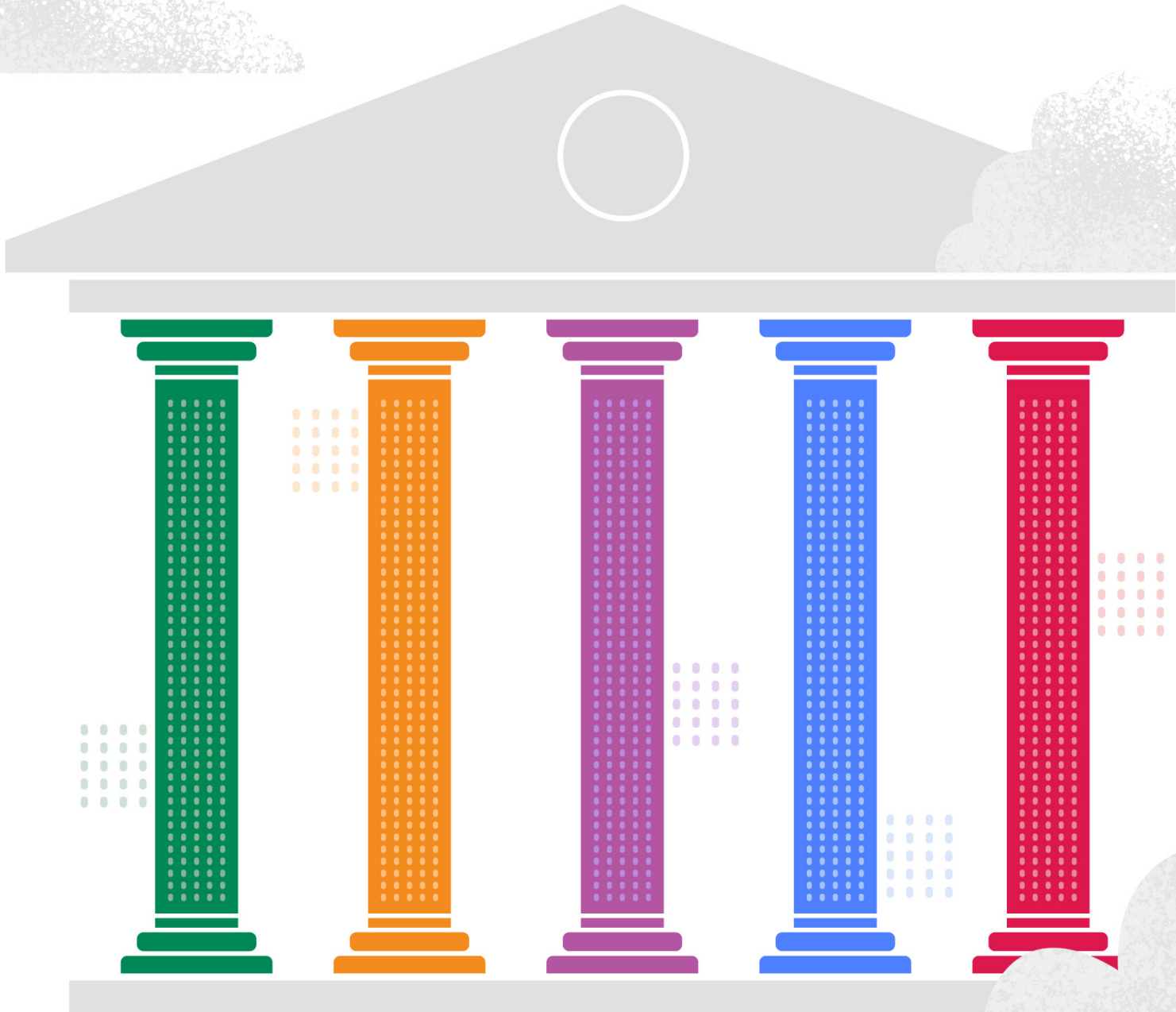# Revamping Curriculum Management: Optimizing Academic Operations

Coursedog

Breaking Down Barriers

Higher education is the key to promoting socioeconomic mobility. Even as higher education is experiencing major changes, like digital transformation or the long-lasting effects of a global pandemic, the core truth remains that it is still the best path for financial, social, and even mental wellbeing.

Despite these benefits, only 37 percent of students enrolled in higher education institutions will complete their degree. Misalignment and inefficiencies in academic operations often creates barriers to student success that contribute to this dismal completion rate. Coursedog's mission is to enable higher ed institutions to break down barriers to opportunity for students, and we believe that higher education's value will become stronger than ever with modern software.

Student Centered Scheduling

Approximately 90% of students reported that their ability to register for classes with few conflicts and having clarity on their program requirements contributes heavily to their satisfaction with their academic experience. While academic operations cover every part of the course lifecycle from curriculum development to scheduling and reporting, statistics like these explain why many institutions start rethinking their academic operations processes by focusing on scheduling.

This was certainly true for the Chaminade University of Honolulu team. Historically, Chaminade scheduled each semester by rolling over from the prior semester and making minimal changes. They wanted a more student-centered scheduling approach, and now they are able to accomplish that by easily accessing data and analytics to proactively schedule their semester based on what students really need. With retention being more important than ever, creating the foundation of a data informed, student-centered schedule means the Chaminade team is on the path to setting their students up for success.

The Burden of Manual Processes

Along with scheduling processes, institutions are struggling with other barriers in academic operations such as less time for curricular innovation, incomplete or non-existent course demand data, and inaccurate or inaccessible public catalogs. Our research shows that university administrators are spending 60% of their time on manual, often duplicative, data entry tasks and very few have the right data for decision-making.

Dallas Baptist University experienced these frustrations with manual processes and were looking for a solution to help them. Like many institutions, DBU had a fairly unique approach to their academic operations processes and wanted to optimize and improve efficiencies without necessarily rethinking their entire process. DBU team has now been able to reduce errors and become more efficient, saving them months of work. The time saved by using an integrated academic operations platform means they now have the bandwidth to refocus on innovation and student success on their campus.

Higher education is not going to stop experiencing change anytime soon. As institutions wrestle with the implications of cultural, political, and even physical changes to the world around them, the focus on student success will always remain the same. Understanding and optimizing your academic operations is a foundational part of creating a sustainable, flexible institution that cultivates an environment that allows students to thrive.

Sincerely,

Justin Wenig
Coursedog Co-Founder & CEO

Introduction

Colleges and universities change their curriculums all the time. Some of the changes are large, such as a college orienting its curriculum around health-related majors. Other changes appear small, such as eliminating a department with few majors. Changes can be controversial because of the way they alter a college's academic offerings, and also because they affect people's jobs.

This booklet features examples of colleges revamping their curriculums for a variety of reasons. And there are essays about curricular change.

Inside Higher Ed will continue to cover these issues. We welcome your thoughts on this compilation and areas for future coverage.

–The Editors
editor@insidehighered.com
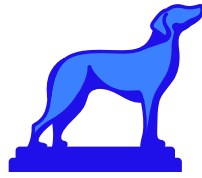
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Liberal Arts Meets Women's Leadership in Health

Women's liberal arts college is not the first to orient its curriculum around a singular topic, and experts say it likely won't be the last.

By Emma Whitford // February 25, 2021

A handful of colleges have debuted health-related programs during the pandemic, and Salem College just joined their ranks.

The small women's liberal arts college in Winston-Salem, N.C., announced Wednesday that it will begin to offer three new health-related majors -- health sciences, health humanities and health advocacy and humanitarian systems -- beginning next fall. The college will also unveil a curriculum revamp that centers on leadership and health.

Despite what the announcement's timing would suggest, Salem's curricular changes were in the works long before the pandemic roiled colleges last spring. Susan Henking, interim president, said that the college's board and the campus worked together to develop the new curriculum.

Several years ago, the college's Board of Trustees sought to differentiate Salem from other liberal arts institutions. Choosing a focus area helped the college "resist the homogenization of American higher education," Henking said.

It's critical for liberal arts institutions to differentiate themselves and show students why the education they offer is relevant, said Rick Hesel, principal at Art & Science Group, a higher education consulting firm.

COURTESY OF SALEM COLLEGE
Salem College announced a new academic model and undergraduate experience.

"If they don't, I think their survival in the long term is in question," Hesel said. "We've done a number of studies on the liberal arts, and just the mere words give institutions a disadvantage, we found."

Salem is not the first liberal arts institution to try to break away from the pack. Agnes Scott College in Decatur, Ga., has its students focusing on leadership and global dynamics through a signature experience program called SUMMIT. Mills College in Oakland, Calif., also created a signature experience program several years ago.

Health is a particularly good focus area, Hesel said. Many colleges are currently looking to expand their health care and health-related programs. Saint Joseph's University in

Philadelphia recently announced a plan to acquire the University of the Sciences and along with it a slate of health sciences programs. A few years ago, Wheeling University in West Virginia gutted its liberal arts programs but left its health-care programs intact.

"The handwriting is on the wall," Hesel said. "We have an aging population. There's a genomics revolution going on that provides encouraging promise for health care, so a lot of places are moving in this direction."

But many colleges are only looking to add health-care programs, and Salem is distinct in choosing to incorporate health into all its offerings, Hesel added.

Before it settled on health leader-

ship, the board examined county-level data that answered questions about what career paths most interested high schoolers. It found that many potential college students were looking at health care. The new focus area fits the skill sets of current Salem students, too -- nearly 90 percent of Salem students who graduate with a degree from the natural sciences or mathematics departments are accepted into health-related programs, according to the college.

The board created a set of parameters for the curricular changes and then handed the reins over to the faculty.

"The board has established a set of guiding expectations in terms of an overall trajectory for health leadership," said Daniel Prosterman, vice president for academic and student affairs and dean at Salem. "In terms of the development of the majors, the decisions with regard to the curriculum and the co-curriculum, that was then completed by a campus-designed team that's composed of faculty leaders as well as a variety of members of staff from different sectors of the college."

Faculty members and college boards are notorious for clashing over curricular and programmatic changes, but that hasn't been the case at Salem, Henking and Prosterman said.

"Faculty governance adjusted itself to be able to act more quickly -- without being asked to do so -- and has really taken a leadership role in a way that I think challenges that narrative that boards are fast and presidents are fast and faculty are slow," Henking said.

The new majors will not require any additional funding at this time, and the college doesn't plan to hire any new faculty or staff members to support the changes. Instead, Henking described funding for the new programs as a redeployment of resources. The college hopes to build on the new programs in the future and may end up adding a few more employees. It will not cut any programs or employees in order to make room for the new majors.

"We wish to build a lot more things over time that will require fundrais-ing, and we are in the process of moving that forward in a fairly aggressive way," Henking said.
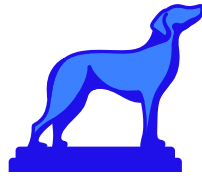
The new focus will hopefully attract new students as well as external partnerships, said Lucy Rose, a former Food and Drug Administration executive and global health-care consultant who is vice chair of Salem's board.

"We expect this transformation to attract more students, partnerships and funding," Rose wrote in an email. "We're excited that our plan, which will be implemented in phases, will offer us an opportunity to work with new partners and organizations that share in our values and will have a direct benefit in developing a new pipeline of women leaders in health."

Salem College's undergraduate enrollment has dropped in recent years. During the 2018-19 academic year, Salem enrolled only 677 full-time undergraduate students, compared with nearly 1,000 during the 2015-16 academic year. The college also enrolls some graduate students and adult learners who are older than 23. ■

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Pulling the Plug on Philosophy

Citing low enrollment, the University of Nebraska at Kearney plans to cut its philosophy major, following the recommendation made by a state board. Students and faculty are fighting to save the program.

By Josh Moody // January 5, 2022

Students and faculty are scrambling to save the philosophy major at the University of Nebraska at Kearney after state and campus officials proposed axing the program because it is underenrolled.

The recommendation to eliminate the philosophy major at UNK was first handed down from Nebraska's Coordinating Commission for Post-secondary Education in 2019. At the time, UNK administration asked for the chance to build up the major and increase the number of graduates. The expectation from CCPE was for the program to graduate seven students a year among an undergraduate population that hovers around 5,000. CCPE numbers, however, show an average of fewer than two philosophy graduates a year at UNK since the major was first approved in 2004.

Now it appears that time has run out: UNK leadership has officially requested permission from the Nebraska Board of Regents to wind down the philosophy major and bar new enrollments.

Philosophy faculty are indignant. They say the university hasn't done its part to grow the program, citing reduced humanities requirements in the general education curriculum, which have resulted in fewer students taking philosophy classes, and administrators dismissing
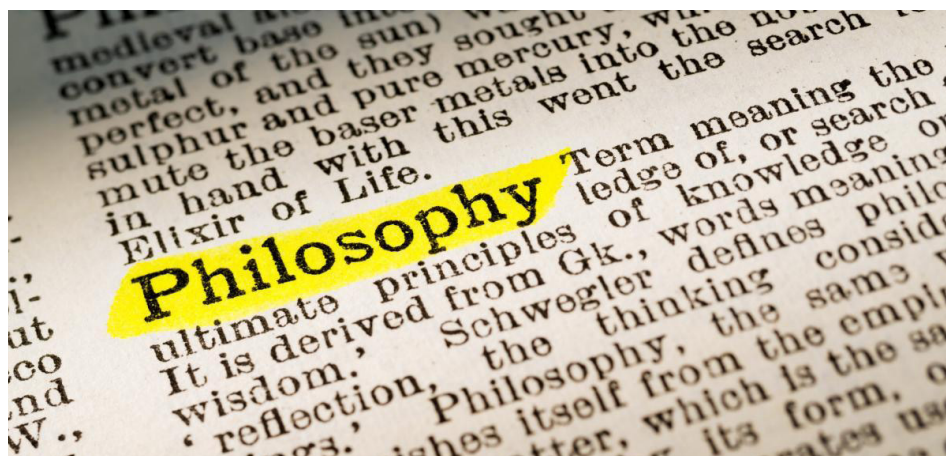
STOCKCAM/ISTOCK/GETTY IMAGES

proposed programs with an interdisciplinary focus.

Finding Philosophy Majors

Philosophy majors are typically students who take an introductory class and get hooked on the topic, said David Rozema, a UNK professor and the philosophy program director. Recently reduced requirements for humanities courses, he said, means students have less exposure to philosophy.

"I am convinced that a lot of the reasons those numbers are low is because our administration has not done what it should do to promote our program to try to get students to engage in philosophy," Rozema said. "If they had done that, we wouldn't be in this position."

UNK administrators also shot down plans to introduce a pre-law

track and philosophy and literature program that would have generated more exposure to philosophy, he said, ultimately undercutting the major.

"I feel like, on the one hand, our administration gives lip service to the value of philosophy and how it's important for every student to have some exposure to philosophy, but on the other hand, in their actions, they've made it harder and harder for students to take philosophy classes," Rozema said.

What Rozema refers to as "the failings of the administration" are more complex than they appear, said Charles Bicak, UNK senior vice chancellor for academic and student affairs. Bicak noted that the faculty council approved general education standards that reduced requirements for humanities. The

Pulling the Plug on Philosophy (cont.)

new core curriculum, approved in 2020, dropped the minimum credit hours required for general education from 45 to a total of 30 to 31. Bicak also cited faculty governance for the reason proposals to create interdisciplinary philosophy programs were not approved.

"The changes within a general studies or general education program begin with and are developed with the faculty. Essentially, administration is at the end of the process," he said. "This is a faculty consideration as opposed to an administrative decree in one direction or another."

Another point of contention between administration and faculty is the actual number of philosophy majors. UNK administration counts three; Rozema counts eight, including double majors.

"My understanding is that there is a true distinction between a double major and an individual major," Bicak said, a benchmark and distinction that the Coordinating Commission established.

COVID-19 has also hurt the recruiting process for the philosophy program, limiting direct contact with potential incoming students. Given the stagnant number of philosophy majors, UNK had tasked the program with recruiting more prospects from local high schools and introducing them to the discipline before they arrived on campus in order to drum up interest in the major. But as the coronavirus spread across the U.S. and schools closed en masse, those plans hit a snag.

Now this week the proposal to cut the philosophy major at UNK will go

> **I feel like, on the one hand, our administration gives lip service to the value of philosophy and how it's important for every student to have some exposure to philosophy, but on the other hand, in their actions, they've made it harder and harder for students to take philosophy classes.**

before the Nebraska Board of Regents Academic Affairs committee, which will review the matter and make a recommendation that the full board is expected to act on as early as February.

The National Trend

If the Board of Regents eliminates the philosophy major at UNK, it will essentially be following a national trend. The list of colleges that have dropped philosophy as a major in recent years includes Liberty University, Western Oregon University and Elizabethtown College.

The trend is one that the American Philosophy Association watches closely, sending letters of support to university administrators to advocate for departments facing cuts and closures, according to Amy Ferrer, executive director of the APA.

Ferrer said the organization wrote six such letters in 2020 and four in 2021.

"We do often hear that the main

rationales for cuts to philosophy programs have to do with simple numerical metrics, particularly numbers of majors (often not counting double majors, which is quite common for students majoring in philosophy)," Ferrer wrote in an email. "Anecdotally, my sense is that departments are less likely to face cuts and more likely to be able to reverse threatened cuts when they have strong interdepartmental connections, such as interdisciplinary major and minor tracks. Those connections often help philosophy departments demonstrate to their administrations that the simple numerical metrics that are often used to justify cuts don't accurately reflect the impact and importance of the philosophy department."

What's Lost Without Philosophy

Jonathan Drozda, a UNK senior who is double majoring in psychology and philosophy, said his interest in philosophy began in high school but wasn't nurtured until college. In his second semester at UNK, he took a philosophy course,

Pulling the Plug on Philosophy (cont.)

an experience that then led him into the major.

Now he's circulating a petition to keep the philosophy major alive at UNK, concerned that the loss of the program will mean an education that lacks depth. He worries that pared-down humanities requirements will lead fewer students down the path he took and the elimination of the major will limit opportunities to think deeply and examine the purpose of life.

"I think if we lose the philosophy major, there would be much less emphasis in thought that relates to meaning in life," Drozda said.

Rozema also has concerns about fewer students in philosophy and what it means for the development of those individuals who, he says, would benefit from philosophy over a lifetime.

"We try to teach students how to think well, try to instill in them ethical principles that they can live by, virtues," he said. "And if you deprive students of those chances, then you perpetuate the problem we have in the world of people who can't think well, can't be critical, aren't very logical."

Though the major is in jeopardy, Bicak noted the philosophy minor will remain in place at UNK. And while faculty members are concerned about what cutting the major may mean for their job security, Bicak said that "any change of that nature is yet to be determined" at this point in time, noting there will still be courses to teach in the minor and for general studies classes.

Despite making the recommendation to eliminate the philosophy major, Bicak noted it was a decision he arrived at with difficulty, one that he sees as being good stewardship of taxpayer dollars at a public university where programs come and go based on head counts and benchmarks.

"A decision like this or recommendation like this deeply saddens me, because an area like philosophy is so central to the description and identity of any university, certainly one that has a liberal arts emphasis [as] we do," Bicak said. "I think we need to examine ways to ensure that we retain that identity. But we are not inconsistent with the national trend." ∎

A Military Appointment at Swarthmore

The college is divided over the president's decision to pair
with a foundation that sends retired military officers to campus to teach.

By Colleen Flaherty // June 14, 2021

Swarthmore College on Friday reaffirmed its partnership with the Chamberlain Project and therefore its commitment to hosting a military scholar, following months of internal debate.

"I did not arrive at this decision easily, and I appreciate that it will disappoint if not anger some segment of our community," President Val Smith wrote in an all-campus message late in the day. "That would have been true had I decided to end the relationship. Respectful disagreement and dissent are essential to a well-functioning community."

Amid the "myriad perspectives and absent any clear consensus, I ultimately drew from the college's mission and my fundamental belief that critical to the liberal arts is our ability to engage in the exchange of diverse and often opposing views, not to shut them out," Smith wrote. "I thought specifically of one of the college's learning goals, created by our faculty, in which we commit to the following: 'Students will engage with different cultures, ideas, institutions and means of expression to enable the critical examination of their own perspectives.'"

Many faculty members have supported Swarthmore's partnership with the Chamberlain Project since it was officially announced in Jan-
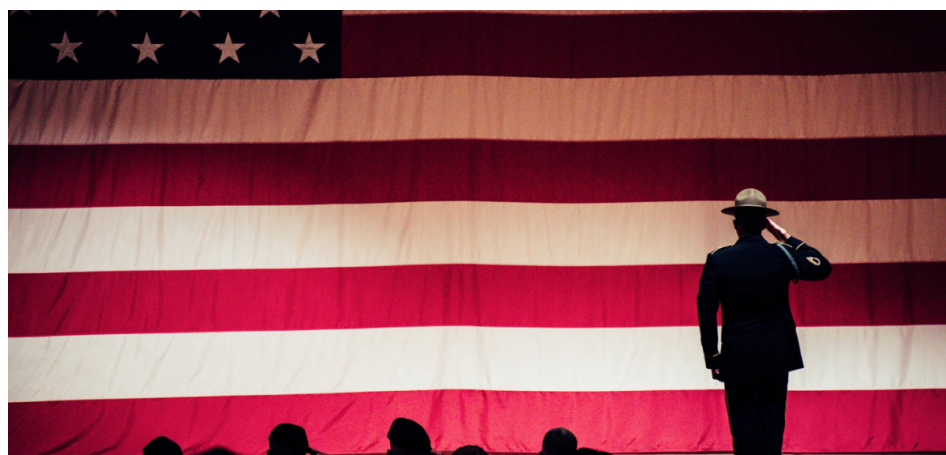
BRETT SAYLES/PEXELS.COM

uary. Among them is Dominic Tierney, professor of political science and senior fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a nonpartisan think tank.

"I think this is a valuable educational opportunity for Swarthmore students," Tierney said. "Yes, the military is in many ways a challenging or problematic institution. But I think the college has a long tradition of engaging with difficult institutions and trying to learn about them from the inside."

Syon Bhanot, associate professor of economics at Swarthmore, said he benefited from learning from military scholars during his time as an undergraduate at Princeton University and as a graduate student at Harvard University, as both of those institutions have public policy schools. So he imagined that Swarthmore students would simi-

larly enjoy having an opportunity to interact with a Chamberlain Project scholar.

"'Stereotyping' isn't really the right word, but it feel like we're just kind of falling on easy arguments about how, in [critics'] view, the military has not been a strong force or good force in the domain of foreign policy -- and I feel like we're talking around each other in a sense," Bhanot said. "This program to me is not about militarism, it's about building bridges, and about ensuring that students have this exposure to diversity of points of view in the classroom."

Bhanot added, "To me, even making that argument about diversity of viewpoints is making an assumption that a qualified former military officer would be coming into our classroom and saying things that would be very different than what

students might hear."

Many faculty members also oppose Swarthmore's new partnership, on principle, process or both. On process, Smith paired with Chamberlain in 2020 without consulting the faculty first, leading some professors to question her commitment to shared governance and why anyone -- let alone a retired military officer -- should be granted what professors call a "back door" to a faculty appointment. The faculty voted to ask Smith to withdraw from the project at a relatively well-attended meeting this spring: of those professors present, 83 rejected the partnership, 48 supported it and 17 abstained. Yet Swarthmore is moving ahead. And, unsurprisingly, given academe's tenuous relationship with the military, professors have expressed concerns that Swarthmore is endorsing militarism.

One additional factor is that Swarthmore was originally founded by Quakers, who are pacifists. The college no longer has any religious connection to Quakerism, but some professors argue that this legacy matters.

"Many of us feel that making military training and expertise a special criteria granting access to faculty positions rises to an institutional level that contributes cultural capital to already dominant violent and nationalist paradigms in the U.S. and around the world and does not represent the mission of the college," said Lee Smithey, a professor of sociology and peace and conflict studies.

No one among the faculty is say-

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> this is a valuable educational
> opportunity for Swarthmore students.
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> them from the inside.
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ing that "people with military experience should be barred from applying for faculty positions at the college," Smithey added, "and there are many ways that we can critically and productively engage with military officers and topics short of making military personnel a special class of candidate."

The Chamberlain Project, which has relationships with multiple other liberal arts colleges, including Wesleyan University and Amherst College, is funded by the Jennifer and Jonathan Allan Soros Foundation. Its stated purpose is to build relationships and understanding between the U.S. military and civilian institutions, enhance students' learning opportunities, and help retiring officers of the U.S. armed forces with academic credentials transition to civilian life. Scholars are guaranteed a stipend of at least $60,000, plus benefits provided by the host colleges. Fellowships last one academic year, during which fellows are expected to teach two courses, mentor students and oth-

erwise contribute to the intellectual life of the host department and college.

No one from the project was available for an interview last week. No scholar has yet been appointed to Swarthmore.

**Building Bridges,
or Burning Them?**

Tierney said he believed the project would "bring to campus a veteran with suitable qualifications, and that would enable us to sort of hear from someone who has seen the military from the inside, and bring some expertise to bear. And I think that would be valuable given the incredible ways in which the military impacts us as a society and, of course, the globe."

Given the increasingly complex problem sets with which the U.S. military is tasked, up to and including nation building, Tierney said he also envisioned the Chamberlain Project as bringing a bit of the liberal arts perspective back to an in-

stitution that would benefit from it.

"Critical thinking, training in a diverse range of subjects, cultural knowledge, language training and so on -- these are skills that American soldiers are going to need in the kind of increasingly complex world that we face," he said. "People might traditionally think of the U.S. military as warriors, with the job of fighting and winning sort of conventional wars. But in recent decades, the U.S. military spends most of its time engaged in much broader activities, such as peacekeeping operations, humanitarian missions, stabilization missions, counterinsurgency, overseeing elections and a wide variety of different activities that are quite far removed from that sort of classic image of the warrior."

Bhanot said his own exposure to military-affiliated scholars at Princeton influenced his decision to work at a refugee camp in Kenya after college.

"I heard from former military officers who came and gave talks and oversaw seminars about how we push too much of our human rights work onto military officers, who aren't really trained for that work, and how we need to build up our diplomatic corps and foreign aid corps," he said.

Asked if he had any concerns about shared governance or process, Tierney said visiting professors have different "mechanisms" by which they arrive on campus. More significantly, he said, "if this project were focused on some other issue, like, say, climate change, or racial justice, or something like that, then I don't think people would have the

> *Many of us feel that making military training and expertise a special criteria granting access to faculty positions rises to an institutional level that contributes cultural capital to already dominant violent andnationalist paradigms in the U.S. and around the world and does not represent the mission of the college.*

same concerns about the process. I think the opposition to this is driven by the sensitivities around the military."

K. David Harrison, professor of linguistics and cognitive science, disagreed.

"Our president joined Swarthmore College to the Chamberlain Project, and Swarthmore's logo has been up on their website for months and months, and the faculty were told about this after the fact, and they begin to wonder about it and look into it, and then think, 'Why weren't we consulted? This is a curricular matter,'" he said. "And we don't have much faculty shared governance but the little, tiny slice of the pie that we have is around curriculum and hiring. Yet the faculty were not consulted and we did not vote on it."

Other visiting faculty members do teach at Swarthmore, Harrison said, but they're vetted by the faculty. "The college has always had veterans on campus in the student body and on our faculty -- that's not

the issue, we're not a military-free zone or something like that. It's just that we don't want to give special preference to people because they were military officers."

Harrison also noted that Swarthmore plans to split the cost of the appointment with Chamberlain, meaning it's not free -- and that that money could be spent elsewhere.

"We have dire needs in many departments," he said.

But this isn't just about process for Harrison, either. He said he objected to the U.S. military's ban on transgender personnel, which was only recently revoked, for instance. "We talk about inclusion and diversity, but why would we enter into a formal partnership with U.S. military?"

Students have also opposed the partnership.

In March, a group of students who identified themselves as being from or having families originally from the Middle East or North Af-

A Military Appointment at Swarthmore (cont.)

rica wrote in an open letter in the student publication *voices*, "We see no benefit in 'building relationships and understanding' with an organization that has committed a host of war crimes, perpetuates decades-long offensive and money-driven onslaughts in many of our homelands, all the while deploying enlistment practices that prey upon lower-income Black and brown people domestically." Similar student letters from other groups have since been published.

In April, a group of alumni wrote in *voices* that the "clear lack of communication" about the project "hints at an effort to quietly push through an initiative that the administration knew would outrage students, faculty, staff, and alumni alike. Such tactics fly in the face of consensus-building, a professed core value of the college."

In her lengthy letter, Smith, the president, attempted to address many of these concerns. "Our relationship with the Chamberlain Project reflects neither an endorsement nor a criticism of the U.S. armed forces," she said, for example. "As some have pointed out throughout this debate, the military is largely controlled by a democratically elected civilian government. As Swarthmore aims to prepare students to serve as leaders and as engaged members of society, we should offer them the opportunity to understand and wrestle with a broad range of experiences and perspectives."

Regarding concerns about process, Smith said departments may evaluate fellows as they see fit. The project "does not impose on our curriculum, which rightly falls within the faculty's purview, nor does it come at the expense of other opportunities," she added.

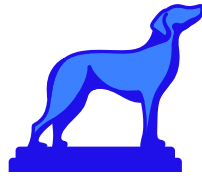Ultimately, Smith said, "It is not only within the president's purview to enter the college into such relationships; it is also a responsibility of the position."

Ellen Ross, the Howard M. and Charles F. Jenkins Professor of Quakerism and Peace Studies, said following Smith's announcement that "in an increasingly polarized world, on an issue as divisive as this, in which the president says that she did not find any clear consensus, I would have hoped that President Smith would have chosen to step back from voluntary engagement with this project, which has elicited such heated exchange."

Moving ahead, into "more contention," Ross said, "seems an ill-advised strategy at a time when, still in the shadow of pandemic, and in a polarized world, the fraying of connections and the straining of trust are defining features of the social landscape. How do the benefits of this association possibly outweigh the social and communal costs?" ▪
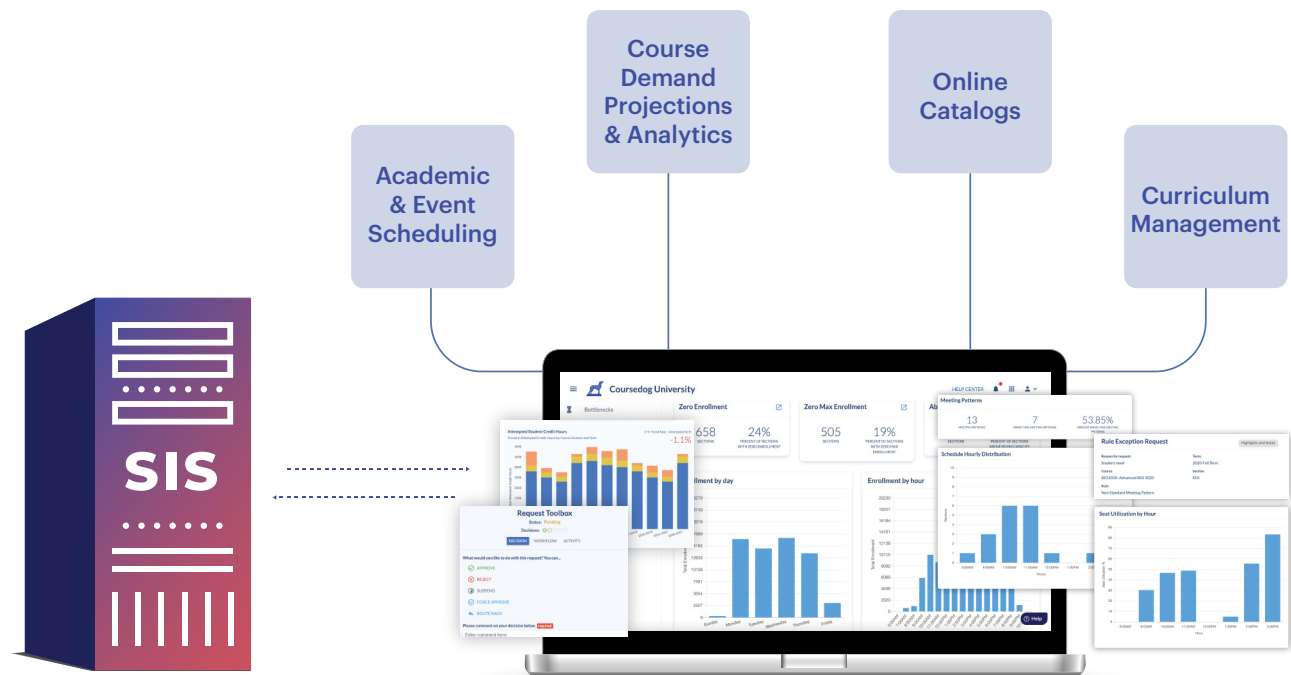
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Compromising on Diversity?

Iowa State's Faculty Senate approved a compromise on a diversity requirement to comply with a new state law against the teaching of "divisive concepts." Some say it's time to move forward, but other professors say this is no victory.

By Colleen Flaherty // November 12, 2021

Iowa State University's undergraduate U.S. diversity requirement has been in flux since earlier this year, when Provost Jonathan Wickert declined to sign off on a faculty-backed update to the requirement over concerns about state legislation prohibiting the mandatory teaching of "divisive concepts" about race and gender.

With that legislation now the law in Iowa, the university's Faculty Senate Executive Board worked over the summer to put the diversity requirement update back in play, in clear compliance with the law. The board's plan, which nine members approved and two did not, didn't involve rewriting the diversity requirement update. Rather, it asked students to complete three of the four learning outcomes instead of all four, as originally proposed.

Only one of the updated learning outcomes—analyze systemic oppression and personal prejudice and their impact on marginalized communities and the broader U.S. society—potentially conflicted with the divisive-concepts law. The board's workaround therefore meant that students who had a problem with this particular outcome didn't have to achieve it.

The compromise satisfied Wickert, the provost. But it proved controversial with the full Senate once it became widely known this fall. Even though the board is allowed to act on behalf of the full Senate when the Senate is not in session, some senators questioned the board's right to make a decision of this magnitude on its own. Some saw the compromise itself as watering down the diversity requirement and hurting students in the long run.

One of the board members, Annmarie Butler, Senate secretary and associate professor of philosophy and religious studies, eventually put forth a resolution calling for a vote to rescind the three-of-four agreement. Following a lengthy discussion, the full Senate voted 33 to 20 to keep the agreement and begin to put the new requirement in place.

Andrea Wheeler, Senate president and associate professor of archi-tecture, said, "It was an important issue. The rescind was not uncontroversial. People felt strongly."

Now that the vote is over, she said, the Senate will work on a timeline and process for adopting the requirements.

"Our Faculty Senate committees and councils emphasize the importance of shared governance and the central role of cooperation in collegial decision making," Wheeler added. "Serving as a faculty senator is a very significant commitment."

Rob Schweers, a spokesperson for the provost's office, said that Wickert originally declined to sign the updated requirements due to concerns about the new legislation as well as those related to student choice, course capacity and flexibility for professors setting their

SHARON MCCUTCHEON

course syllabi.

The Executive Board's agreement helps address potential concerns about the legislation, Schweers continued, and "provides greater choice for students to take courses that address their individual needs or knowledge gaps around diversity, equity and inclusion." It also "enhances capacity so students can complete their graduation requirements in a timely manner, and provides greater flexibility for faculty to teach courses the way they want."

Those senators who voted to rescind, among other professors, aren't happy with the deal, however, and remain concerned about the new Iowa law's demonstrated ability to affect the curriculum.

David A. M. Peterson, Lucken Professor of Political Science, said the "handling of the entire process, particularly the invocation of Iowa's law about divisive concepts into the debate over the diversity requirement, has created real climate issues on campus." Faculty members sense a "chilling effect due to our administration's interpretation of the law. I think that is quite unfortunate and damaging to faculty morale."

Brian Behnken, an associate professor of history who helped draft the original, four-of-four diversity requirement, said he was speaking for himself and not the university and that the Senate decision "was deeply disappointing. While some are celebrating this decision as a victory, I see it as a retreat from our commitment to diversity and the education of our student body."

Revising the new U.S. diversity requirement "before it even had the chance to be implemented sends a message that there is something wrong with educating our students about diversity and only heightens the chilling effect many faculty members are feeling" since the law passed, Behnken said. ∎

https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2021/11/12/iowa-state-faculty-approve-diversity-requirement-compromise

Remote and Rural

The Maine Community College System will train hundreds of rural students in remote work skills as the pandemic continues to shift the American job landscape.

By Sara Weissman // June 29, 2021

The Maine Community College System will launch a free training program to prepare over 700 rural students for remote jobs over the next three years.

Students living in rural areas of the state will be able to take six- to nine-month-long online courses in fields especially conducive to remote work, such as IT support, customer service and medical transcription. Participants will receive training and earn a certificate in remote work skills. The program will also offer a certificate course for supervisors on how to manage remote workers.

Administrators plan to start the Remote Work for ME program next January with a cohort of about 60 rural students. The $1.2 million program will be funded by a $535,000 seed grant from Ascendium Education Group, a philanthropic organization focused on postsecondary education, as well as funds from the John T. Gorman Foundation, the community college system and its foundation.

"Over the years Maine has tried a variety of ways to bring jobs to rural communities," John Fitzsimmons, president of the Foundation for Maine's Community Colleges, said in a press release. "Through the advancement of technology, along with the support of employers,
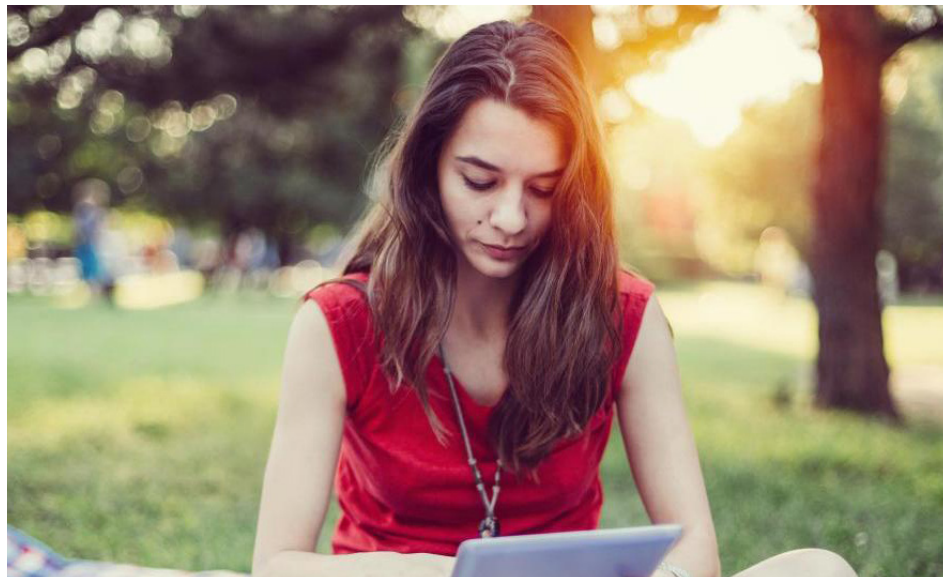
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we can now connect urban-based companies with skilled workers working remotely. This is a win-win for both Maine employers and rural workers."

The initiative is an outgrowth of the pandemic and the ways it appears to be reshaping the norms of American work culture. Employees across the country left their offices in droves in spring 2020 because of COVID-19. More than a year later, some workers may never go back to spending full weeks in the office. The percentage of workers permanently working from home is expected to double in 2021, according to a survey by the market research firm Enterprise Technology Research.

Dan Belyea, chief workforce development officer at the Maine Community College System, called this shift a "cultural transformation." He said that many employees were "thrown into" working remotely during the pandemic without any preparation for the unique challenges of working partly or entirely from home, but going forward, students can be methodically taught how to thrive in a remote work environment.

"We want to train folks not only to do a job that's in the range of remote work, but we want to train students in how to be highly successful and efficient," he said. "That's going to take a new set of skills. How do you work with folks

that you may not necessarily see every day? How do you communicate? How do you project manage your work? How do you keep yourself motivated?"

Four of the colleges in the Maine Community College System are in rural areas, and all seven of them serve rural students, Belyea said.

The trend toward remote work could have particular advantages for rural communities experiencing population loss due to outmigration. Populations in many rural areas have been thinning for decades as college graduates leave in search of higher-paying jobs in cities.

Many of these students don't actually want to leave, said Kai A. Schafft, director of the Center on Rural Education and Communities at Penn State University.

"The highest-achieving students from rural areas are also often those young people who are most connected with their communities," he said. "I think in many cases, kids from rural areas would be happy to stay in the places that they're from, or go somewhere else and return to those places, but there has to be some kind of economic opportunity as well."

Remote work may be a way for alumni to use the credentials they earned in college and remain in the rural areas where they grew up, said Mara Tieken, associate professor of education at Bates College.

"One of the challenges with rural college-going is it exacts a higher cost on rural kids and rural families, because oftentimes going to

> "
> *That's going to take a new set of skills. How do you work with folks that you may not necessarily see every day? How do you communicate? How do you project manage your work? How do you keep yourself motivated?*
> "

college may mean getting a degree that can be really hard to put to use in your rural place," she said.

She noted that universities too often have an "urban-centric bias" and steer students toward leaving rural areas. For example, many four-year institutions build their alumni networks, offer internships and advertise jobs predominantly in cities.

"Really meaningfully addressing that will take some deliberate work across colleges, really thinking about how are we urban-centric in our networking? How can we shift that?" Tieken said. "With remote work, that might be easier."

Higher education leaders and lawmakers have put a particular emphasis on supports for rural students in the last few years. For example, the University of North Carolina system set a goal in January 2017 to enroll 11 percent more students from rural and low-income counties and to increase these students' degree attainment by 20 percent in the system's strategic plan through 2022.

Senator Susan Collins, the Maine Republican, and Senator Maggie Hassan, a New Hampshire Democrat, introduced a bipartisan bill in the U.S. Senate last year to create a demonstration program intended to encourage rural students to pursue higher education, graduate and enter the workforce.

A new research alliance was formed in January to study rural regional colleges. Achieving the Dream, a nonprofit organization focused on community college student success, in February announced a new initiative, called Building Resiliency in Rural Communities for the Future of Work, to help rural colleges provide students with work skills and connect students to well-paying jobs.

There are over 260 rural community colleges in the United States, which educate nearly 670,000 students a year, according to the U.S. Department of Education. Meanwhile, nearly 41 million American adults live at least 25 miles from the nearest college or university or in places where one community college

is the only source of broad-access public higher education in that area, according to the Urban Institute. Rural community colleges suffer from disparities in local, state and federal funding, access to broadband internet, and student basic needs and mental health resources, according to a 2021 report from the Association of Community College Trustees.

Tieken pointed to spotty broadband access in rural areas as a possible obstacle for students as industries move toward remote work. Only two-thirds of rural Americans report having broadband access at home, according to a 2019 Pew Research Center study.

Belyea said he expects students to face these kinds of challenges, but the Remote Work for ME program will provide students with laptops and Wi-Fi hotspots as needed, free of charge, and students can keep the equipment after the program.

"As we did for our students during the pandemic, we're going to make sure that's not a barrier for them," he said.

Other community college leaders are also considering new ways to give rural students access to remote work opportunities.

For example, Cloud County Community College in Kansas is now providing a coding certificate program in partnership with Rural & Remote, which trains remote workers in rural areas. The 50-hour, noncredit program will introduce students to HTML, CSS, JavaScript, Command Line and other programming languages. This is the first time the college has offered a curriculum in coding and web design.

"This opportunity aligns with the college's mission to prepare students to lead successful lives and enhance the vitality of our communities," Amber Knoettgen, president of Cloud County Community College, said in a press release.

Maria Dahlquist, Rural & Remote tech lead for northwest Kansas, said in the release that the partnership is focused on reaching students who want to pursue a career where they can live anywhere -- such as rural Kansas. The curriculum is designed for students of all experience levels, "even if you've never written code in your life."

Charles Terrell, the outgoing president of Eastern West Virginia Community and Technical College, said institution leaders have been exploring the idea of creating a hub for telecommuters in technology fields on campus.

In 2018, the college began renting space on campus to the Washington, D.C.-based technology firm ISMS Solutions, and in return, the company recruits students that work in the on-campus site. Terrell believes this can be a broader model where employers set up outposts on campus that offer jobs to students and graduates in the area. That way, students can telecommute to companies based elsewhere while working in a so-cial, nonisolating environment with secure internet access. Simultaneously, the college can design training programs that meet these companies' needs, he said.

He described his vision as a "cross-pollination between education and employers," a community college "plus almost a technology park."

"This becomes a recruitment pipeline for students to be able to work for an employer on-site, like ISMS, and know that they're doing this at home in their community and not having to go and find jobs in Northern Virginia or D.C. or along the Beltway," he said. For students in counties near the college with poor internet access, the campus may have better internet access than they have at home. "The college not only becomes a source for education but the site where they may be employed by another employer."

Belyea, of the Maine Community College System, said he envisions the Remote Work for ME program as a model that can be replicated at other colleges that serve rural students and aim to help them succeed in a shifting work landscape.

"We've attempted to lower every barrier we can imagine to allow someone to access this program, access the equipment needed to be involved in this training and the ability to bridge the skills gap that they may have and provide a real wage for themselves and their families," he said. ∎

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10 Things Community Colleges Must Know About General Ed

> "Dizzyingly long lists" of courses meeting gen ed requirements put unhealthy pressure on students and inhibit community colleges from living up to their ideals, Terry O'Banion and Cindy L. Miles write.

By Terry U. O'Banion and Cindy Miles // February 16, 2022

General education, or GE, programs offer the first taste of college to millions of students each year and constitute at least half of most associate degrees that community colleges offer. General education has been a valued priority in community colleges since the 1950s, and we, the authors of this article, have been its advocates for decades. But a lot has happened over those decades, including the massive reform movements to increase equitable student success that have swept the nation's two-year institutions in recent years. Thus, in fall 2020, we began a national study of GE programs in community colleges to gain an understanding of the current status of such programs, the results of which will be published early this year.

Our approach for this study was to review GE philosophy statements, requirements and approved course offerings from the most recent catalogs of a random, stratified sample of 30 community colleges. We drew that sample from the most recent Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education listing of American public two-year colleges that granted associate degrees, excluding specialized institutions. We examined three subgroups of two-year colleges as categorized by the Carnegie Classification: large/very large (a full-time-equivalent enrollment of 5,000 or greater), medium (2,000 to 4,999) and small/very small (1,999 or fewer). We also examined the expectations of the seven regional accrediting commissions about general education programs to explore whether college GE philosophy statements and offerings reflected those expectations.

What We Discovered

We saw some interesting patterns that we'd like to share with community college leaders as they consider their curricula going forward—and the place general education should hold in it. Here are 10 key findings from our study.

1. Required GE programs are universal to community colleges across the U.S. Every community college and statewide community college system we examined required a general education program.

2. Almost two-thirds of community colleges include a philosophy statement on general education in their catalogs. Colleges described their programs in lofty terms about preparing students for whatever the world, their lives or the future might bring, as in these examples:

- The general education program
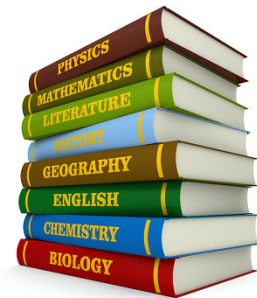
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provides a foundation in the knowledge and skills needed to develop a life of personal fulfillment and contribution to society.

- The purpose of the general education core is to ensure that college students have the broad knowledge and skills to become lifelong learners in a global community that will continue to change.

- General education seeks to assist students in obtaining the knowledge, skills and attitudes that enhance quality of life and the ability to function effectively in an ever-changing society.

3. Most colleges make it clear that their intention for general education is to offer a common core of knowledge and skills that *all* students need. We saw this theme echoed in recurrent language across institutions, captured in phrases like "a common body of

knowledge," "skills that are deemed to be commonly shared" and "common to all students regardless of major."

4. Colleges often make clear the connection between their general education programs and accreditation requirements. The course descriptions frequently included references to accreditation obligations, and we confirmed all seven regional accrediting commissions have requirements addressing the general education programs of their member institutions. The expectations from accreditors are similar in spirit and largely nonprescriptive, but all compel general education programs to demonstrate broad and substantive learning—typically framed as "breadth" and "depth"—based on a cohesive or coherent curricular framework.

5. The ideals that colleges described for their general education programs rarely translate to cohesive, integrated bodies of knowledge. The lofty language isn't reflected in what colleges actually offer their students. After their high-minded and admirable philosophy descriptions, most colleges provide lengthy lists of disparate courses from which students are to choose, or they refer students to catalog lists of all the courses in particular disciplines. Here are two common instructions:

- Choose one course from List A. Choose two courses from Lists B and C.

- Select any two courses from the following disciplines: anthropology, economics, geography, history, political science, psychology, social science, sociology.

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> What's more, the negative impacts of the tangled surfeit of general education courses fall most heavily on the most vulnerable students, those whom the reform efforts underway in community colleges are striving to support.
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> "

6. Community colleges, on average, require students to select a dozen courses from a mixed bag of 162 approved courses to meet general education requirement. Most colleges call for students to take 10 to 13 general courses and have them choose those from an average of 181 courses in large colleges, 203 courses in medium colleges and 102 courses in small colleges. Bear in mind, these are specifically approved courses—not electives—that colleges require students to sort through to select a handful to attain an associate degree and, ultimately, the purported ideal of being educated members of society.

7. The range of course options that colleges have approved to meet required general education courses is overwhelmingly expansive. Courses included Women's Self Defense, History of Rock and Roll, Elementary American Sign Language and Liberal Arts Math, all in one college. We found general education offerings from 49 to 491 courses in large colleges, from 68 to 372 in medium colleges and from 58 to 223 in small colleges. Colleges in states with strong centralized governance systems, including a mandatory general education core and state approval of general education courses, offered far fewer options than those in states with more local control.

8. Most colleges categorize their general education requirements into five major subject areas. Those areas are commonly named arts and humanities, social and behavioral sciences, natural sciences, communication and composition, and mathematics. We found consistency in the number of required courses within each area, but great variety in options offered. Most colleges had a three-course requirement in arts and humanities but offered 10 times that many course options. In social and behavioral sciences, six medium colleges, two large colleges and one small college approved at least 50 courses to meet a two-course requirement. We found more uniformity among natural sciences options for colleges' one or two required courses, with large, medium and small colleges

averaging 31, 33 and 21 course choices, respectively. Still, students at a medium-size college in the study had to sort through 91 natural science courses to pick two.

9. Two general education areas have significantly consistent requirements and constrained options. Those are: 1) communication and composition and 2) mathematics. More than half the colleges in our study offered no choice among their required English composition/rhetoric or speech courses. All 30 colleges required a single college-level mathematics course to be selected from one or two options available to most students. We were left to wonder that if faculty in communication and composition and in mathematics could come together to limit GE course options to those deemed essential, why couldn't faculty in other GE areas do the same?

10. Colleges approve at least four times more general education courses than they require, and most have students choose from pools of courses at least 10 times larger than they require. Despite abundant claims about promoting a common core, our findings point to the reality that the nation's current community college general education programs continue to cultivate the cafeteria curriculum—a wild smorgasbord of courses from which students must select a dozen courses to be labeled "college educated."

Key Takeaways

No matter the size of the college, the big takeaway from this study is clear: the great glut of required general education courses and dizzyingly long lists of course offerings from which students must choose to meet those requirements puts unhealthy pressure on students and inhibits colleges from living up to their ideals. A growing body of literature suggests too many choices creates a great deal of stress for students at a time when they are under pressure to make some of the most significant decisions in their lives.

What's more, the negative impacts of the tangled surfeit of general education courses fall most heavily on the most vulnerable students, those whom the reform efforts underway in community colleges are striving to support. Providing enough academic advisers to help every student make individual decisions seems out of reach, and technology can't solve this problem for marginalized or digitally disenfranchised students.

President Woodrow Wilson said, "It is easier to move a cemetery than to change the curriculum." And a wag added, "In either case, you get no help from the residents." To date, curricular reform in general education has amounted to little more than trimming the branches of a dead tree and haphazardly tossing about handfuls of seeds to see

what takes root. Across the nation, inspiring work is underway in community colleges to build intentional pathways to guide student learning and success, eradicate long-standing equity barriers like mandatory placement exams, and streamline academic pipelines from high school through university transfer to the workplace. But we've seen little motivation at most two-year colleges to tackle the general education jungle. For colleges that are serious about general education reform, these first few steps could begin the journey:

- Examine enrollments in all current courses that meet general education requirements and delete those that post zero enrollments or fewer than five students in any one term.

- Establish criteria related to general education outcomes for all new courses submitted to the basic list.

- Appoint a faculty task force committed to quality education to review current philosophy and programs of general education and to recommend a general education program for the 21st century.

If faculty and administrative leaders do not take responsibility and find a way to prioritize this effort, the community college our students deserve today and the community college our communities need for the future may never come to full fruition. ∎

Bio | *Terry O'Banion is senior professor of practice at Kansas State University and president emeritus of the League for Innovation in the Community College. Cindy L. Miles is also a professor of practice at Kansas State University and chancellor emerita at Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District.*

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Reviving the Humanities Through General Education

Andrew Delbanco and Loni Bordoloi Pazich describe a model for engaging students who seek respite from the pre-professional treadmill and for expanding teaching opportunities for faculty.

By Andrew Delbanco and Loni Bordoloi Pazich // October 18, 2021

As students have returned to campus at many of our leading research universities this fall, the usual contingent of new doctoral candidates in literature, history and other humanistic fields is not among them. During the pandemic, as tuition revenues fell and mitigation costs rose, the largest share of graduate programs to suspend admissions was in the arts and humanities. When those programs resume, Ph.D. students will face an academic job market even more dire than it was before COVID.

Yet while humanities programs have been cut, the pandemic has confirmed how urgently faculty members are needed to engage undergraduates with humanistic questions. The public health crisis of the last 18 months -- and counting -- is also a values crisis. It raises difficult moral, political and historical problems: How should the risk of illness be balanced with the cost of quarantines and closures? How can individual liberties be reconciled with the public good? How can we explain the history of America's savage inequities in health care and quality of life?

The aftermath of this crisis will be the prelude to the next. A collective reckoning will be impossible without the context and capacities cultivated by the humanities. Yet the ranks of undergraduates studying the humanities are thinning, and graduate students aspiring to become humanities faculty face meager employment prospects.

In response to these challenges, the Teagle Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities launched Cornerstone: Learning for Living to restore the humanities -- and thereby humanities professors -- to a central role in undergraduate education. The Cornerstone model provides a gateway general education course for first-year college students that creates a common experience through discussion of inspiring works of poetry, fiction, argument and oratory. It also provides pathways through general education via upper-level courses that connect humanistic texts and questions with the careers to which more and more students aspire -- in such fields as business, technology and health sciences. The model holds significant promise for expanding teaching opportunities for current and new humanities faculty.

Since its inception a year ago, over 30 institutions around the country -- from private research universities like Stanford University to public two-year institutions like SUNY Onondaga Community College -- are in the planning or implementation phases of adapting the Corner-

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stone model. By embedding the model into the existing structure of general education, institutions need not attempt wholesale restructuring of their curricula, which is often a deal breaker in efforts at reform.

At Purdue University, for instance, where humanities enrollments had been sagging, humanities and STEM faculty developed a 15-credit certificate called Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts, beginning with a two-semester gateway sequence on Transformative Texts -- including works by such authors as Plato, Dante, Mary Shelley, W. E. B. Du Bois and Toni Morrison -- that meets

existing universitywide written and oral communication requirements. They also identified thematically related clusters (e.g., Technology and Society) of new or existing courses that help students confront technical issues from humanistic perspectives while meeting existing distribution requirements. Students who complete the gateway and three upper-level courses earn a certificate that goes on their transcript with no detour away from timely degree completion.

A different adaptation of the Cornerstone model is underway at Austin Community College, where faculty created the Great Questions Seminar -- a gateway course fulfilling the student success course requirement that is increasingly the norm at community colleges. Students in all sections of the seminar encounter a common set of readings, starting with *The Odyssey*, as aids to reflection on the personal journey on which they are embarking. Subsequently, to complete a designated track through distribution requirements called the "great questions journey," they can take courses that span from government, history and Mexican American studies to theater and speech. All courses in the track focus on primary texts and make general education more coherent for students.

At Purdue, instructors in all sections of the gateway sequence are free to teach texts of their own choosing but are asked to assign at least half their choices from a list of works developed and periodically revised by those teaching in the first-year sequence. That strategy gives the course both variety and

> The public health crisis of the last 18 months -- and counting -- is also a values crisis. It raises difficult moral, political and historical problems: How should the risk of illness be balanced with the cost of quarantines and closures? How can individual liberties be reconciled with the public good?

commonality and minimizes discord over what books should or should not be taught. Instructors meet regularly in workshops led by experienced teachers who speak about how they make specific readings exciting for first-year students. At Austin Community College, new instructors are also welcomed into the collaborative effort through workshops in which they share in-class exercises and assignments related to the common readings.

The response from students has been remarkable. Purdue piloted its two-semester gateway humanities sequence in 2014 with 60 students; it now attracts 4,000 students, 80 percent of whom plan to major in engineering or other pre-professional fields. At Austin Community College, the Great Questions Seminar grew from a pilot with 30 students in fall 2016 to over 625 students by the 2020-21 academic year. Students report that the common intellectual experience of the gateway course, coming at the moment they arrive in college, helps them build community at a time

when feelings of isolation run high and they are hungry for connection with one another.

The gateway humanities courses are paying for themselves in the form of improved retention of first-year students. Purdue's College of Liberal Arts is now seeking to staff at least 150 sections of the first-year gateway humanities sequence each academic year; 60 percent of instructors are tenured or on the tenure track in the humanities. To help staff those courses, the College of Liberal Arts has hired 18 new full-time instructors for 2021-22 and will be conducting searches for another eight instructors for the following academic year, all on renewable appointments. And in a bold new policy, new tenure-track hires at the College of Liberal Arts are required to devote at least half their teaching to the gateway sequence, with no ill effects on recruitment.

At Austin Community College, interest in teaching the Great Questions Seminar figures prominently

in new full-time faculty hires in the humanities. Moreover, the gateway courses kindle student interest in additional humanities cours-es. These are early signs that the Cornerstone: Learning for Living program model is helping to create rewarding employment opportuni-ties for humanities Ph.D. students.

Cornerstone is not a panacea for the deep and recalcitrant prob-lems of the academic humanities, including the long-standing need to reconceive graduate education. But it is a promising effort to reach undergraduates who seek respite from the pre-professional treadmill and crave time for reflection. And for graduate students, it represents a chance to get a meaningful job on a renewable appointment, teaching in and beyond their chosen fields.

Some people will object. They will say this is a route to second-class academic citizenship because it emphasizes introductory teaching over advanced research. But in the age of STEM, there's no better way to attract students into humanities classes than through general edu-cation. Humanities faculty need to go where the students are, not wait for the students to come back to them.

In his forthcoming book, *Rescuing Socrates: How the Great Books Changed My Life and Why They Matter for a New Generation*, Roo-sevelt Montás, longtime director of the core curriculum at Colum-bia University and member of the advisory council for Cornerstone: Learning for Living, sums up the case: "Putting serious liberal arts programs at the center of the un-dergraduate curriculum will not only inspire more students to major in the liberal arts, but will reinvigo-rate the professoriate and reverse the precipitous decline in faculty jobs in the humanities." General ed-ucation is the place to start. ∎

Bio | *Andrew Delbanco is president of the Teagle Foundation. Loni Bordoloi Pazich is program director for institutional initia-tives at the Teagle Foundation.*

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Small Changes to Promote DEI in College Classrooms

> While there are no shortcuts, we can adopt some small, intentional steps in four key areas that can yield big results for student success, write Rita Kumar and Brenda Refaei.

By Rita Kumar and Brenda Refaei // October 18, 2021

The pandemic and tumult over social justice have been challenging how educators approach teaching. Safety protocols and debates over the role of diversity, equity and inclusion in higher education have left many instructors feeling burned out. In such a state, it is helpful for us as educators to focus on small changes to our teaching that can yield big results for student success. As James Lang writes in *Small Teaching*, we should consider taking "an approach that seeks to spark positive change in higher education through small but powerful modifications to our course design and teaching practices."

Amna Khalid and Jeffrey Aaron Snyder point out that "there are no shortcuts" if higher education is going to meet its role in confronting social issues of poverty, discrimination and racism. Thus, we should ground any activities we pursue along those lines in an ongoing educational process. But while there are no shortcuts, we can adopt some intentional small changes in four key areas to make our teaching more inclusive.

Small Changes for Ongoing Self-Reflection

To initiate a process of change, we must begin with what we know best: ourselves. Small changes begin with our engaging in the self-work that we need to develop empathy and understanding of others' experiences. As educators, we should reflect on and examine our experiences for biases and assumptions. Several resources and tools are available to facilitate the process of self-examination, such as *The Racial Healing Handbook* by Anneliese A. Singh, *Me and White Supremacy* by Layla Saad, and the *Project Implicit* tool by Harvard University and the University of Virginia.

Using such tools helps us to uncover implicit biases that we harbor at a subconscious level. That process of self-examination should be consistent and built over time with intentionality. Our responsibility as educators requires us to continually seek knowledge that helps us understand DEI issues. Only then will we be able to develop educational practices that create inclusive learning environments. Former University of Richmond president Ronald Crutcher has emphasized the need to "be intentional about leveraging diversity as an educational benefit if we are to succeed in graduating empathetic listeners capable of navigating and bridging divides."

Small Changes to Adopt Inclusive Pedagogical Practices

Faculty members have many opportunities to adopt small changes

RUDZHAN NAGIEV/ISTOCK/ GETTY IMAGES PLUS

to their pedagogical practices to make them more inclusive. First, as instructors, we can use a quick survey to learn about students' interests and goals for the future. We can incorporate such surveys throughout the semester to check in with students about their concerns about the course, their college experience and their life beyond college. We can then use the results to connect students to needed resources.

Second, we can review our syllabi for inclusive language. Course policies should be stated in positive terms that support student success. As Kirsten Helmer at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst has noted, reframing support opportunities such as office hours into descriptions that can be more easily understood helps students who may not know the terminology

commonly used in higher education. Using terms like "student support hours" or "meeting time for students" can help explain that the time is dedicated to meeting with students to discuss their concerns or questions

Third, we need to uncover the hidden curriculum, which consists of the unspoken, unwritten, unofficial or implicit academic, social and cultural messages found in higher education, so that expectations are visible to promote educational transparency and equal opportunities for all.

Finally, students need to be engaged in active learning. Active learning encourages students to use higher-order thinking skills as they actively construct their own knowledge and understanding of concepts and procedures. Active learning can range from a pause in the lecture for students to note the muddiest point to a community-based group project. Studies have demonstrated that active learning approaches are more effective not only in helping students learn but also in creating more inclusive classrooms.

Small Changes to Create Inclusive Curricula

Instructors can start with small changes to create an inclusive curriculum, as well. We can begin by selecting, where possible, course content or concept examples that reflect our students' experiences. We can validate student identities by modifying course material to create authentic, relevant learning experiences. Students' participation in the course and ultimate re-

> Our responsibility as educators requires us to continually seek knowledge that helps us understand DEI issues. Only then will we be able to develop educational practices that create inclusive learning environments.

tention in college depend on both how reflective and relevant the curriculum is to their lives.

As Lang suggests, we can apply the "small teaching" concept to portions of a course. For example, we can identify a specific class session to try applying universal design for learning approaches, such as using a multimodal presentation of course content that makes it more accessible for all students. We can also focus on decolonizing a specific course concept by bringing in new voices and perspectives. In fact, an especially effective way to begin the process of making the curriculum inclusive is by inviting students into the process of creating the curriculum. Doing so can impact the curricular outcomes "with the ultimate objective of developing learners who will be autonomous, critical, and assertive citizens," as we write in our book, *Equity and Inclusion in Higher Education: Strategies for Teaching*.

Small Changes to Conduct Inclusive Assessment

Implementing small changes to assessment processes can yield significant improvements to student success. If possible, we should offer our students a choice of how they illustrate their understanding of the course and what they've learned. Giving students that agency encourages them to invest more in the processes of demonstrating their learning.

Another small change faculty can make is to provide multiple opportunities for students to receive feedback and conduct guided self-assessment of their learning. For example, to reduce their load, faculty members can create peer feedback sessions that help students better understand assignment requirements.

Transparent assignment design, developed by Mary-Ann Winkelmes and other scholars, relates the assignment not only to the course but also to real-world outcomes, creating greater student engagement in the assignment. Transparent assignment design uses a simple heu-

ristic of purpose, task and criteria for writing-assignment directions. In a biology assignment to create an infographic, for instance, students can be given a rationale for how the infographic will advance their learning, given steps to create one and finally given the criteria for how the infographic will be evaluated. In a study they conducted, Winkelmes and others found that students who received transparent assignments made gains in three areas linked to student success: 1) increased academic confidence, 2) a greater sense of belonging and 3) awareness of their mastery of the skills that employers value most when hiring. In another study, students at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas were retained at higher rates than students who did not receive transparent assignments.

In addition, quick assessments like the classroom assessment techniques described by Thomas A. Angelo and K. Patricia Cross provide students and faculty with insights into student comprehension of course material, which gives students time to correct their misunderstandings before a high-stakes assessment. Inviting students to submit an initial draft of their ideas for an assignment and engaging in peer-review activities provides helpful scaffolding before a major assignment.

Small Changes for Ongoing Growth

The work of addressing diversity and promoting equity and inclusion in higher education is an ongoing task that can be made more manageable if instructors develop an intentional plan for their growth in this area. We can begin by setting goals for ourselves in each of the four areas we've described and seek institutional support where possible. We should also work with our students to create more inclusive classrooms by engaging them in the self-reflective work needed to understand their own positionality.

Based on that understanding, we can co-create inclusive pedagogies, curricula and assessment processes that value each member of the learning community. As educators, we should also develop a means to evaluate whether we are meeting our goals of inclusivity or missing our mark so we can course correct if needed. In our book, Deyu Hu and Michele Deramo provide a rubric that can be used for this self-assessment.

Finally, administrators should recognize and support faculty members' efforts to improve equity and inclusion in their courses. Efforts related to DEI work frequently involve BIPOC faculty, adding an extra service load to their already busy schedules that leaves less time for them to conduct and publish their research. Unfortunately, such work often is not acknowledged or rewarded, leading to further inequities when it comes to tenure and promotion.

With encouragement and adequate administrative support, faculty members will more likely be able to engage in advancing equity in their courses and classrooms. They can begin to make intentional small changes to consistently build inclusive learning environments that respect differences. And that will ultimately be no small matter. As Crutcher has observed, such small changes over time have the potential to prepare students who are better equipped "to strengthen pluralistic democracy and build an America that makes one out of many." ∎

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It's Time for Engineering to Be Equity-Centered

Diversity, equity and inclusion should be a required
part of engineering schools' curricula, argues Alec D. Gallimore.

By Alec D. Gallimore // August 30, 2021

In technical fields, we often pride ourselves on our objectivity -- as though the work exists outside ourselves. In engineering, we have historically believed that we could make technologies that work for anyone, regardless of the identity of the engineer or the user. We have believed that technological progress was inherently making the world a better place.

And, in many ways, it has. From the wheel to the automobile, the printing press to the internet, eyeglasses to orbiting telescopes, engineering has expanded humanity's horizons and improved the human condition. But it has become clear that such technologies and systems do not benefit everyone equally. At times, they can even actively harm some groups. Unintended consequences can occur, because engineers are people, too -- people shaped by their cultures, with biases and blind spots.

That's why, earlier this year, I joined fellow engineering deans in submitting a letter to the Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology recommending that they add diversity, equity and inclusion requirements for accreditation of engineering programs. Engineering must provide deep technical training, yes. But it must also require nontechnical training in fields such as ethics, social science, the hu-manities, history and matters associated with equity.

Baked-In Biases

Indeed, engineering technologies and systems have transformed society in many ways. We have seen this recently in the many aspects of life that were able to continue through pandemic lockdowns -- yet we also saw great inequity in who was able to work from home or access virtual school.

In fact, sometimes inequity is built into the product. Women are 17 percent more likely than men to die in a car crash and 73 percent more likely to be seriously injured. Why? In part because crash-test dummies are modeled on men. Similarly, algorithms keep poor people out of jobs and housing and lead to Black people being held in police custody because they were wrongly identified by a system optimized to recognize features of light-skinned faces. And designs for autonomous vehicles, often touted as having vast potential to increase mobility for people with disabilities, leave their needs out of most prototypes.

Technologies have also inadvertently played a role in widening the gap between the haves and have-nots. Engineered tools have led to improvements in productivity that helped to either entrench or exac-

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erbate income inequality -- limiting opportunities for some while increasing them for others. By many estimates, wages for the bottom 90 percent of earners have not kept pace with U.S. economic growth.

Part of the problem is that engineering teams tend to represent just small swaths of society. Recent reports make clear that they often don't include women or people from historically excluded groups. Of the nearly 1.7 million prime-age engineering workers in the United States in 2019, 81 percent were either white or Asian, and 84 percent were men, according to the Georgetown Center for Educa-

tion and the Workforce. And while the unemployment rate for scientists and engineers over all is lower than it is for the U.S. labor force in aggregate, that doesn't hold true for engineers and scientists with one or more disabilities. For that group, unemployment is higher than the national rate, the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics has found.

In addition to considering diversity within the ranks of engineering companies, there is a powerful opportunity in advocating for more diverse supply chains as well, enabling small firms to establish themselves in competition with the big players. Many leading companies have supplier diversity programs, and Intel recently announced $500 million it plans to put toward companies led by women and historically excluded groups.

Engineering can make the world a better place. But to do that in the broadest way possible, we must think differently about what engineering is and whom it's for. We can do that by approaching our work through an equity-centered lens. Equity-centered engineering, like its cousin, equity-centered design, strives to intentionally close societal gaps rather than unintentionally expand them.

Equity-Centered Engineering Is Foundational

It starts with education. My colleagues and I are calling on the accrediting body of our field to require diversity, equity and inclusion education in engineering school, and at Michigan Engineering, we're not waiting to be told. For the past two

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years, we've been incorporating an equity-based framework into our undergraduate curriculum and defining experiential learning objectives that include empathy, ethics and cultural awareness. We recently approved new plans to educate the entire College of Engineering community of students, staff and faculty on diversity, equity and inclusion -- starting with a focus on race, ethnicity and bias.

Perhaps the most impactful part of the new education effort will be in the undergraduate curriculum, as we graduate more than 2,000 students per year. We're developing a new course for all of our undergraduates that will examine diversity, equity and inclusion in STEM, its historical context and societal impact. We're also integrating content on diversity, equity and inclusion into existing technical coursework where it's appropriate, because we believe this knowledge is vital to both excellence and ethics in engineering practice.

We are taking these steps because,

frankly, we need to require more of our engineers. Society demands rigor in engineered systems, so it goes without saying that technical acumen is a hallmark of engineering education. But engineering is a people-first field. We do not make or use technology in a way that is separate from the culture and society we are part of. We need to teach that in required engineering coursework, threaded throughout the academic experience, as a practical means of addressing or preventing social problems that materially affect the field and society at large.

Engineers must understand how their individual biases and those of the field influence engineering practice and how to counteract those biases. They need to know how to work in diverse and inclusive teams, and why that's valuable as they advance in their careers. They must learn how to step back from engineering's conventionally technocratic frame and to respectfully engage with and learn from stakeholders. And they must hold themselves and each other accountable

to root out biased or toxic behaviors that perpetuate environments that cause harm.

Without this broader educational foundation, tomorrow's engineers run the risk of exacerbating the societal wedges we see today. To stay on our field's current path is to accept that, and to choose that outcome.

Rethinking the Engineer's Role

From the midst of the fourth industrial revolution, we have an opportunity to rethink the role of engineering in society. Our actions will help determine how the rise of ubiquitous computing and advanced automation affects communities and workers, and all of us.

So we must think carefully about the questions we ask, and whose problems we choose to solve. What if, from day one, engineers were trained that it's their responsibility to inquire about the impacts that technologies will have on people, the planet and future generations? What if they were taught to explore, from the outset, what a product's supply chain would look like, how it would be manufactured and whether its components could be recycled? What if engineering teams included not only people who could ask about those impacts from all angles, but also leaders who were prepared to step back from the status quo and demand answers?

In addition to the moral grounds for change, there's also a business case. Recent years have seen the rise of environmental, social and governance, or ESG, practices, which have proven to be important to a growing number of socially responsible investors. Engineers who understand these factors will be increasingly valuable in the marketplace.

If all engineers had these additional core competencies, not only could we see diversity blossom in the field in the coming decade, not only would we create the kind of engineers that society is asking for, but we could also move toward surmounting what is perhaps the grandest challenge: ensuring a more equitable future. ∎

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