neither the employer nor the employee bring to work an expectation of loyalty or commitment to an organization. Rather the commitment has been transferred to the individual and the particular knowledge base any individual can bring to a particular problem at a particular moment. This condition is gradually impacting higher education as students and employers value less and less a degree from any one institution. In a buyer’s market, colleges and universities become one of many sources of education and training. And in a buyer’s market, what is being sold is knowledge. The knowledge is being packaged in a variety of forms and this market segmentation is exploding. Technology makes it
possible for students all over the world to construct their own educational plans and to use a variety of educational providers to fulfill those plans. Institutions of higher education are simply one resource to use in building one’s knowledge base. Even the concept and need for a college degree is challenged.

One could ask why learning communities continue to flourish when “community” as we have experienced it is already being transformed. What does commitment look like in a transformational environment, and what can endure when the assumptions about how we are leading our lives is shifting so dramatically?

As has been noted, when learning communities are established, they are often seen as ways to address certain problems, as “silver bullets” aimed at general university concerns such as retention, cross-disciplinary studies or even faculty development and invigoration. Their creation is often established at the edge of the curriculum, not embedded in the heart of the academic enterprise, and their number, except for FIG’s or formal living/learning communities like residential colleges at state universities, is small. In other words, the institutional commitment is conditional and local and usually connected to a particular group of faculty or administrators. Students join one or possibly two learning communities while attending a particular institution.

Thinking about a shift in how we make commitments means we must be purposeful in thinking about why we want to create and sustain learning communities. A commitment to establishing learning communities must reside in a whole systems view of an institution and a holistic plan for what learning communities represent. For example, establishing a learning community does not often mean that the university is committed to cross-disciplinary education although it ought to mean just that. It means, at minimal, that the university is providing a space for some cross-disciplinary education to occur for some students and faculty. Placing learning communities among special populations or confining their existence to special programs does not signify that the institution changes its other programs in relation to these populations, although it ought to mean that. Because true institutional change is not embedded in the creation of learning communities, learning communities like many other so-called innovations, last for a period of time and then yield to the next iteration of campus change. Areas of campus such as the registrar’s office, the admissions office, the alumni office have to think about their roles in a different way if learning communities are to flourish. Curriculum committees, tenure and promotion committees, hiring committees have to rethink the types of individuals who can work in a learning community environment. Enduring change is not cosmetic; it is systemic; and leading such change requires patience and a view of an institution as a complex, interrelated entity.

When learning communities are created out of a shift in how we see the world and how we establish relationships, then institutional commitment is necessary, not conditional. Also, the work within the learning communities shifts from being a kind of experiment or temporary innovation to being a vigorous engagement with important curricular and value-based assumptions. Learning communities are then not seen as vehicles for solving particular problems but as ways to foster constructivist thinking, collaborative engagement, team work and a habit of connected relatedness. In an environment of commitment, trust flourishes and connection to one another and perhaps to the institution deepens. When people rely
on one another, they work in community. They can argue and test out new ideas; they can validate evidence; and they can move into uncertain territory. The flow of meaning that can be created through learning communities links to other aspects of the curriculum and to others in the community, on campus and off campus.

Learning communities that are created out of an institutional commitment to learning then have meaning for many. Opportunities to reflect on discoveries and experiences are not contained within the walls of the learning community but find voice and influence among those not formally engaged in the learning community. Those discoveries become linked to the institutional plans and elaborated in other examples of shifts in how one sees the world, how one establishes and continues relationships and how one makes and continues commitments. When the experience and dynamism of learning communities are encapsulated, the institution loses an extraordinary opportunity to expand the learning for others.

The challenge for leaders, those who enable learning communities to exist and those who teach and learn in learning communities, is to urge and maintain a dynamic whole systems perspective. This will demand a rapidly cascading change in how we see the world. Leaders do not always bring this point of view because they do not necessarily see themselves as part of a learning community in a very broad sense. Leaders live in a world that asks for concrete solutions to enormously complex problems and their focus, understandably, is to drive towards addressing those problems. Shifting that more directed, goal-driven stance to a more open, process-oriented, flexible and inclusive posture is difficult, but is exactly the challenge posed by teaching and learning in a learning community. The kinds of transformational learning that learning communities can foster replicates in microcosm the macrocosmic learning and leading that also must occur in order to sustain, in a deep way, the learning community experience.

Learning as a way of being

When we consider the dramatic changes in the students who are studying at colleges and universities and the pressure those institutions feel to address the needs of these "customers," the challenge to higher education seems enormous and even depressing. Yet futurists like Peter Schwartz and Peter Leyden, writing recently in Wired magazine note that the advent of the Information Age can been as an enormous positive opportunity for learning and for our society as a whole. They write: "We are watching the beginnings of a global economic boom on a scale never experienced before. We have entered a period of sustained growth that could eventually double that world's economy every dozen years and bring increasing prosperity for—quite literally—billions of people on the planet. . . . these two mega-trends—fundamental technological change and a new ethos of openness—will transform our world into the beginnings of a global civilization, a new civilization of civilizations, that will blossom through the coming century." ("The Long Boom," p. 116).

What they and other futurists predict is that a shift in how we see the world, moving from an expectation of predictability and formality to an engagement with possibility and a continuous construction and re-construction of our world and its opportunities will allow us to dream and play, learn and work, in ways we cannot yet have imagined. This "letting go," however, is subtle and scary, and yet it is
precisely what we try to effect in many of our learning communities.

Peter Vaill’s recent book, Learning as a Way of Being, speaks to this shift in how we must navigate. In his previous work, he noted that leaders and learners are now operating continuously in a world of “permanent white water.” What this means is that we cannot expect that once we manage one crisis or one period of turbulence, we can expect peaceful times. In fact, what is expected is that our world will be and is constructed of a series of turbulences and that these turbulences are the norm. Thus, when we exhort faculty and students to learn about critical thinking and complex decision-making and to develop better verbal and written competencies, we are seeing that these skills will be needed to work in a more plastic, less predictable environment.

Vaill sees this new world as a wonderful opportunity for transforming the ways we learn. Like others we have noted, he speaks to the fact that learning must be connected to how one understands oneself in one’s work role and in one’s private life. We are not isolated, separate entities, and in fact, our ways of living are becoming intricately connected with our ways of working. How we understand the world and how we approach learning are inextricably connected to who we are internally. Thus his latest book, Learning as a Way of Being, systemically compares more traditional, academic learning approaches to a more expanded, experientially based stance. This stance speaks directly to the ways learning communities can be constructed in order for them to endure and contribute to institutional transformation.

Each of the types of learning listed below actively engages and empowers the learner. When one engages in these types of learning, one does not rely on the teacher but rather creates a partnership with a more experienced learner. This shift from a teaching to a learning paradigm means that students and their teachers each have much at stake in the learning enterprise. They must work in the present to explore, to connect their minds with their bodies, to assess critically the outcomes of their discourse and their experimentation. When one engages in these types of active learning, the traditional accoutrements of faculty life begin to fall away. If learners are self-directed, then what is the role of grading, we might ask. If we connect explicitly our feelings with learning, then we become more vulnerable and thus more able to admit our mistakes. Learning truly becomes an active noun because it involves exploration, discovery, wrong turns, and stunning mistakes.

Learning communities use the types of learning listed below:

- **Self-directed learning**
  - Non-prescribed learning: no road maps; invention, integrated with one’s values, skills, life experience

- **Creative learning**
  - Inventive learning: divergent thinking, exploration, discovery

- **Expressive learning**
  - Learning in the here-and now: connecting feelings with discovery and expressing it in the external world.

- **Feeling learning**
  - Vulnerable learning: making mistakes, trying out, acknowledging limits of competence
On-Line learning
De-institutionalized learning: on-the-job learning

Continual learning
Lifelong learning: continuation of learning themes; feeling like a beginner again and again, testing oneself and one's knowledge base.

Reflexive learning
Learning about learning: paying attention to the learning process; folding back reflections into lifelong learning themes.

When we link explicitly learning and living, the shifts in perspective become apparent and almost commonplace. The role of the learner in a learning community is taken up by the student and the faculty and the internal and external themes of their relationships, their life long experiences, develop into what Senge calls a "Purpose Story." How each learning community unravels and learns its story then becomes a launching point for re-integration into the larger system—the college and the community. Vigorous learning communities contain many stories: students speak to the joy of cross-disciplinary study, to the freedom of dialogue among themselves and their teachers; the faculty tell of being rejuvenated, of working with their colleagues in a new, more meaningful way. Telling these stories becomes an active way of assessing the success of the learning communities and, at the same time, discovering new ways of understanding how people are learning. Telling the stories shows that we are a healthy organization; that we are on a journey which is both general and specific, purposeful and theoretical. Stories reveal how we see the world, how we understand relationships, how we make commitments. They form the core of institutional identity—and these stories are changing...away from the heroic teacher who is embedded with the wisdom of the ages toward a more democratic, participatory community.

Senge writes: "Real learning gets to the heart of what it means to be human." When learning communities engage in "real learning," they involve human beings in a deep way in the process of living. Thus learning communities are alive, dynamic arenas to pursue one's being. Leaders, whether they be administrators, faculty or even students, cannot create a learning community out of context and cannot keep it away from the changing context after it has been established. When we lead and learn in community, we discover our roles over time; we purposefully commit to shared values and goals; and we acknowledge a diversity of viewpoints, perspectives and backgrounds. When people choose to become members of a learning community—in all their various roles—they need to make a commitment to examine and reexamine what membership in this community entails. Living in a world of permanent white water, in a world where the definitions of what it means to learn are changing, those who claim to undertake change must examine how that change affects every aspect of the system in which they work. Far from heading over a cliff, this type of work brings life to an organization and connects it with the enduring spirit of living and learning in community.
Works Cited


The 1990 publication of Ernest Boyer's Scholarship Reconsidered was a benchmark occasion. Almost immediately the academy endorsed his document's usefulness as a framework within which to examine, maybe rethink, practices of both institutions and individuals which appeared to reflect a riven enterprise. Boyer's perception that exclusive emphasis on "scholarship" for status and rewards in American colleges was, as the term remained narrowly defined, incompatible with the demands of proliferation and access, and it struck a chord.

His way of framing discourse about scholarship, his suggestion that a broadening and redefinition of the term "scholarship" might serve to help institutions cope with practical and fiscal reality, was the focus of general interest. Both in professional conferences and on campus, his framing resonated with the felt contradictions between the rhetoric and reality of access already at the heart of a growing debate about undergraduate education. His proposal was that we accept varieties of scholarship—"of discovery, integration, application, and teaching"—as equally important, and to do so as a means of reconstituting a structure intended now to reflect "the full range of academic and civic mandates" of the professoriate (Boyer, p. 16). Doing this, he argued, would provide a matrix within which issues of quality and assessment of performance could be handled more appropriately for this new era in academic history.

The faculty debate I witnessed took up eagerly his four categories of research. Finding ways to 'appreciate' work undertaken in laboratory, library, classroom, committee, community organization, and the world of work had instant appeal. Indeed, Boyer's categories appeared to offer a foundation for discourse among vocational and liberal arts faculties that promised genuine recognition of professional productivity, but also of underlying values and commitments that those of us in liberal arts took to be our domain, and that we presumed were wanting in the bedrock of colleagues in disciplines outside arts and sciences—values and commitments that could be embraced by an entire campus joined in a single effort to organize mutually acceptable activities, and assessment of them.

At the same time, it seemed essential to think through how these four classes of scholarship, if indeed we endorsed them as equally significant, might play out in an actual course. Linking the discussion of rewards to that of pedagogy was, however, not something many faculty seemed prepared to undertake. It was evident from the outset that imagining how the experiences of a) a faculty member and b) a student might represent, in any given syllabus/course, the activities inherent in all
four categories was an elusive challenge, not to say experientially remote conception.

As is often the case with cultural sea-change, others had also been thinking aloud about rifts in the academy. Parker Palmer was one whose insights resounded perhaps surprisingly, given his emphasis on communal engagement. But he sounded a note heard for years afterwards with his address at the annual meeting of the American Association for Higher Education, in 1988, “Community, Conflict, and Ways of Knowing.” This address, published in the association’s Change magazine the same year, reached many in higher education. He argued for “new epistemologies” that “juxtapose analysis with synthesis, integration, and the creative act” (Palmer, p.24). The need for new epistemologies, for Palmer, derives from his conclusion that the academy has produced in our students a “trained schizophrenia.”

They have always been taught about a world out there somewhere apart from them, divorced from their personal lives; they never have been invited to intersect their autobiographies with the life story of the world. (Palmer, p.22)

Palmer’s reasoning is that to the extent we train our students to objectify, to presume a gulf between themselves and the world they examine, to that extent they will not “intersect their biographies with the life story of the world.” Hence he urges the development of ways of knowing that connect knower to known. The “juxtaposition of analysis with synthesis, integration, and the creative act” is the positing of an intellectual objective: if students can be brought into a learning environment where these four kinds of thinking are juxtaposed, they will be building a foundation on which an entire edifice—a lifetime of connected knowing—might be built.

Palmer’s phrase “communal conflict” characterizes, then, the relational structure and the way individuals in it can deal with one another, with information, with the search for knowledge and insights. It jibes well with Boyer’s four categories of scholarship, if one can imagine all four as components of a single mind’s on-going activity.

I propose that a course, or cluster of courses and experiences, be considered a single whole for the student, in parallel to the lifetime whole of the professor. That is, I propose that we find ways of bringing the reconsidered scholarship of which Boyer speaks to the drawing board, and begin to imagine moments in a student’s life when all four categories of scholarship-as-reconsidered occur in the same time frame, not strung out seriatim. I propose we implement the design project by incorporating, to foster the desired outcome of this project, the juxtaposition of analysis, synthesis, integration and the creative act.

The National Collegiate Honors Council has, in its organizational history, engaged in one experiment that aims for these goals: its Honors Semesters. These are site-specific, experiential opportunities that draw students away from the familiar to work and live as a residential group in an unfamiliar setting. All courses and activities revolve around some theme especially rich to explore in this site.

From the moment of their arrival, participating students are thrust together in a problem-setting mode. Explorations of the local environment, participant-observer field inquiry, research projects undertaken here that could not be done as well
elsewhere, processed through sustained self-reflective discourse and the pressure-cooker living community, all drive the contextualization of student learning. Consistent focus on self-reflection—on questions of how the viewer sees, and why, and to what end—generate a laboratory for perceptions about self-in-context. Students manage, in one short term, to pull together the civic dimension explicit in the larger environment and implicit in their small living unit within a campus enclave, and to bring to their individual directed research topics not only insights gained from reading/lectures/interviews—but from their refined sense of how these many socio-political spheres encroach upon their topic, and themselves—and vice versa. The structure and scope of their investigation of experience is such that juxtapositions are unavoidable. The sense of wholeness students express, and of their discovery that the many parts of their experiences are deeply connected, through and in them, is powerful. Learning that analysis, synthesis, integration and creative acts are not antithetical classes of abstract processes, but are kinds of thinking and doing that co-exist, appears to be transformative in NCHC's Semesters Alums.

Both Boyer and Palmer were motivated to shape their arguments as they did in part out of a keen sense that the academy is somehow fractured. For Boyer, the professoriate is besieged by contradictory demands and practices; for Palmer, its students are “trained” schizophrenics left disconnected from their world. The model of programs that function as an organic whole anchored in the world, validating and privileging practices in the world which students analyze and refract through a lens of which they are sufficiently conscious to synthesize what they see within some larger context, leads inexorably to an integrated view of the world and themselves in it. It leads to unusual creative leaps, as reports on the closing Symposia of these Semesters have suggested (Braid, 1985; 1991).

This model is interesting as well in terms of what might be called the civic concerns of Boyer and Palmer. NCHC’s Honors Semesters began in 1976. There have been twenty-five of them. None has focused exclusively on matters like social equality, issues in human rights, or political responsibility. Yet given the students’ immersion in the larger social arena of their site, considering problems such as these has been part of every Semester’s discussions. The proliferation of project topics during Semesters that examine closely environmental, social, and political matters is impressive. The persistent phenomenon of Semesters Alums’ moving into fields like human rights abuses against the Romani (Gypsies) in Romania, joining the Peace Corps, or becoming involved in social projects designed to benefit others, suggests that, once students acquire the habit of mind of connecting themselves to the world, they do not easily lose it.

This is a model worth elaborating on because it includes elements that the many service/volunteer/foreign study programs around the country do not: the self-reflective activities that require analysis, for one, and the contextualizing of self-in-setting for another. Both are pedagogical strategies that can well be imbedded in campus course structure. The fact that in this year 2000 the academy is still trying to frame an action plan for the professoriate that addresses the concerns raised by Boyer’s rifts and Palmer’s splits suggests that we have not found ways to adapt for use on our own campus the import of these two essays. In The Professoriate and Institutional Citizenship: Toward a Scholarship of Service, Jerry Berberet argues.
At a time when students are flocking to campus service learning programs, the faculty voice regarding how the civic dimension of higher education's traditional mission should be enacted at the dawn of a new millennium is largely unheard. This silence continues although advocates such as Alexander Astin and Carol Schneider have been vocal and visible in recommending that civic education be imbedded in the curriculum and the work of disciplines: that theoretical knowledge, experiential learning, and disciplined reflection are essential components of civic education (italics added); and that institutions must assure that their student bodies reflect the larger society's diversity and intellectual pluralism. (Berberet, p.36)

His organization, Associated New American Colleges, has embarked on a Pew Charitable Trusts grant to flesh out implications for the professoriate of Boyer's arguments:

We have incorporated Boyer's call for integrative approaches, whether in connecting the various components of the campus in order better to serve student learning or in understanding all major faculty responsibilities as a form of scholarship…. (Berberet, p.37)

I join their arguments with another: liberal learning has always been rooted in the spirit of breadth and shaped by the practice of depth. In its origins it sought to produce educated people capable of clear, reasoned thought who were aware of the larger cultural domains in which that thought must flourish. Liberal learning became linked, during the early 80's wave of academic reform, to active learning as a means toward self-liberating achievements. The work of Gamson, Chickering, Smith, Clinchy and her associates, was full of the wisdom that connects theory and practice. These practitioners—master teachers we came to call them—were the research voices of the 80's and 90's whose observations and experiments gave voice to pedagogical concerns of liberal arts institutions.

Boyer's conclusion for the professoriate was that "knowledge is acquired through research, though synthesis, through practice, and through teaching" (Boyer, p. 24). Twinning his argument to faculty with Palmer's proposed epistemology of knowing—the four-part juxtaposition of analysis, synthesis, integration and the creative act—we have an opportunity to think about re-ordering our work by re-ordering the experiences of instructor and student simultaneously. This is an invitation for change in approaches to liberal arts undergraduate education. Since virtually all degree programs require significant exposure to arts and sciences, it is reasonable to suppose that fundamental shifts in course design will have a direct impact on professional practices in all domains.

There has already been much borrowing from schools of architecture, engineering, and the health professions for use in the humanities, social sciences, and even business. Legitimate "practicum" segments drawn from applied science and adapted to arts and sciences have made inroads into the primacy of theory-only practices. Incorporated into liberal arts, and translated into a variety of "social laboratory" settings, the beginning has surely been made to provide some measure
of access to multiple ways of knowing such as Palmer urges.

The converse has happened as well: the model of open-ended discussion based on interpretation, synthesis and application drawn from philosophically oriented disciplines has worked its way into discussion sessions formally part of medical school teaching. Either direction, some things are clear: assigning studio problems, bench labs, or volunteer placements does not, merely by the students' completion of those assignments, produce the connected knowing that Blythe Clinchy and her colleagues stress. An arena in which both analysis of the raw field experience and synthesis of that material with scholarly theory are mediated by expert voices—the integration required for really creative acts—is what is needed. A venue in which the nature and extent of interpretation as a facet of analysis, in which the interpreter engages in reflection about self-in-context, in which the matters of evidence and discovery are examined carefully, is also necessary.

Judging from presentations at national associations in which questions about praxis and the lack of opportunity for integrative learning are still being raised, not all campus life has yet been affected by the impulse to synthesize. In fairness, given the hiring activity of the 90's - a refreshing change from the frozen playing fields of the late 70's and early 80's—even were efforts to move on all fronts a common occurrence, newer faculty would still be outsiders in this effort. They have emerged, after all, from the very heart of a split-personality academy that provoked the comments of Boyer and Palmer to begin with.

So it is not, perhaps, out of place to urge that the heart of liberal education's enterprise is to link practice and theory, the workplace and the campus, social theory and lived community, science and humanities, writing and doing. The link must be made by students, but without a venue in which such links are invited—and tested—they will frankly not be made by many.

A modest experiment of my own has been to use Clifford Geertz' field observations on perspective, particularly his thoughts on "blurred genres" (Geertz, 1983), as a guide to constructing an on-campus seminar for students who have off-campus work placements. Both field observations and self-reflective writing, as in the City-as-Text© laboratory exercises I developed for the Honors Semesters (Braid, 1990), and elaborate mapping exercises, are integrative stratagems in the methodologies of this Workplace Dynamics course. Readings selected widely from literature, social theory, and political commentary figure in. Technical aspects of students' work performance are reported and viewed by the seminar cohort in the context of the working environment in which they themselves perform.

Remarkably, I have found that students well-trained in sophisticated fields—computers, speech therapy, accounting, health professions—and strong in their disciplines, indicate no discernible mechanism at the outset of the course to measure a) context; b) self; c) self-in-context. They are adept at separating out, but impoverished when it comes to pulling together. No wonder that, despite working in possibly the most diverse city in the world and studying on arguably one of the most multicultural campus sites in the country, these apprentices lack the skills and means to see themselves as others see them; to imagine that insights from art and literature might open a window in the workplace; or to understand that modes of inquiry cannot exist in a cultural vacuum.

The sense of what is a text, any text, is missing; of what relates one thing or event to another, or of how otherwise this same interaction might be viewed: these
are perceptual matters, and they are missing. The ability to ask, in the public domain, “What makes me think so?” is missing. The desire to answer “What does this have to do with me?” in civic matters, is likely also to be missing.

Agility in using ALL Palmer’s intellectual skills is, I have come to believe, not only a tacit component in the earlier, displaced, paradigm of a well-educated liberally learned citizen, but an actual source of power over one’s place in this world, and it must be re-embraced. Acquiring mental athleticism—through exercises by which one juxtaposes theory and practice—is liberally to educate. And prowess in such exercises is liberating.

Works Consulted


Learning and Research with Students: The Example of the Tilton/Beecher Scandal

Carol Kolmerten
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To read any number of Jeremiads on “the death of literature” or on “literature lost” lately might make most anyone believe that liberal learning is dead in English departments across the country. The twin evils of feminist scholarship (whose practitioners insist upon social readings of texts) and deconstruction (whose practitioners debunk “timeless truths”) have, according to such authors as Alvin Kernan or John Ellis, cheated students out of having a meaningful liberal arts education with old fashioned teachers who love their subject and impart it to their students.

In books like Alvin Kernan’s The Death of Literature, Kernan glorifies the single figure, sitting alone, silently reading as the apotheosis of teaching, a constant reminder of what we are missing today: the seasoned teacher who works and thinks alone and then saunters masterfully into a classroom to mesmerize rows of adoring students.

My take on liberal learning for the millennium is just the opposite of these writers and their glorification of the old-fashioned teacher/scholar in his ivory tower. My own experience (and the experience of many of my closest academic friends) is that collaboration, particularly with students, is a preferable model to the lone scholar model we all grew up with.

Most of us who have been at our colleges and universities for the past twenty to twenty-five years have, indeed, grown up with that model of the insular, aloof scholar; most of us emulated it quite well, teaching our classes and publishing our first books, essentially in isolation. We quickly became used to the scholarly conference, where we defended our ideas against the attack of others; where the lone “us” faced off against the many “them,” some of whom, at least, were simply graduate students learning the model themselves. Our dissertation defenses, our first conference papers, our march up the tenure ladder were steps in a battle. We conducted our research alone, we wrote alone, we taught alone. Like the students we were teaching, we did not like to share our work in progress, for we secretly believed that to collaborate meant to give away our positions and thus our strength.

I was, in my first two decades in the classroom, a demonstrative teacher—I lectured, I argued, I put on quite a show for my students. If there were a silence in the classroom, I filled it. If students would not discuss the topic at hand, I did. But in the 1980s I had begun to think about working with others because I team-taught a number of times, and I found such teaching exhilarating. Yet, it was only when I directed a collaborative program that I began to understand the true benefits (to myself and to my students) of working with students rather than teaching at them.

Planning the honors program at Hood clarified the value of the collaborative approach. My colleagues and I at Hood had spent over a decade figuring out how
to structure an honors program. I had attended a number of NCHC meetings to see what worked at other colleges like Hood. What I had learned was that the most interesting programs, with the most enthusiastic students, were collaborative ventures. The notion I had buried away somewhere in my head about honors programs being terribly elite "clubs" where students listened to a master teacher discuss a difficult subject (gleaned from my college days in the mid-60s) had nothing to do with the reality of good honors programs in the 1980s and 90s. Students learned best, I kept hearing and reading over and over, when they were involved in their learning. Honors programs succeeded when students were involved in the day-to-day operations of them.

With the success of our collaborative honors program, my own teaching and scholarship seemed out of kilter with the direction my life was taking. I began to change the way I structured classes, making students responsible for more of their learning. We agreed that students would write a paper each class period. Together, we learned how to post the papers on a class listserv so that everyone could benefit from reading them. We experienced the joys and exhaustion of regular conferences where, together, a student and I talked about the class and about her learning in it. At the end of the term, each student had to evaluate her learning in the class and suggest a fair grade.

At the same time, I began rejecting the image of the solitary scholar, working (always) alone in some sort of ivory tower, unapproachable to all but those in similar towers. I had spent over fifteen years working alone on my first book, but I now sought out collaborations on my next two books. Then, I began involving students in the kind of research I love doing—searching primary texts (particularly journals and letters from the mid to late nineteenth century) to substantiate (or deconstruct) generalizations.

This past summer I was fortunate to receive a major grant to gather materials for my latest scholarly project—a study of the Beecher/Tilton scandal of 1874-75. I split my research money with one of my undergraduate students, who joined me every day at the Library of Congress. Nominally my "research assistant," Marta was no more my assistant than I was hers. Together we grappled with the ethical issues that permeated the project. Together we tried to make some sense out of thousands and thousands of pages of trial transcripts, newspaper editorials, and personal letters. I am convinced that I would never have begun to understand these materials had it not been for Marta's collaboration. On her part, Marta reports in long e-mails to me, now that she is living back home in Spain, that the summer's project changed her life; that she can no longer imagine a life that is not based in research and teaching.

So Marta and I spent the summer of 1999 gathering thousands of pages from newspapers across the country in 1874 and 1875. We were, from the beginning, completely overwhelmed by the mass of material we found. In addition to the fact that every major American newspaper seemed to be obsessed by the story, giving it front-page coverage almost every day for six months, we also found hundreds of essays and books written about the subject. We often just looked at each other in despair, wondering how we could even read all the material we were gathering. If either of us had been doing this project alone we might well have quit, but together we kept plodding along, gathering during the weekdays and reading and analyzing over the weekends.
Half way through the summer, a fortuitous event occurred. Exhausted by our morning’s efforts, we decided to have a long lunch at a French cafe a block from the library. There, we happened to stumble across a colleague from our college, also having lunch. When Mark asked us, “so what are you working on,” we began to tell him. First we had to clarify what the scandal was, who was involved, and what their stories were. We told him this:

The Beecher-Tilton scandal, as it was so named, was, simply put, the biggest national story in nineteenth-century America after the Civil War. For the first six months of 1875, every major newspaper in the United States followed the “trial of the century” in all its lascivious details as it unfolded in Brooklyn. Newspapers from as far away as Chicago hired special reporters to cover the trial; one newspaper was founded just to cover trial news. That the best known religious leader of the era was accused of a sexual affair with one of his parishioners, who happened to be the wife of one of his formerly closest friends, only heightened readers’ interest.

This is a story where Henry Ward Beecher, the religious patriarch, ended up acquitted and still revered by his parishioners; where Theodore Tilton, the husband, ended up in France playing chess; but where Elizabeth Tilton, the wife, ended up blind (literally and figuratively), in poverty, and alone. It seemed to be an all too familiar story. It was also an open-ended story, we told Mark; we wondered whom to believe and how to know whom to believe.

**Principal Players**

**Henry Ward Beecher** was either a heroically devoted minister, husband, and father who was maliciously accused of adultery, or one of the greatest evangelical hypocrites who ever preached in an American church.

**Theodore Tilton** was either an innocent cuckolded husband (guilty only of writing and speaking for liberal causes such as the woman’s suffrage movement) who was devastated by his wife’s betrayal, or a free loving, scheming blackmailer who would stop at nothing to destroy Beecher.

**Elizabeth Tilton** was either a pious, pure wife and mother, who put her children and her scoundrel husband before everything except her God, or a weak woman who capitulated to the sex urges of her frequent visitor, the Reverend Beecher, and then lied about her actions.

**The story**

The story is not any easier to talk about than the “players.” It comes in various versions, with differing layers of meaning. It is complicated by the fact that, during the trial, the story was told only by the two men—the minister (Beecher) and the man accusing him of alienating the affections of his wife (Tilton), as women were not allowed to testify for or against their husbands in late-nineteenth-century American courtrooms.

According to Theodore Tilton, he and his wife, Elizabeth, were married by the Reverend Henry Ward Beecher in 1855; their marriage was a happy one until the
late 1860s when the frequent visits of the Rev. Beecher to their home, particularly while Theodore was out of town, led to an affair between the 55-year old minister and the 35-year old Elizabeth Tilton. The affair lasted two years until Elizabeth confessed to Theodore in the summer of 1870, unable to live a lie anymore. In December, 1870, Theodore extracted from Elizabeth a signed “confession” of adultery.

The “story” according to Beecher was completely different. His visits to Elizabeth Tilton, an unhappy young woman whose husband often left her for months alone, were strictly pastoral visits. He counseled her, advised her, and reinforced her spirituality at a time when her husband was questioning the divinity of Christ and befriending a group of women’s rights radicals (including Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Victoria Woodhull) who challenged the sanctity of marriage and women’s roles in that marriage. It was Theodore Tilton, not the Reverend Beecher, who had an affair in the late 1860s. Upon seeing Elizabeth’s signed “confession” of adultery in December, 1870, Beecher raced to the Tilton home and demanded that Elizabeth retract her confession—which she did, in writing.

Then we told my colleague why I had been so fascinated with the scandal (other than the fact that it dealt with sex on the front pages of daily newspapers): it seemed, I told him, strangely appropriate to study a scandal about a woman who remains silent, without a voice, as I was particularly interested in women’s silenced voices.

In a book I wrote over a decade ago (Women in Utopia: The Ideology of Gender in the American Owenite Communities), I had posited that if we would take the time to listen to women’s voices, we would learn a different history from the one that patriarchs told; that we needed to learn to take women seriously by not dismissing their complaints, by not ignoring their problems, by not relegating them to unquestioned cultural practices to be enacted without thought. I ended by saying that an egalitarian world has the power to transform objects into subjects and in this transformation lies utopia for women.

It seemed to be a good thing to say at the time and certainly had shaped my approach to the materials we were finding now. What we read in trial transcripts showed two men busy fashioning stories (diametrically opposed stories) about a woman’s beliefs and actions. What drew me to this scandal in the first place, I explained, was Elizabeth’s absent voice in “the trial of the century.” She is having a war waged over her words; yet, she just sits in the court every day, silent. Cipher-like, she allows us (the situation allows us) to imagine anything we want to about her. When her husband creates her story, repeats what he says are her words, he seems believable; when the Rev. Beecher fashions her story and repeats what he says are her words, he seems slightly less believable (but perhaps, I added, this is my own bias, I who have been taught to disbelieve the evangelical rhetoric of the Elmer Gantrys of the world). Both men talk about her as if she were a child, immature, not knowing her mind, not sitting right there in the spectators’ section of the courtroom.

I pointed out that contemporary scholars have only magnified this impression of Elizabeth as a cipher without a voice. University press books like the recent Rev. Beecher and Mrs. Tilton, by Altina Waller, focus on the war of words between the two men. Elizabeth is only a voiceless backdrop to their stories about her. Even well-known feminist critics have dismissed her. See, for example, Ann Douglas, who
writes: “Attractive, charming, not particularly bright, emotionally unstable, and immature, Libby Tilton . . . died essentially of confusion, without a life” (292). I intended to “rescue” her and to retell the story from her perspective, thus creating new meaning. By telling Elizabeth’s story, I explained, I would be able to right the wrongs of her historical elision and tell the “real” story of the scandal.

Then my colleague turned to Marta and said, “and what to you make out of all of this.” And Marta replied, thoughtfully: “they are real people. Living people. That’s what surprised me when I went to the manuscript room and found some of their letters. They aren’t characters in a novel. They are complicated and contradictory, and I don’t have a clue as to whom to believe.”

And that was it for me—the moment I don’t think I would have gotten to by myself as obvious as it now seems when I look back on it. I realized with the force of an epiphany that I had gone into this project with my ideological blinders on, expecting to find (and glorify) another voiceless woman. That when we heard her voice, we would understand. But Marta was right; the “characters” here were “real” and thus messy. No preconceived story-line seemed to work.

And then we both started explaining, words tumbling over each other: “I’m not even sure I like this woman very much,” said Marta. “I feel sorry for her . . . but . . .” I added. Both of us stared at each other, surprised by the hesitation in each other’s voices. How could we not like this voiceless woman? This silenced woman? This victim? All my previous thinking and writing had prepared me to glorify her and, of course, to give her a voice. Marta, who had not spent an entire scholarly life giving voice to silenced women, could say more easily, “I’m not sure I like her.” We had both been prepared to hate her husband (faithless bastard . . . slime) and her minister (lying hypocrite). We had our categories all set, and we were ready to place her in the “innocent wife, betrayed by both her husband and her minister” one. We liked the story that we had created in our heads.

And we had liked her when we first read her words; she appeared, when we waded through all the men’s language about her and made it through to her own words, a sincere, rather pious wife and mother. Even though she did not testify in the trial in 1875, Elizabeth did testify before the investigating committee of the Plymouth Church in 1874. She also wrote letters to local newspapers (for publication) and to her husband (not for publication).

The first of Elizabeth’s public statements we found is from a letter she wrote to the Brooklyn Eagle (the Reverend Beecher’s paper) dated July 23, 1874. In it, as one would expect from a member of the Plymouth Church congregation, she writes to refute the “malicious” statement that her husband had given to the church patriarchs who convened in July, 1874 (at Henry Ward Beecher’s request to exonerate him). She writes clearly and emphatically that “I affirm myself before God to be innocent of the crimes laid upon me; that never have I been guilty of adultery with Henry Ward Beecher in thought or deed; nor has he ever offered to me an indecorous or improper proposal.” She adds that her husband’s testimony to prove her “insane, weak-minded, insignificant, of mean presence,” show him to be “heartless.”

A week later, meeting the “investigating committee” of the Plymouth church, Elizabeth affirms the statement in her published letter. She characterizes her life with her husband as that of a subordinate, always catering to someone who thought himself better than she was. She says, first, that she takes the blame for the
“indifference” her husband showed to her “in all my life”... “I understood very well that I was not to have the attention that many wives have; I realized that his talent and genius must not be narrowed down to myself.”*

Elizabeth gives her evidence of a husband who was constantly “dissatisfied... there was nothing in our home that satisfied him” (190). Her husband was very critical about my “language,” so much so that, as she said “I do not think I ever said anything freely or naturally” (191). He was “fastidious, and must have the best of everything” (191), often “scolding” her then apologizing. In fact this pattern—criticism then apology—created the structure of their marriage (and of her life).

Elizabeth talks of Theodore’s jealousy—of the Reverend Beecher as well as of several other men. When asked if Theodore made her feel “beneath him,” she answered emphatically yes, citing a time in which, going to meet friends, Theodore turned to her and said “I would give $500 if you were not by my side” (198). Constantly criticizing her for being short, he often said “I wish you would not keep near me.” She adds that she suffered “ten years of misery in this home” that she had been ill treated since 1866, often “kept without food and fire, locked in my room for days together, etc.” She talks about Theodore’s advances to a young woman who lived with them; she tells the investigating committee of the woman Theodore brought into their home as a housekeeper who she feared was his lover.

Both Marta and I were moved by Elizabeth’s story. Marta reminded me, though, that it was also Henry Ward Beecher’s story, almost to the word, and that if we wanted to believe and “like” her we also had to believe him. We agreed that Theodore appeared as insensitive (at best) and a brute at worst. The twenty or so pages of her testimony in 1874 before the church fathers certainly did emphasize her innocence and her betrayal by a husband who appeared to constantly put her down.

At the same time, we also examined Elizabeth’s private correspondence, letters written to her husband during the alleged “affair” with the Reverend Beecher during 1868-69. These letters, published in the August 13, 1874 Chicago Tribune (by Theodore’s lawyer), affected us more than any other of the documents we found. As we read them again and again, we realized that it was these letters that bothered us the most. Here are excerpts of some of the letters we read:

The Letters

Apr. 1, 1866:

My darling, may God make me worthy to be your wife.

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*The testimony before the investigating committee of the Plymouth Church was published in many newspapers across the nation (and even in Europe) during the summer of 1874. Charles Marshall gathered all the testimony before the committee in 1874 and the trial transcripts from 1875 and published all the material with page numbers in his True History of the Brooklyn Scandal: Being the Complete Account of Trial... The page numbers in the text refer to the testimony cited in his book.
Dec. 23, 1866:

I have been thinking of my love for Mr. B considerably of late . . . and have you not loved me more ardently since you saw that another high nature appreciated me? . . . It is not possible for any human creature to supersede you in my heart. Above all, you rise grand—highest, best . . . .

But to return to Mr. B. He has been the guide of our youth, and, until the three last dreadful years when our confidence was shaken in him, we trusted him as no other human being . . . . Of course, I realize what attracts you both to me is a supposed purity of soul you find in me . . . . Without you, I can be nothing . . . . without you, I can do nothing.

Jan. 7, 1867:

What a delicious way you have of rebuking and teaching me. [I am so] thoroughly satisfied when you praise me, though it be true or not, I am content. I go singing and light-hearted about my work. Every difficulty is straightened and life is sweet.

Jan 10, 1967:

I feel how poor and meager my letters are in comparison with yours . . . . You call me your heart’s twin; I want to be.

Jan. 11, 1867:

Am I your soul’s mate? . . . . I cannot believe I have capacity to meet your soul’s want, though you entirely fill mine. When I look at you, I say “Yes, my soul is satisfied, — our union is perfect.” But when I turn and look at myself as supplying your need, I bow my head and pray God to add the needed grace.

Jan. 13, 1867:

Pardon me if so many of my letters are filled with accounts of the pastor’s visits. It is because I would have you know all that fills my thoughts that I write so frequently of him. Yesterday he made me very happy. It was Saturday. He came in about 11:30 a.m.,
bringing flowers, as usual. After visiting with me twenty minutes he said, "I am hungry to see your children." "Are you, really?" I said, "then come up directly and see them." I had set apart this day for doll-dressing, as I had not time before Christmas. So he followed me upstairs where, for one full hour, he chatted and played with them delightfully. After this he invited me to accompany him to Mr. Ovinton's, which call he had inclined to make for some time. . . . Having been inspired by our dolls, he then wished me to go with him to the toy stores and advise him in selecting a doll for Hattie B. . . . I wish you would write him. . . . Oh if you two dear men were once more reunited in perfect sympathy.

Jan. 15, 1867:

Your letter expressing great patience toward me in reference to my finances came yesterday also. I thank you with all my heart. You are magnanimous and generous beyond all men. I long to be more entirely what you need. It is the wonder of my life that you are satisfied with me. It is your great goodness and not in my merit.

Jan 16, 1867:

Do all love as we do? And shall we continue thus, when we meet? This is the nightmare which abides with me. Good-night, your own pet.

Jan 24, 1867:

My husband, I believe I love you as well as you wish me to; I should be wretched if I loved stronger. I suffer enough as it is.

Jan. 26, 1867:

(On Mr. B): He is [pityfully mistaken in his opinion of you. I can never rest satisfied until you both see eye to eye and love one another as you once did. . . . I do love him very dearly, and I do love you supremely, utterly—believe it. Perhaps, if I by God's grace, keep myself white, I may bless you both. I am striving. . . . I love you as Mrs. Browning loved. Don't you know it? Pray for me always. I pray for you. . . . if I could sit in your lap and look into your dear eyes now—I'm afraid it would be more than I could bear. . . .
any rate, I should have a good cry—THAT, I am now going to have without you. It always "baptizes me" to use your word.

Jan 27, 1867:

Mr. B called Saturday. He came tired and gloomy, but he said I had the most calming and peaceful influence over him, more so than any one he ever knew. I believe he loves you. We talked of you. He brought me two pretty flowers in pots, and said as he went out: "What a pretty house this is—I wish I lived here."

Feb. 3, 1867:

The church tonight was filled with medical students, Mr. B preaching before their Christian Union. . . Will you not on your return throw in your inspiration and join me in fulfilling our vows as members of this Christian church? Your beautiful spirit would help many there, as it does everywhere. . . And, to me, there is no spot so sacred as Plymouth Church.

Jan. 28, 1868:

My waking thoughts last night were of you. My rising thoughts this morning were of you. I bless you; I honor you; I love you. God sustain us and help us both to keep our vows. Yours entirely,

Feb. 14, 1868:

Yours [letter] from Crawfordsville came today. To hear that you are happy, cheerful, and love me, is more than even my faith could hope. I wept over it, I laughed over it, I prayed over it . . . Mattie is hungry to hear from you. I think she feels a little care that Mr. B visits here . . . she said "Lib, I heard through Mrs. Morrill that Mr. B. Called on you Wednesday. I believe he likes you ever so much." Now my darling, I have often urged him to visit Mattie, believing he would find her more comforting and restful that I can be. SHE would be refreshed and cheered—while as for me, I who am rich in the fullness of your delicious love, have no need.
Feb. 17, 1868:

Yes, darling, I have fallen (why not say risen?) desperately in love with my husband. I have fallen quite long enough. I cannot tell why such lines as these in your letters depress me: "I am cheery, good-hearted, hopeful, and bright man." In my soul I rejoice that you are, but I cannot help thinking that it is because I am not with you!

Feb. 18, 1868:

I have felt so heart-sick that there are so few great men or women. The idea of a faithful, true marriage will be lost out of the world—certainly out of the literary and refined world—unless we revive it... I shall have much to tell you of our dear friend, Mr. B. He has opened his heart as you would love and admire him.

Feb. 24, 1868:

My darling of darlings:... oh my beloved, I feel unutterable love and sympathy for you in your anguish and "heart-break"—as you say. It is too true you have given largely, grandly, and beautifully of your best love to friends, age even to your wife—while in return you have received most often indifference, and, at best, love not deserving the name, in comparison with thine own. . . .

Again in one of your letters you close with "Faithfully yours"; that word "faithful" means a great deal, yes, darling, I believe it, trust it, and give you the same surety with regard to myself—I am faithful to you, have always, and shall forever be, world without end.

Feb. 26, 1868:

Mr. B put our baby to sleep, laid him down and covered him up.

Feb. 28, 1868:

How much I want to do to make you happy when you come home! I can do no great things; but all the many little things which love will suggest, these will I do for my beloved.
It was in discussing these letters where we both understood the true benefits of collaboration. Both of us found the letters deeply depressing but for different reasons. Marta pointed out that Elizabeth’s voice sounds like that of a fifteen-year-old girl, infatuated with an older, popular boy, who sometimes notices her, but more often ignores her or criticizes her. They are not, she stated emphatically, the letters of a woman who has been happily married for the past fifteen years, as Theodore had suggested.

These letters distressed me for another reason. I agreed that Elizabeth’s need for love and acceptance from her husband was obvious, but what is also clear in these same letters is that in place of a husband who was either critical or enraptured, Elizabeth found complete acceptance from another man. Elizabeth writes time after time of “Mr. B’s visits.” As she writes, “Pardon me if so many of my letters are filled with accounts of the pastor’s visits; it is because I would have you know all that fills my thoughts that I write so frequently of him.” But she adds, quite astutely on another day: “I have been thinking of my love for Mr. B considerably of late... and have you not loved me more ardently since you saw another high nature appreciated me?”

To be sought after, courted with flowers and presents, impressed Elizabeth more than it might have other women. With Beecher, Elizabeth was at ease; with Beecher, she could enjoy simple visits where he would read to her from his novel-in-progress. Where her husband didn’t even want her in the room when his women’s rights friends (the intelligent Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony and others) were visiting, Henry Ward Beecher sought out her comments, her company. How could she have denied herself this, we asked each other?

The more we read the letters and talked about them, the more insight we got from them. As we told our colleague Mark about the letters, I realized with certain clarity that Elizabeth was, in our 1990s terminology, an abused wife. Given what we now know about abuse, we pieced together the specifics of their dysfunctional relationship. Their letters clearly chronicle what we now call a “cycle of abuse.” This cycle begins with the batterer intimidating his spouse, withdrawing affection from her for her many shortcomings, putting her down. It then leads to an “explosion,” which for Theodore was not hitting but verbal abuse and or locking Elizabeth in her room without food. This cycle ends with a declaration of love and begging of forgiveness and all appears well for the moment.

As we read these letters through the language of abuse, we did, perhaps, understand Elizabeth a bit better. But what was most interesting to both of us is that our response to her mirrored our culture’s response to abused women: “something is wrong with the women to cause that abuse.” Yet, even knowing that, we still felt ambivalent towards Elizabeth. On the day we talked with our colleague, we finally figured out our ambivalence: Marta pointed out that Elizabeth was no Innocent Victim that she portrayed herself to be. I added that her letters illustrated both her need for Theodore and her need to show him that another man, another man who was once Theodore’s closest friend, another man who was one of the most powerful men in the United States, did enjoy being with her. We both agreed that about her fidelity, she appeared to protest too often and too much. Faithful spouses simply do not spend their epistolary time reinforcing their faithfulness.

Through these letters, we also began to understand Elizabeth’s reasons for changing her story. What had bothered both of us the most about Elizabeth is that
sorely out to destroy flat, fiction that was anthologized in

Our collaboration also helped us understand all three principal "characters." After hearing Marta tell our colleague Mark about how the people whose words we were studying were people, not characters, I realized that we had created meaning by creating binary oppositions: Rev. Beecher, for example, we first saw as being one of two things: he could either a hypocrite or a loving minister; Elizabeth Tilton was either a loyal wife or a lying seductress. When we engaged in constructing these binary oppositions, we were assuming these living people were, somehow "characters" in a melodrama, characters who either had to be "good" or "bad." Like many of our colleagues, we seem reluctant to give up our comforting either/or dualities; as devoted readers of Western popular literature, we do not want ambiguity, and we assume that we need both a hero and a villain in our stories.

In the Beecher-Tilton scandal we found no heroes and much ambiguity: Beecher was a devoted minister and also a hypocrite. Affair or not, he gave Theodore $7,000 to hush the scandal. And despite his statements that he only visited Elizabeth "two or three times in several months" her letters suggest that such was not the case. He was at the Tilton home four or five times a week. Theodore Tilton may well have been a cuckolded husband, but he was also, most certainly, an abuser. Finally, Elizabeth Tilton was certainly a pious wife and mother, who, psychologically and verbally abused for close to a decade, did indeed lie—she lied whenever her husband or her minister asked her to. Given the pattern of her life—trying unsuccessfully to please her husband and her minister—how could she not continue to try to please? Yet her letters reveal that she is not simply a victim of Theodore's abuse; she also egged him on. In letter after letter to him, she tells him of how wonderful "Mr. B's" visits were, how loving he is, how much he cares for her.

Our response to Elizabeth was, in some ways, the response of the press of the 1880s. At best, she was ignored (as an unimportant, voiceless object); at times, she was pitied. Usually, she was criticized and often the criticism was heaped upon her with much more venom than that heaped upon the two men. "Degraded and worthless," the New York Times called her, for example. In trying to analyze both our own responses and the responses of her contemporaries, we realized that we were, indeed, viewing the Beecher-Tilton scandal as one of the great melodramas of the late nineteenth century. Every day, during the six-month trial, the transcript of the testimony was published in newspapers across America. Like the sentimental fiction that was anthologized in popular magazines and newspapers, always with a plot twist at the end to keep readers coming back for a new installment, the Beecher-Tilton trial kept everyone coming back for six straight months. And the readers were looking for story and for character. And what kind of characters?—the flat, unchanging characters of melodrama, of course: either the "good" wife and "loyal" minister along pitted against the "evil" husband and his mistress, who are out to destroy all that is God-given in the world or the loyal husband who has been sorely deceived by his best friend and wife. Like the newspapers, we saw these real life people as unchanging characters because that is the way we understand
symbolic representation in melodrama or morality plays. But as Marta pointed out the day we talked to my colleague at the French cafe, these were real people, not symbolic representations. I, too firmly grounded in the importance of hearing women’s silenced voices, did not know how to listen to Elizabeth’s voice, as it kept changing. I, who shaped her life as a “story” with a clear beginning (innocent bride), middle (troubled young wife who sought out her minister when her philandering husband would leave her), and end (innocent victim, ostracized by society), could not see the “life” outside the story. My anger at her, at least in part, is based on the fact that she would not “fit” into the categories that I had so carefully constructed for her.

And, of course, this is what happened to Elizabeth in her own time. She was so hated by the press because she fit no 1870s “story” either. To the reformers of the world, particularly to the woman’s rights advocates, she was an albatross who brought down her husband; to the believers in Christian, evangelical religion, whose way of looking at women as virgins or whores; saints or sinners and whose rhetorical practices dominated the trial, she was the woman (the sinner) whose very presence almost led to the destruction of their minister. She, thus, had to be the opposite of a pious, pure woman, and therefore a woman to be ostracized outside of the physical and linguistic community.

Marta and I agreed that the most fascinating communication of all of Elizabeth’s is her final public letter, with a final “confession.” In April, 1878, almost three years after the end of the trial, where Beecher’s testimony that he and Elizabeth had never had an affair prevailed, Elizabeth wrote a letter that was published on the front page of the New York Times. It reads:

> I now solemnly affirm that the charge brought by my husband of adultery between myself and the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher, was true and that the life I had lived so well the last four years had become intolerable to me.

She adds that she is now confessing to the “truth” because a sense of “truth and justice” necessitates it.

How satisfying it would be to end this little essay by saying “Now this is the truth; this time we hear Elizabeth’s true voice.” I could even end with a final irony, so beloved of English professors everywhere: the pious, religious woman who wanted only to be a good wife and mother ended up, after finally speaking the truth, alone, miserable, and blind. But, alas, this essay is not a “story” and it can’t end that way. Also included in the New York Times front-page “confession” were a few additional articles concerning the veracity of this confession. A Times reporter argued that the letter was, indeed, written by Mrs. Tilton, unaided by her husband; whereas “a prominent member of Plymouth Church,” wrote that the letter was “clearly Tiltonian,” in that he thought “no one could doubt for a moment that Theodore Tilton was the author of it.” The Times also included the rumor that the Tiltons had been about to reconcile. It is simply not clear that we can believe Elizabeth; the shadowy Theodore is still hovering behind the scenes, perhaps even drafting the letter, perhaps not.
Sometimes when we listen to women's voices we hear not one, clear truth about who they are (that we would like to hear); rather we hear that they, like men, are extraordinarily complex human beings and our system of creating binary oppositions creates a too-easy version of the "truth" in a case like this. Similarly, the "old-fashioned" teaching that the writers of fashionable Jerimiads yearn for has been based for far too long on a comparable binary opposition: teachers and students, at opposite ends of the "ignorance/knowledge" pole. As Paulo Freire has so eloquently told us in his Pedagogy of the Oppressed, a true liberal arts education "reconciles the poles of contradiction between students and teachers so that both are simultaneously teachers and students," so that neither is a receptacle to be filled and neither is the filler of "containers" (as quoted in Richter, 69). Thus, instead of cheating students out of a meaningful liberal arts education, teachers who truly love their subject will consider ways of actively sharing that love through collaboration.

Works Consulted

*The Brooklyn Eagle*, July 23, 1874.

*The Chicago Tribune*, August 13, 1874.


On Discourse

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Exactly twenty years ago I bored this conference to desperation with an interminable disquisition on “Smaller Teaching.” While I hope that essay helped open the way to larger learning, I must admit now that it was not only too long, but that it fell short of an important truth about the honors classroom. In the intervening two decades, experience in the peer review panels of the National Endowment for the Humanities and the academic advisory committees of the College Board has helped me understand more deeply this central site of honors education—and, I dare say, liberal learning. I hope to suggest that dimension to you today, albeit very briefly.

In “Smaller Teaching” I did not understand fully why the honors classroom contained more than two people. I talked about extending the “tutorial principle” to a group. I did notice that, the more various the learners in a group, the more the context of their thought could become the content of their study. But only recently have I begun to understand that the implicit rules of procedure in the honors classroom, as well as in other thoughtful groups, are the very conditions under which we can hope to know the truth and do the good.

Most of us have had, at the end of a class period, that peculiar sense of regret over not having gotten to where we had hoped to get. I don’t mean those occasions when the proceedings were interrupted by horseplay, or perhaps colt play. Nor do I mean that some sort of unilateral, linear exposition fell short. We all know that trying to “cover the material” is the original sin in honors teaching. No, the experience I am trying to get at can also include an odd tinge of elation. The class discussion didn’t get where we had wanted it to go, but it did end up someplace very, very important indeed.

I want to suggest that what happens on these occasions is that the group shifts from normal communicative interaction to what the philosopher Jurgen Habermas calls “discourse” proper. The group does not get sidetracked, but rises to become engaged with what Immanuel Kant might have called the transcendental or what our own intellectual generation might call the meta-communicative. That is, it begins to sort out explicitly the presuppositions and conditions involved in successful communication. Far from a waste of time, “discourse” in this sense—it can plausibly be argued—is the very structure for human knowledge and morality.

When we speak with each other, we are not only trying to convey a certain content or proposition, we are also doing something. In the most important case, we are offering and accepting each other’s promise to be comprehensible, to be consistent or trustworthy, to be truthful, and to act in accord with the right. We accept each other’s offered obligations because the validity of these claims can be tested in the course of communicating. We can engage in reciprocal paraphrase to make sure we understand what the other means. By constructing narratives, we can
examine the consistency of action and interaction over time. The validity of a claim to truth can be tested by examining the grounds on the basis of which it is made. The validity of a claim to rightness can be tested by examining its justification. Sometimes these tests are fairly straightforward: the stone exists because Dr. Johnson broke his toe; Officer Krupke has the right to arrest me because he shows me his badge.

Sometimes, however, we are not convinced. Dr. Johnson has gout; his toe is always red and misshapen. Officer Krupke is a stooge for a racist regime bent only on domination. At this point, normal communication has broken down! Participants have several choices: they can resort to force; they can resort to trickery and deceit (what Europeans like to call “strategic” communication); or they can engage in “discourse.” The last is a special kind of communication in which we put out of play all motives except that of coming to a rationally grounded agreement. Discourse is open to progressively more radical or speculative challenges. Agreements reached are valid for all potential participants, that is to say for all rational subjects.

Such discourse implies what Habermas calls an “ideal speech situation.” For all participants there is a symmetrical distribution of chances to speak and respond. The conversation is free of such distorting influences as open domination, conscious strategic behavior, subtle kinds of self-deception (for example, professing what you believe the teacher wants you to think). When we act as if we can agree, we are ‘driving under the influence’ of the ideal speech situation. When an honors class does not make linear progress but raises and attempts to respond to more and more challenging questions, it is making explicit the suppositions of such discourse and rising toward intimations of an ideal speech situation.

Because the goal of honors education, indeed of liberal learning, is not only knowledge but also understanding of how that knowledge is put together and supported, I suggest that the home ground and practice field of such education is this “ideal speech situation.”

Catherine, English teachers and other language teachers make such great honors teachers because, as Habermas puts it: “What raises us out of nature is the only thing whose nature we can know: language. Through its structure, autonomy and responsibility are posited for us. Our first sentence expresses unequivocally the intention of universal and unconstrained consensus.”

In short, liberal education affirms “the possibility of reaching agreement through the use of reason, and thus by recourse to, rather than by violation of, the humanity of those involved” (T. McCarthy).
The Shock of the Strange, the Shock of the Familiar: Learning from Study Abroad

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“No matter what happens, travel gives you a story to tell.”—Jewish proverb.

I began writing this as I sat in a borrowed office in the outskirts of London on a strange computer with an unfamiliar keyboard. I blundered my way from my guest house after riding two buses and walking several blocks, London A to Z in hand. Cup of white tea and biscuits by my side, I find that this is not a bad setting for writing about the adjustments of study abroad.

Being in a foreign country sharpens the senses. Even in England where we share the basics of language (but not all the vocabulary, as any visitor learns), things are different enough to create situations that sociologists call “anomie”—lack of knowledge of the expectations in social situations. Routine shattered, one must live by one’s wits, as it is impossible to cruise along in the semi-robotic state in which we often live at home. Negotiating everyday events becomes a lesson in resourcefulness—everything from riding the Tube to using the toilet brings on new challenges. The very experience of living requires learning new approaches to situations. And this is the reason that study abroad is a perfect mechanism for honors education.

Specifically in terms of honors, it seems clear that the NCHC basic characteristics regarding the goals of honors education are a perfect fit for study abroad. Experiential learning, first-hand research, enhanced student-faculty interaction, critical thinking, and challenging scholarship all come into play not just in a foreign classroom, but more saliently in the experience of living abroad itself. In keeping with these goals, honors programs have the golden opportunity to offer students the chance to participate in global culture through international travel and study abroad. Whether as a component of a regularly scheduled course, a summer program, or an entire semester or year abroad, the actual experience of travel to a foreign country is an essential and life-changing feature of a global education.

Study Abroad and Learning

As students become immersed in a new culture they open up at least three major areas for learning: the host culture itself, new perspective on their own culture, and self-learning. As all students abroad find out, their coursework is just the smallest part of their learning experience. Dealing with new situations, relationships, and their own reactions to cultural differences offer the bulk of the education. This learning takes place not only during the sojourn, but continues upon return as the students reflect on their experiences and share them with others.
Indeed, the reentry process is another adjustment (or possible crisis) for which students must be prepared and has the potential to become a fruitful opportunity to continue the learning experience.

When students begin study abroad, they are in a period of adjustment on many levels. They must deal with the academic work and perhaps the bureaucracy, rules and customs of a different host educational system. Moreover, they are confronted with strange cultural rituals and patterns. Survival becomes a challenge as they attempt to negotiate new routines of everyday life. What exactly are the rules of behavior and interpersonal relationships? Did I really understand that conversation? What could this menu item (e.g., "bangers and mash") be? What is expected of me in this situation? These questions are recurrent and persistent and can produce uncertainty and discomfort for the visitor. Indeed, this unpleasantness is a major part of the predictable pattern known as "culture shock," defined as the "emotional reactions to the disorientation that occurs when one is immersed in an unfamiliar culture and is deprived of familiar cues" (Paige, 1993). When Oberg (1960) first talked of culture shock, he conceived it as an actual illness—complete with clinical symptoms and cures. In the past several decades, social scientific studies of culture shock (Adler, 1975) have placed it solidly in the realm of the social rather than the medical worlds as they identified the typical stages of the experience and suggested possible mechanisms for coping. It seems inevitable that students will experience some of the effects of culture shock, and therefore it is crucial that any study abroad program prepare the student for it. Even better, honors study abroad programs could not only prepare students for the anticipation of culture shock, but use its many facets to enhance the learning experience and personal development. As Adler states, "the process of adaptation to cultural shock can be described as a depth experience beginning with the encounter of a different culture that becomes an encounter with the self."

It would seem useful to deconstruct the phenomenon of culture shock into several components to anticipate students' experiences and the potential learning opportunities. Culture shock involves complex feelings and reactions of both loss and change which can ultimately lead to personal growth: loss in terms of homesickness, loneliness for friends and family, and the absence of the familiar—familiar sights, sounds, food, objects that makes us feel comfortable, and interpersonal communication styles. Loss of these familiar cues of interaction such as language, non-verbal cues, norms and customs of everyday life (how do things work? what is funny? how do I eat?) can result in feelings of isolation, helplessness, confusion, and being "out of sync." Unaccustomed attitudes toward time and the course of events can result in anger and frustration. For example, Americans expect "yes" or "no" answers to inquiries, not "As God wishes." Huh? Does that mean yes or no?

The other aspect of culture shock—change—introduces new challenges, unfamiliar customs, bureaucratic structures, attitudes, values, and relationships we must learn in order to get along. To adopt these new norms involves the ability to be open-minded, take risks, and make mistakes—indeed, break out of the home cultural frame of mind and adopt the new culture's point of view, and make adjustments to one's identity in the process (Weaver, 1993). Travelers who have taken these steps can likely relate stories of feeling foolish or silly as they engage in the unfamiliar. It's no wonder student sojourners who experience the initial elation
of a foreign country long to hide in their rooms and eat cheeseburgers when it all becomes a bit overwhelming.

Students need to be taught that this is a predictable reaction to living abroad. Today scholars generally agree that there are four stages to the culture shock process (Furnam, 1984): 1) fascination with the new culture, yet realizing barriers exist between the visitor and the host; 2) hostility and frustration with new culture and emphasis on superiority of home culture; 3) improvement and adjustment with decreasing tension and increasing humor; and 4) biculturalism where sojourner develops a fuller understanding of host culture. Here is a personal example: while I was living in Europe for a year in the early 1980's, my reaction to cozy smoke-filled cafes changed from quaint amusement—"Isn't this neat?" (stage 1) to disgust—"why isn't there a no smoking section like we have at home?" (stage 2) to resigned acceptance and appreciation of cultural differences—"oh well, the smoke is bad but the food is great." (stages 3 and 4).

How can honors programs prepare student sojourners for the inevitable? It is crucial that honors programs and study abroad offices offer a thorough orientation for the student traveler, not just in the academic, but also the emotional side of travel abroad. These programs exist in many schools and offer students a chance to learn about the host culture, talk to other students who have gone abroad, and learn the basics of intercultural communication. Orientation programs are critical in that the degree of adjustment difficulties experienced by student sojourners has been shown to be related to their prior expectations (Martin, et al 1995). The researchers found, in a study of 248 student sojourners, that the more the student's prior expectations are met or positively violated (i.e. the actual experience was better than expected), the better the evaluation of the entire sojourn. Unrealistic expectations are a source of much disappointment in students' early foreign experiences. I remember as a 21-year-old student stepping off the plane on a dreary London day and being rather put out that not only was I not met on the tarmac by the Beatles, but that London was not at all like the Charles Dickens vision I expected. Thus it is crucial for pre-trip planning to include development of realistic expectations rather than a totally optimistic projection. Things will go wrong, they will be lost and homesick, and Prince William will not be on the jetway to greet them upon arrival.

Students need to be clued into various coping strategies: bring along reminders of home, feel empowered by learning about some simple "do's" and "don'ts" of the host culture, and make attempts to interact with the host nationals.

Many types of orientation programs and guides to travel are in existence—the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, for example, has a web page with an introduction to culture shock and suggestions for coping; UNCW provides students with a bookmark with the stages of cultural shock and tips for a successful transition. Going beyond these initial orientations, honors programs can use the cultural shock experience as a planned learning tool in the study abroad process. How can this be achieved?

1. The actual study of the culture shock pattern as a component of the course would assist students in recognizing and coping with the adjustment process. Learn about the stages, be familiar with the research, know what to expect.
2. Teach students about the concepts of ethnocentrism and cultural relativism, and have them examine these in their own lives. A truthful facing-up to one’s own prejudices and stereotypes about foreigners and members of other cultural groups will assist in the adjustment process.

3. Have the students keep a journal of their experiences and especially their reactions to intercultural differences—perhaps organized by categories such as people, food, language, customs, stories, pleasant surprises, disappointments, etc. Reading these over time gives students insight into how far they have progressed.

4. Encourage the students to be involved in independent travel while abroad (as if they need encouragement...). Gmelch (1997) found that in many years of taking students abroad in structured university programs, the independent travel they engage in on their own time has had major impacts on their learning experiences—perhaps more so than the classroom work. As students travel on their own, they learn from the need to "...constantly make decisions and deal with the demands of life in new and unfamiliar settings" (1997:475). The result was that, in having to cope with the unpredictability of travel, solving problems, making decisions about time and money, and learning to deal with their traveling companions, they became "...more confident, self-reliant, and adaptable" (1997:486). This, indeed, is what we in honors call experiential learning, and it is crucial that programs seize these learning opportunities for students to venture off on their own.

5. Students will vary in their degree of independence and insecurity, and those who develop the strength to venture out, take risks and get lost a bit will benefit most from the experience. They need to be encouraged to leave their former identities on the home campus and, however threatening, get immersed in the host culture.

6. Work with students to view their home country from the perspective of an outsider. Just as fish are oblivious to the water in which they swim, members of a society are ignorant of its basic assumptions and rules. Bill Bryson in his book, I'm a Stranger Here Myself, says, "Nothing makes you feel more like a native of your own country that to live where nearly everyone is not" (1999:3). Use this precious opportunity to assist students in the analysis of American culture from the stranger's point of view. The stranger or outsider is in a much better place to observe the taken for granted norms than the natives and can offer much new insight into the familiar. As an example, the US "love affair" with guns and its generous gun-owning policies and consequent gun violence are viewed as absolutely crazy by most of the outside world. A British physician told me that in her 20 years of practice in inner-city London hospitals, she had never once seen a gunshot wound. Even a short visit abroad will give the American another way of looking at our cultural understandings and the insight that it can be different elsewhere. As Shannon (1995:98) says, through study abroad, "...Americans learn one of the most important lessons of their life: The 'American Way' is not necessarily the best, the most efficient, or the smartest."
7. Emphasize to students that a bad experience with culture shock can ruin their sojourn—it has the potential of not only spoiling the “fun” aspect of the trip, but damaging the learning potential as well. The student who is miserable or hostile, or who hides out in the dorm, is hardly likely to get the most learning and personal development from the experience. The goal ought to be to work toward stage 4 of the process.

No matter how enriching an international experience, there comes a time when students must return home—to family, friends, and home campus. Reentry poses a potential for reverse culture shock, and students are rarely prepared for the unfamiliarity of returning home. Shannon (1995) argues that students learn more abroad than they realize, and often do not assimilate this until their return. Even though they have longed for the familiar while away, it all feels strange back home. Students may miss the foreign cultural habits they had adopted. As Shannon says, returning students “...realize that they are suffering from a malady without a name: a homesickness for a place that isn't home” (1995:102). At this point hopefully they begin to understand that they are capable of learning new ways of life and being at home anywhere. This is a valuable lesson and one that flourishes under the discussion and analysis of like-situated individuals.

While most universities offer some pre-trip orientation, very few offer students any formal program for, or even insight into, the reentry process. Research has established that reentry has many of the same features as the initial culture shock and varies with the degree of immersion in the new culture. In his study of student returnees, LaBrack reported that reentering students experienced difficulty because they had idealized their home cultures while away. They unconsciously expected that all at home would remain the same and were startled by any changes in the home environment. On returning home to America after 20 years in England, author Bill Bryson (1999) waxed rhapsodic over such Americanisms as the “dizzying abundance of absolutely everything,” including garbage disposals, junk food, and automobile cup-holders. He, however, was dismayed by American wastefulness, environmental insensitivity, and the McDonaldization of everything. Some authors conclude that the more comfortable the sojourner becomes in the new culture, the more difficult the transition home. In the worst case, “The failure to successfully meet the challenge of reverse culture shock can result in confusion and alienation or geographical expatriation or psychological expatriation. The extreme result is a zealous conversion to the new culture, not unlike a cult experience” (Hogan 1983). Heaven help the honors director who has to explain this to a frantic parent!

Honors programs and study abroad instructors can assist students with converting reentry shock into a learning experience in a similar fashion as for culture shock:

1. Can you go home again? Yes, but don’t expect home or its inhabitants to be just like they were when you left. Encourage students to keep in touch with family and friends at home (Brabant, et al, 1990). Keeping abreast of day-to-day developments can ease the transition upon return. This has been greatly simplified in recent years by the ease of e-mail and cheap phone cards.

2. Assist students to use their new insight to realize how their values, attitudes and expectations have been shaped by their home culture, and now their new...
host culture. Foreign travel experiences and seeing the world as a stranger can have a dramatic impact on one's view of the meaning of life and one's place in it (McNamee and Faulkner, 1999). Research has shown that students who study abroad receive long-lasting benefits—they even do better academically upon return to their home campuses. Their minds have been expanded forever!

3. Now that students have acculturated to their new environment and developed a taste for crusty breads or smelly cheeses, they must realize that their new preferences are not likely to be available at home (at least not at reasonable prices!). The same reaction as the original culture shock may occur when the newly familiar is not available in the old culture.

4. Students will return more enlightened perhaps about language, art, architecture, customs, foods, etc of their new culture, but they should realize that people at home will easily tire of their comparisons. Just as it is difficult to describe to someone how a Godiva chocolate tastes, it will be difficult to expect others to really understand your foreign experiences. Provide avenues for returning students to seek out others with similar experiences to share.

5. Most important academically, honors programs should provide opportunities for students to continue the conversation and reflection upon their return. Many study abroad courses have analysis and reflection as a built-in component. Others may offer returning students the opportunity to meet with prospective students and the general public to share their insights. For example, this year at UNCW, the Office of International Programs hosted a seminar as part of “intercultural week” entitled “The Young and the Restless,” which involved recent graduates talking of their international careers.

With appropriate training for the pitfalls of culture and reentry shock, the inherent benefits of international experiences for an honors education can be realized. How, then, can honors programs integrate study abroad into their programs? Must they offer long-term study abroad opportunities? Clearly, the model international experience for honors would involve an immersion-type foreign experience in which students live outside an enclave of Americans, interact regularly with students and others from the host country, operate somewhat independently of a guide or overly protective instructor, and involve substantial reflection upon return. However, even relatively short-term programs are valuable and may lead to further desire for foreign travel, study, and learning. Honors programs can beneficially offer short-term guided trips (say, over spring break or a winter term) to give students a taste for international travel and learning, and do these at a reasonable cost and no disruption to the their course of study.

**Short-term Honors Study Abroad: An Example**

Honors programs can offer study abroad experiences with attention to the realities of culture shock and reentry shock even in a short-term framework. The following example is one in which I was involved as an instructor and would be adaptable to many other honors programs.
In spring semester 1996, the UNCW Honors Scholars Program offered a section of a one-credit enrichment seminar with the focus on London, modeled on a City as Text® approach. For the first half of the semester, the class met weekly for an historical and cultural overview of the city. Guest speakers familiar with London introduced the students to their specialties. Each student then chose an aspect for further study. Some topics were London bridges, Keats in London, the Blitz, the tabloids, The Beatles’ London, Jack the Ripper, and the plague. The highlight of the course was a visit to London during spring break where the students participated in group events such as a tour of the British Museum, a walking tour of the East End with a curry dinner, and lectures by British professors at a London university. While in London, the students conducted first hand research on their research topics providing each student with a focus that organized his or her free time and point of view (see also Noran, 1995). This came to be a crucial aspect of the course, giving students opportunities to specialize in an area and later share their expertise with others.

Twenty students and three instructors went on the trip. Prior to leaving, there was a one-evening orientation to the logistics of the visit, which included a proper English meal and visiting students from English universities. The students were similar in their excitement and anticipation, but not their experiences. For many, it was their first time abroad or even out of North Carolina. Certainly, many had never been in a big city on their own. As part of the course, each student was required to take a day-trip out of London to a town of their choice such as Oxford or Bath. As mentioned earlier, research has shown that independent student travel, as distinct from the study abroad academic experience, is a rich source of learning self-sufficiency, self-esteem, and resourcefulness (Gmelch, 1997). As the students made their way in and out of London on the tube, buses, and railway, they developed a new sense of empowerment. Even though traveling to a foreign country with 20 undergraduates is a bit daunting, we managed to bring them all back safely and have the joy of watching them grow in knowledge and self-confidence.

A key feature of the class was reflection. Upon return, the class met to share experiences, present their projects orally, and collaborate in a class album. Each student's presentation reflected his or her expertise on the research topic and also his or her personal growth. I think it is informative to know that of the 20 students in the course, one went on to a full-year International Student Exchange Program (ISEP) exchange in France; one enrolled in the Honors Semester in New York the following year (another foreign country?); three went on to participate in semester study abroad programs in Wales or Australia, and one married her British boyfriend and went to live in England! The week in London was just a taste—but one that whet their appetite for more international experiences. They had become citizens of the world!

**Conclusion**

Globalization is a fact of modern life involving increasing economic cooperation and competition between nations and regions of the world, environmental interdependence, and the increasing ethnic and religious diversity of our home communities. Our students are likely to work and interact with persons of many cultural backgrounds. Our graduates will be involved with the world outside the US,
as even small business must deal with the issues of international trade, currency, and production. Travel and tourism are forecasted to become the largest world-wide income earner in the early decades of the 21st century. As the world is becoming more interdependent, the imperatives for global education are growing, and universities are responding by placing more emphasis and resources in international education. The American Council on Education (ACE) has called for changes in how institutions of higher education educate students about the world by calling for expanded emphasis on foreign language training and the understanding of cultural and global issues (ACE, 1995). Honors programs have a special mission in preparing their students for the global age. This will require honors programs to operate within the larger university goals relative to the increasing international dimension. Part of this process will involve working to lessen the obstacles which currently thwart students in their efforts to study abroad by finding creative solutions for scheduling, funding, and integrating international experiences into students' educational careers.

As we look toward the future, international experiences will no longer be viewed as "frills" on a college resume, but will increasingly become requirements for employment and advanced study. It is up to us as educators to ensure that the possible negative outcomes of culture and reentry shock do not detract from the potential for true personal growth and learning that is a realistic outcome of a study abroad experience.

As for my own reflection, now that I am safely back in my own office in North Carolina, surrounded by the souvenirs and academic trappings of my sojourn to England, I feel fortunate for the experience and the opportunity to share it with my students. The English breakfast tea I brought home is brewing, my e-mail from a colleague in England is on the screen, and the class notes I took are already dog-eared. My life is subtly, yet forever enriched, and I wish for the same for my colleagues and students.

Acknowledgment

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Works Consulted


Introduction to Section Three:  
Work and Play

Anne Ponder  
Colby-Sawyer College

Throughout our work on this volume, our own sense of unfolding possibility was buoyed by what we have learned from Catherine Cater. Her keen insights are always—always—offered with a sense of wonder and delight at what we may come to know.

Sam Schuman has captured just such a moment in his peroration, but not before explicating the idea of work, especially work in an academic setting. The balance in the rigorous work we undertake ourselves and the work we require of and inspire in others is found in his title, Labors of Love.

Paul Strong’s eloquent essay begins and ends in poetry. He guides us to conclude that “serious play” is essential for life, by taking us travelling to Italy. Whether at his daughter’s wedding or over a meal in Tuscany, his delight is obvious and persuasive. As is ours.
I want to speculate a bit about some of the connections between liberal learning and work. This might, at first, seem what those of us in early English literature would call a metaphysical conceit—the yoking together by violence of two seemingly unconnected concepts; an odd connection, in other words. I've been thinking about "work" a lot these days—as I get closer to retirement—because it is a notion which seems to link together a number of things happening in higher education generally, in my college in particular, and in my personal responses to both.

Certainly since my student days in the early '60's, the American work ethic has been taking its lumps. Who better to revisit and defend what is often seen as a remnant of our colonial Puritanism and our dominant Protestant ethic than the grandson of an immigrant Russian Jew!

Actually, what has obsessed me about work and college has been living in rural Minnesota. I'll return to this specific theme in a while.

On the national scene, post secondary education is in the midst of a frenzy of rediscovery of the virtues of combining work and learning. As most of you know better than I, these combinations come in several flavors and have different names. For example "internships." As I understand this term, it means students working, in a kind of apprentice role, often off campus (sometimes on campus), in for- or not-for-profit institutions, for payment and/or academic credit. So, a student can do an internship in sports medicine in the training room down at the gym for 2 credits, or she can do an internship for a semester at a bank across the country for course credit AND salary. Generally, internships seem to involve doing actual useful employable work, but doing it, in effect, with one's eyes open, so that at the same time you are taping ankles or attending board meetings, you are learning about overuse injuries or corporate decision-making. For years organizations like Campus Compact and CAEL have emphasized the back and forth interplay of doing something, then reflecting on what was discovered by doing it. That's why internships almost always involve writing a paper or making a presentation, or somehow demonstrating organized cogitation inspired by and on the actual work experience. Internships are often seen as excellent career preparation, and I suspect they are. (Indeed, in some fields, internships are required for advancement in professional education—e.g., in social work.) They are also seen, by students and by instructors, as an effective way to bridge the distance between the worlds of adult employment and collegiate, classroom instruction. It would be interesting to do some sort of national assessment to discover over, say, a 10 year period, how many students actually end up devoting a significant portion of their mature working lives to laboring in the field.
in which they did an internship. My guess would be that it would be a fairly small proportion, but that if you asked the former internship-taking students if their experience had been “worth it,” a huge majority would respond with enthusiastic affirmation.

Closely related to internships, sometimes bafflingly close, is the hottest current trend, service learning. It seems to me that the major difference between these two activities is that service learning involves placement in a work setting in which the emphasis is on advancing some common good—enriching the lives of senior citizens or planting trees or teaching American language and culture to recent arrivals or big brother/big sister programs with kids with disabilities, and the like. Such “good works” are coupled with overt curricular aims. A freshman English class “adopted” a Senior Citizens center, paid several visits, did lots of useful activities, then used those experiences as a basis for their writing assignments. The students were very heavily invested in the service activities, which made their writing far more engaged and passionate, and made them want to communicate effectively about something about which they came to care a great deal. That’s service learning. I suspect that if the same students had worked in the nursing home’s administrator’s office, learning about the business practices of elder-care, and written papers about that, for an economics or management class, that would have been an internship.

Then, of course, there’s volunteerism, which could be described by the cynic as service learning, without the learning. Actually, my guess would be that most students learn every bit as much in their volunteer activities as in most any other, but it is less planned, less curricularly based, far more individualized and idiosyncratic, and often not overtly articulated. Students have always volunteered to do good works in their college communities; today’s students seem quite energetic and eager in this realm, and many of our small college towns, like mine, benefit measurably from this virtuous dedication. I volunteer. It makes me feel good. It makes the lives of others happier or more comfortable. Who knows, I may be surprised to discover that, contrary to my impression, I really do have an immortal soul, and quite by accident in such activities I’m promoting its salvation or mitigating its damnation.

A fourth kind of work program is that embedded in the culture of a Warren Wilson or Blackburn or Deep Springs College: students, by requirement, actually do a significant amount of the work of keeping the physical campus going. At Warren Wilson, they tend the buildings and grounds and run a farm; at Blackburn they even build the buildings. At Deep Springs, the college subsists as a working ranch, with the students the hands. I am drawn to this ethos. It suggests to students that they are the owners and stewards of their college, not pampered aristocrats who are indulged in their intellectual endeavors by a cadre of lesser mortals who clean their bathrooms, erase their graffiti, cook their meals, cut the grass, sweep the halls and paint the woodwork. In my limited experience, students with that feeling of proprietorship have something of the same sense of control, empowerment and engagement with the studies they pursue in such colleges, and that’s a good thing for learning.

Of course, there’s also “work-study”—students who have campus jobs to help pay for their financial aid. Often, those jobs actually involve learning some useful things, even the jobs washing dishes in the dining hall or socks in the gym. At my school, we actually have a kind of employment called an Administrative Internship

86 JOURNAL OF THE NATIONAL COLLEGIATE HONORS COUNCIL
where students get paid to help keep the college running. Such an assignment might involve processing gifts in the Development Office, or doing the accounting in a faculty Division headquarters, or doing a survey of the economic impact of the college on the local community for the Chancellor.

Of course at most institutions, students work for a living or to help cover expenses off campus. Some places are populated almost exclusively by students who have full time jobs. The mixed and multiple demands of family, work, and school can be a source of stress and complication for some students, but it also seems to me, anecdotally, that students who are holding down outside jobs often bring more zeal and commitment to their classwork than do their full-time student colleagues.

Then there are the rest of us who actually work for our livings in colleges and universities. While I have never been much of a fan of faculty unionism, it has also struck me on occasion that it might be a good thing if we acknowledged that what we are doing when we are on campus is “working.” Is it possible that one reason that, at every time and in every place, “faculty morale is at an all time low” is because somehow it seems wrong to us to acknowledge that in some ways what we do to earn our salaries has some things in common with what everyone else who works does? Some Monday mornings we don’t want to get up and go in to work. Some days we try hard, and things don’t turn out as we hoped they would in spite of our best labors. Sometimes we want to make more money. (Parenthetically, it has been fascinating to me, in 20 years in academic administration, how universally people who are asking for more money for themselves swear that they aren’t really asking for more money. Whenever a conversation begins, “It’s not really the money I’m talking about…” I know it is.) We long, occasionally, for vacations and retirement, just like steamfitters and lawyers and roofing contractors and priests. Our work is often hard, and it is usually wonderfully rewarding. But it’s work. Maybe if we saw it that way, we’d be happier.

Here’s what I’m most fascinated by, though. In Morris, Minnesota, on the wind-blasted great plains not all that far from Catherine Cater’s Fargo, students work at learning. Oh, they play sometimes; they work at McDonald’s sometimes, but mostly they work very hard and very effectively at the labor of learning. I like to tell prospective faculty at our college this story; soon after I came to the University of Minnesota’s Morris campus, I taught a Chaucer course in which 27 students enrolled. That in itself surprised me a bit, since the class wasn’t really required for anything. At the end of the term, I scanned my grade record book, looked across all the rows of students’ names and down the columns of papers and quizzes and tests, and realized that all of the students in that class had done every single recordable thing I had given them to do, when they were supposed to do it. Not one test missed, not one paper late. This had not happened to me before. I began to ambush colleagues in the hallways, like some modern ancient mariner, and tell them about my wonderful class. The standard reaction was: “Oh, that won’t happen ALL the time.” In other words, while this sort of performance from a class is not universal, there’s nothing particularly rare or remarkable about it. The commentators were, as it happens, right. It doesn’t happen all the time. It does happen often, most recently in the course I taught last year. The University of Minnesota Morris is the kind of place where, when I offered students in an introduction to poetry class extra credit if they were prepared to memorize and recite a poem of at least 14 lines, every single
A student in the class did it. It is the kind of place where if a Professor slacks off and lightens up the syllabus too much, the students blast her or him on their end-of-term evaluations. Occasionally all this is irritating. Sometimes students seem so intent upon intellectual consumption that they seem unwilling to discuss things, and prefer to digest great gobs of unchewed truth. I learned very quickly at UMM not to begin classes with my customary query, “What do YOU want to talk about today?” On the other hand, if I start with a question like “So, why do you think the play is called Midsummer-Night’s Dream?” or “What do you think the Wife of Bath thinks would be an ideal marriage?” or “Would someone remind us why it is that King Henry thinks he needs to make a pilgrimage to the holy land?” I’ll be greeted with a sea of hands.

I’m bragging. And I don’t want to suggest I’m at a perfect school, nor one with perfect students. There are plenty of folks who run screaming from Morris, Minnesota after one winter.

But our students do come to our campus with the assumption that being a college student means working hard at collegiate learning. The average student on our campus enrolls for MORE than a full time load, and occasionally our calculated FTE exceeds our head count. We have to keep telling students that triple majors might not always be a great idea. This makes an incredible difference. It makes a difference in the classroom and it makes a difference in campus culture. At Morris, nobody worries that when you put students on campus committees, they will shirk their work. Rather, we worry that they will shame the rest of us by doing their homework so thoroughly they make the non-students look lazy.

Let me make the linkage between this sort of student work ethic and liberal learning, because I believe it is a powerful one.

E. M. Forester said, famously, “only connect.” Making connections is, it seems to many, the quintessence of a liberal education. At liberal arts colleges, and in colleges of Arts and Sciences and, indeed, in the liberal arts requirements of almost all schools, curricular structures and sequences, graduation requirements, the whole fabric of learning, is based on the premise that understanding the relationships between different fields of knowledge, and different methodologies of learning, is intellectually liberating. The core of true intellectual freedom is not knowing something about poetry and something about mathematics, it is understanding something about the ways those two systems of symbol manipulation are similar and different; it is connecting that freshman calculus course with the junior class in 17th century British writers that makes the difference.

When we understand not just that this is a mountain, and that a river, but the way in which the entire landscape is connected, we can move about in it in a purposeful and effective manner. So, proposition #1 is that the central act of liberating learning is grasping the connections between things.

Proposition #2 is that institutions can’t really perform that act for learners. Even in colleges with a starkly unitary curriculum, like, say St. John’s of Annapolis and New Mexico, my guess is that this doesn’t happen as much as desirable, and for the rest of us, it is impossible. At St. John’s, at least if one is teaching a third year class, one knows what every single student has had for the first two years, and they know it of each other. If I don’t know in my 17th century poetry class who has taken freshman calculus and who has taken statistics instead, and who has yet to meet her math requirement, there is only so far I can go. Most students, in most colleges,
will take something like 30-50 courses as undergraduates, and at many schools Student A's 32 courses may have no overlap with Student B's. How do we make this smorgasbord coherent? Well, we often suggest that you need something from the salad table, some main course, then a bit of desert. We even suggest that the offerings should be sampled in order. But rarely, if I may beat this gastronomic metaphor into the ground, do we notice how the tart dressing on that particular salad complements the sauce on that fish and contrasts with the sweetness of this cake (in Minnesota, it would be Jello). When it comes to making the essential connections which bind together an undergraduate career into a liberating experience, we lead students to water; if we are good, we tell them to drink; then we leave them on their own.

The conclusion I draw from these two propositions is that it is the students who are in the habit of self-generated working on their educations who actually do drink, who put things together. The final task in liberal learning, the one which pulls the whole enterprise together and makes it make sense, will only be done by those willing to do the hard work of doing it themselves. If it is the job of liberal education to build liberated minds, this is a construction job which requires hard labor, and it must be done one hard working individual mind at a time. Sometimes, one hears about active learners and passive learners, but I would argue that what we want our students to learn can only be acquired by action and activity, and moreover, those acts are guaranteed to be arduous, long, trying. Liberal learning is not for the lazy.

How do we cultivate this work ethic? It is nice to be living and working in a region where it is a dominant trait of the culture. The rural upper Midwest has heaps of flaws, ranging from an inability to make a decent cup of coffee to an often humorless view of the world (remember, Minnesota was settled by folks who were too dour to make it as farmers in Norway!), but there is certainly a pervasive belief that the route to salvation is one of unremitting work. It is my suspicion that this is less likely in, say, Santa Barbara.

I can think of a couple of mechanisms for building this kind of student culture:

1. One is those sorts of other work options I mentioned earlier: internships, service learning, campus work programs. People get in the habit of working hard, and experiences in attractive, rewarding, challenging collegiate work activities, it seems to me, have to help build that habit.

2. Secondly, I think we need to tell students about all this—from the beginnings of their careers to the end. If we are expecting them to do the intellectual labor of exploring and understanding the connections which make their educations meaningful, it is a good idea to clue them in. I don't think this is a message which cannot be framed in a manner which is easily grasped by bright college freshmen, and certainly it better be something they can understand before they graduate. We need to take and make a few opportunities to be explicit about our expectations along the way.

3. We can model in our own lives exemplary patterns of hard intellectual work. Few of us are shirkers, in spite of the occasional bad press. It is probably valuable to tackle, periodically, some new project which really challenges us to
break new ground—the rather obvious awkward laboriousness of such endeavors is useful. Moreover, I don't mind students seeing me do physical work: it is a good emblem of cerebral labors.

In our words and in our lives, we can propose, in an era of television zombies and computer game addicts, that there is joy in work. I can think of no person I know who better exemplifies that link than the one we honor in this volume, Catherine Cater. No one has worked longer or harder for the NCHC than Catherine. No one has served our organization more effectively. No one has thrown herself into that work with more glee than Catherine. Catherine's obvious joy in much of her work in no way diminishes her toughness: anyone who thinks Catherine Cater is just a cute little old lady is in for an astonishing and quick awakening.

Let me finish my work here with an image of Catherine which I cherish. It is one of many. A year or so ago, I had the opportunity to spend a bit of time on Catherine's fairly nearby campus, and during my visit I went to a rather nice dinner with her and with two of her colleagues, two guys around my age or younger, who, as it happens, succeeded her, sequentially, as Director of the Honors Program at NDSU. We emerged from dinner after dark, but on a rather balmy North Dakota evening. There was a full or nearly full moon. As we meandered across the parking lot, after a good dinner after a good day's work, in the soft air, and in the light of the moon, Catherine raised her arms and twirled around once or twice and said in the voice of wonder of a ten year old girl, "Oh, isn't it beautiful!" It was a great moment: three middle aged guys in ties, standing flat-footed in a parking lot on the outskirts of Fargo, North Dakota, bewitched, enchanted, caught up in the magic of this ever-lively woman, dancing in the moonlight. I think I'm still just a bit spellbound. For that gift, and for so many more, for myself and for all of us, thanks, Catherine.
At the memorial service for his nephew last summer, Senator Ted Kennedy read a poem, the same one the Irish Ambassador recited shortly after John F. Kennedy Jr. was born:

We wish to the new child,
A heart that can be beguiled,
By a flower,
That the wind lifts,
And it passes.
If the storm breaks for him,
May the trees shake for him,
Their blossoms down.

In the night that he is troubled,
May a friend wake for him,
So that his time be doubled,
And at the end of all loving and love
May the Man above,
Give him a crown.

Reading those words I was reminded of how it is we turn to poetry at the most profound moments at our of our lives, births, weddings, and deaths, when we wish to express “thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.”

Among the arts, perhaps only music shares the power to console; moreover, the times we wish for such succor are usually not nearly as dramatic as an untimely death. A simple example: when, by the luck of the draw, I have a collection of students who refuse to meet me halfway and engage in the work most classes do willingly and with pleasure, my thoughts turn to the matador Pedro Romero in The Sun Also Rises who gets a bull which does not see well. Such a bull makes it impossible to do one’s best work, for such a bull cannot respond properly to the cape. Nonetheless, Hemingway’s bullfighter, a professional, does the best he can with what he has; so, smiling inwardly as I am reminded of him, I think “OLE!” and do my best with a class that sees less clearly than one might wish.

At my first job, trying to teach art history and literature at an engineering school where many students and faculty did not value the liberal arts, I often found myself
pondering something I had been told: two years after graduating, engineers wish their courses had taught more of the applied math and science they need on the job. In ten years they wish they’d learned more basic math and science. Twenty years out, they wish they’d spent more time studying literature, music, and art.

I assume this is because as we grow older and begin to see things sub specie aeternitatis, we come to better understand what really matters. At the top of my writing syllabus is Annie Dillard’s dictum: “Write as if you were dying. At the same time, assume you write for an audience consisting solely of terminal patients. That is, after all, the case. What would you begin writing if you knew you would die soon? What could you say to a dying person that would not enrage by its triviality?” Students don’t much like hearing that, and they like it even less when I remind them that when class is over they are 50 minutes closer to dying. They’d better be paying attention; or, if a class isn’t worth 50 minutes of their lives, they’d better find one that is.

Sometimes this leads to a discussion of “famous last words.” On his deathbed in a cheap hotel, Oscar Wilde is supposed to have looked around and said, “Either this wallpaper goes or I do.” Civil War General John Sedgwick, at the battle of Spotsylvania Court House, remarked, “Why, they couldn’t hit an elephant at this dist——” There’s Hamlet’s “The rest is silence” and Gus McCall’s “Woodrow, quite a party.” On his deathbed Brendan Behan turned to the nun who had just wiped his brow and said, “Ah, bless you Sister, may all your sons be bishops.” And, of course, there is Charles Foster Kane’s “Rosebud,” a true deathbed perspective on what matters and what doesn’t. But there is another class of less familiar last words, those never heard because they’ve never been uttered anywhere, on anyone’s deathbed, and first among them must be the following: “I wish I had spent more time at the office.” I assume this is what those engineers come to realize when they hit middle age.

I fear for 18 year olds who come to college wanting to be investment bankers, having swallowed the American dream, hook, line and sinker, fully expecting that making a bundle is the fast track to happiness, students who have never read An American Tragedy or The Great Gatsby or Walden, or Death of a Salesman, or seen Citizen Kane. It’s not my point that these novels or films would move them away from investment banking, nor do I think most of us teach these books with that intent. But until a young man or woman realizes there is something uniquely at work here—one never hears, for example, of the Bulgarian Dream—it may not occur to them to step back and examine it as an “assumption” rather than as a “truth.” The unexamined life may or may not be worth living, but an illiberal education most probably means that we live less than freely, enslaved by unexamined assumptions and prejudices. Had more students the chance to dispassionately examine their assumptions, there might be fewer middle-aged men and women waking up wondering, “What right did that 18 year old have to decide I was going to become an investment banker?” If they had read Thoreau as undergrads, they would have had the chance to at least consider his dictum that “superfluous wealth can buy superfluities only” and not possibly have it come as a shock twenty five years later. Must we be condemned to lives of quiet desperation, as Thoreau felt our forbears in Concord were? Reading Walden will not prevent it, of course -- many have read it and not learned its lessons—but not reading it makes the trap of repeating the past all the more likely.
Some years ago my wife and I bumped into some other Americans in the Sistine Chapel. Turned out they didn't have the foggiest notion of what all that stuff was on the ceiling. So, ever the teacher, I gave them the explanations; the story goes that Bramante, the architect, and Raphael, the painter, were so envious of Michelangelo that they encouraged Pope Julius II to force this peerless sculptor, but novice painter, to cover the enormous empty space of the Sistine ceiling with frescoes in order to sidetrack his career; that Michelangelo, who wanted to sculpt, not paint, tried to talk his way out of it; that when it was half done and the work in progress was shown, its impact was so great that Bramante, more jealous than ever, implored the Pope to take Michelangelo off the job rather than allow him to finish this masterpiece; that it took Michelangelo three years to paint more than 10,000 square feet, and in his hurry to finish so he could get back to sculpting, he sometimes painted in the darkness with a candle strapped to his forehead so he could see what he was doing.

After my mini-lecture we had a chat. In what part of Rome were they staying? They weren't sure. What were their plans for the rest of their stay? They had none. Did they know any Italian? Nope. We spoke of the Forum, Hadrian's Villa and the Tivoli Gardens, the Pantheon and the Piazza Navona; it was news to them. They didn't know about Giolitti's, that wonderful ice cream parlor. They might as well have been visiting the dark side of the moon. These people were obviously well off. They'd made a lot of money somehow, but seemed vaguely bored and a bit disoriented, and as I stood there in the Sistine Chapel, in the middle of the Vatican, a temple of the arts, I felt profoundly sad.

My love for Italy and things Italian goes back to my undergraduate days studying art history. I've never understood why I am so drawn to painting, but it is a central fact of my life. My first visit to Italy—to the Sistine Chapel, Botticelli and Bronzino in the Uffizi, Giotto's frescoes in Padua and the mosaics in St. Marks and Ravenna—was incredibly exciting. Whenever I am in the presence of such beauty I think of Walter Pater -- "In this short day of frost and sun . . . art comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moment's sake."

Traveling in Italy has brought me many moments of "the highest quality" and, more, given me a passion for things Italian, among them Frances Mayes books, Under the Tuscan Sun and Bella Tuscany, which concern her attempt to begin a new life after an ugly divorce. If her books have a subplot, aside from a celebration of Italian wine and food -- the difference between crostini and bruschette, for example -- it is to articulate the richness and beauty and fullness of Italian life. In Bella Tuscany she writes, "[t]he Italians claim more time for their lives . . . At home in California, time often feels like a hula-hoop, a ceaseless whirl on a body fixed but in a rocking place. I could kiss the ground here, not to feel myself in that tight space where the past gnaws the future but in the luxuriant freedom of a long day to walk out for a basket of plums under the great wheel of the Mediterranean sun" (250). Again, along these same lines: "I feel as well a growing distrust of spending too much of one's life deifying work. Finding that running balance among ambition, solitude, stimulation, adventure—how to do this? I heard Ramsey Clark, then Attorney General, speak when I was in college. All I remember him saying was something like, 'When I die, I want to be so exhausted that you can throw me on the scrap heap.' He wanted to be totally consumed by his life" (100).
Does this not ring true to us work-obsessed Americans? Mayes' words are a cautionary reminder, another version of those wonderful *carpe diem* lines,

> Time will not be ours forever;  
> He at length our good will sever.  
> Spend not then his gifts in vain.  
> Suns that set may rise again;  
> But if once we lose this light,  
> 'Tis with us perpetual night.

More prosaically, there are John Wayne's thoughts on the subject. When working on his last film, "The Shootist," Wayne was dying of cancer, and he knew it. One morning someone on the set said, "Boy, it's a beautiful day." To which Wayne replied, "Every day you wake up is a beautiful day."

To those in the teaching biz, these sentiments are old news. But to a college freshman they may well be a breaking headline. Poetry, said Ezra Pound, is news which stays news. But how can we communicate to our students, some of whom may never have worked a day in their lives, the down'side of "spending too much of one's life deifying work." How can we help them find "that running balance among ambition, solitude, stimulation, adventure."

One way, I believe, is to broaden their view of which things are worthy of study in college, and not privilege and deify courses in their "major," that is, courses which may lead to a profession. The bane of too many undergraduates' lives is the time they spend worrying about their major, which is often just another way of worrying about a career. Calling it a "major" makes it sound all important and implies everything else is secondary, a "minor" or an "elective." And what are those electives? All too often they're the courses in poetry and music and film and novels and painting that give so much pleasure. Why shouldn't college be a time to focus on serious play, on those things that amateurs, that is, lovers of learning, do for pleasure when they grow up? What would happen if an Honors Program made such courses the basis of its curriculum? In fact, I have tried to get away with this at my school, and I can tell you what, given the opportunity, some people choose to do in this situation.

Each fall and spring, when I send out the call for Honors seminars, faculty are asked to propose a course they feel passionately about, to experiment, to try something new. It goes without saying that this gives a freshness to many of the offerings and a degree of commitment one simply would not expect from someone teaching the same old, same old. When faculty are asked to offer seminars on anything they like, on topics totally unrelated to their "specialty" not to mention their "field," not surprisingly they choose to explore the very things adults do when they are free to do as they like. "Reading courses" of all sorts are most popular; the second largest category of seminars, which would have pleased Thoreau mightily, might be called "things of the spirit": an anthropologist on alternative healing, a specialist in religion on spirituality and the counterculture, a drama teacher on T'ai Chi, a psychologist on Zen, a sociologist on religion and para-religion, and an English teacher on the art of meditation. A few years back a political scientist offered
a seminar entitled “Vision Quest” which involved building a sweat lodge, fasting, and prayer. Another category of seminars which are serious fun deal with the arts: writing and producing a musical, building a lap dulcimer and learning to play it, studying the blues, or opera. There have been many courses on film—film noir, the detective film, Humphrey Bogart and Stanley Kubrick. Of course there is a more “normal” selection of such things as Chaos Theory, Superconductivity, Sleep and Dreams, Knots and Surfaces, The Left Side of the Brain, Plato and Einstein, but there’s also Food as Cultural Metaphor. Is that too far over the top? Some on my campus think so—whatever happened to intensive calculus? But why shouldn’t students learn something about cooking in college—and I don’t mean on their own, in the privacy of their own kitchens. My wife took great pleasure trying to recreate that wonderful pasta with gorgonzola and pistachios we loved in Venice. Why not share this secret?

I think the same approach makes sense for the senior thesis, that staple of Honors Programs, usually involving research, often a more intensive version of work done in the classroom or in the lab. Most students know that’s normative, and that’s what most choose. But just as faculty can be encouraged to teach to their non professional interests, students can be encouraged to follow their heart, which is often in a field far from their major. And to my way of thinking the most satisfying senior projects, the ones in which students are most invested and which achieve the most striking results, are this sort of labor of love. What else would one expect from an entomologist who spent untold hours of her senior year attempting, by trial and error, to recreate her grandmother’s recipes and to construct a cookbook of them? Or the artist who made a book of her father’s poetry—handset, hand bound, with her own graphics? Or the English major who spent over $700 on material and much more of her senior year than she probably should have researching and then creating a dress and undergarments for Shakespeare’s Viola? Or the pre-med who wrote a jazz piece and talked the jazz ensemble into a public performance? These are the things that we, adults, might do if free to do what we wish. As educators, I believe, we owe it to our students to validate these pursuits as worthy of their time at the University.

Some years ago when my English Department was writing a description of itself, of what we did and what we stood for, someone suggested the old saw, “There’s no money in poetry, but there’s no poetry in money, either.” Our discussion reminded me of the three bears. Papa bear thought it too defensive; Mama bear thought it too in your face. Baby bear, me, thought it was just right. Why not say to the more or less unformed 18 year olds who come into our grasp, some of whom believe the function of college is to enable them to become day traders, and who view their undergraduate years as a kind of apprenticeship to that end: look! work is an important part of life—teaching is, after all, a job, and I love it—but you neglect serious play at your peril.

For we know things about the long view that they don’t. As much as we may love teaching, we know full well how much we value time spent away from work—in truth, for some of us that’s quite a bit of time—summers not teaching, for example. But at the least there are evenings and weekends. Some day they may retire from that job they so eagerly seek. They might even opt for “early retirement.” Common wisdom is that 40% of those who reach 65 can expect to live to 90. Surely our students are not thinking of how to spend those years pleasurably and
productively, but we can. What will they do in those 25 years? Watch TV? Play golf? Water the lawn?

Not if we've done our job. Not if we've introduced them to the things educated people do for pleasure. We read. We meditate. We cook. We listen to music, and we go to the movies. We travel— to the Pantheon and to Giolitti's. We learn the difference between crostini and bruschette, between Montalcino and Montepulciano. And when we are in the Sistine Chapel, or standing in the Uffizi looking at the Botticellis, we enjoy them all the more because they are not a blur of confusing images—our minds are filled with what we learned once, about Pope Julius II or Neo-Platonism. We have more to say about these beautiful objects, to our companions, to our children, and most importantly to ourselves, than "that's different."

I began by speaking of poetry and how we call on it at the most profound moments of our lives. It seems unlikely that any of us will be in the Kennedys' place, expecting a wedding one day, preparing words for a funeral the next. That is a cruel circumstance. More likely, death will not intrude and we will not need consoling; the wedding will proceed as planned; poetry serves those times as well. I was most conscious of this last spring when my daughter asked what I was going to read at her wedding. After a lifetime of teaching poetry, and of reading it to her as a child, I had to choose words that, I hoped, would express my love for her and my hope for her future, and add beauty to the ceremony. I would like you to read now what I read then, Miller Williams' "A Poem for Emily," my hope being nothing more than that it "comes to you, proposing frankly to give nothing but the highest quality to your moments as they pass, and simply for those moments' sake":

Small fact and fingers and farthest one from me,
a hand's width and two generations away,
in this still present I am fifty-three.
You are not yet a full day.

When I am sixty-three, and you are ten,
and you are neither closer nor as far,
your arms will fill with what you know by then,
the arithmetic and love we do and are.

When I by blood and luck am eighty-six
and you are some place else and thirty-three
believing in sex and god and politics
with children who look not at all like me,

some time I know you will have read them this
so they will know I love them and say so
and love their mother. Child, whatever is
is always or never was. Long ago,
a day I watched a while beside your bed,
I wrote this down, a thing that might be kept a while, to tell you what I would have said
when you were who knows what and I was dead
which is I stood and loved you while you slept.
About the contributors

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