

Newsletter of the Association for Core Texts and Courses

April, 2001

Midwest Welcomes ACTC

Scott Lee, Phillip Sloane, Ruthann Johansen, and Donald Whitfield

This year, our seventh annual conference, **The Wider World of Core Texts and Courses**, is being held at the *University of Notre Dame* in conjunction with the *Program of Liberal Studies* 50th Anniversary Celebration. *The Great Books Foundation*, located in Chicago, joins Notre Dame's Program of Liberal Studies and its *Arts and Letters Core* program in bringing the Association to the heartland of North America.

For the past four years, ACTC had endeavored to move the conference across the continent from Philadelphia, to Asheville, to New Orleans, and San Francisco. This conference is our first on-campus venue, and we welcome the opportunity to hold the conference at one of ACTC's most prestigious institutions. Next year, we hope to hold a conference in Montreal, under the sponsorship of the College of Liberal Arts at Concordia University.

Each year, as ACTC has matured, conference sponsors have taken on more chores. This is necessary if ACTC is to continue to grow. Our special thanks goes out, this year, to Phil Sloan, ACTC Board member, and Professor in the Program for Liberal Studies (PLS) at the University of Notre Dame. Along with Nick Ayo and Michael Crowe, also Professors of PLS, Phil was instrumental in securing the venue and necessary financial support for the conference. He did yeoman work in helping us to plan our agenda with the Center for Continuing Education. He worked on the wonderful idea of the supplemental Saturday meal and the Chester Quartet concert. He publicized and secured support for the conference from other programs on campus. Nick Ayo and Michael Crowe brought forward the original idea of linking PLS's 50th Anniversary Celebration with the ACTC conference and helped us to secure some of the plenary speakers. Stephen Fredman, the Chair of the Arts and Letters Core, provided valuable support and helped to turn the conference into an all-campus event. Eugene Halton conceived the Lewis Mumford exhibit and panel, while Clark Power brought forth the panel on great books and the homeless. Maria C. Tomasula secured Riley Hall for the reception combining an interest in art in the core with a meeting for individuals interested in building a core textbook by and/or about women.

Donald Whitfield, Director of Adult Programs at the Great Books Foundation, offered at last year's conference to help co-sponsor this year's event. He has been most helpful in providing generous support, in building the panel on Shared Inquiry and Civic Values, in supplying texts for our Tajikistan book drive, and in providing the pleasure of a reception on Friday evening. Don's vision of the applicability of great works as a way to open the wider world of core texts to members of our society beyond the campus helps ACTC build a rapidly expanding constituency outside of traditional two- and four-year institutions. We also wish to express our thanks to President Peter Temes of the Great Book Foundation and to Garth Katner, Director of Global Programs, who has been instrumental in the book drive and in helping ACTC to think about building its global activities.

We are pleased to provide to ACTC members further insights into each of the institutions and programs that have helped to make this conference a success.

Liberal Studies At Notre Dame

The Program of Liberal Studies (originally named the General Program of Liberal Education) dates from 1950 when it was established as an required four-year "Great Books" curriculum, modeled in some respects on the Robert Hutchins College program at the University of Chicago. Since that time it has existed as a full department in the Arts and Letters College. It is now a three-year program elected by interested students in their sophomore year who, then, graduate with a degree in the Program of Liberal Studies. The core of the program are the six "Great Books" seminars, taught by all faculty in the Program, whatever their disciplinary specialty, that commence with the ancient Greeks and end with twentieth century literature and philosophy. Alongside the Seminar students take more limited and intensive required tutorials in philosophy, literature, music, political philosophy, natural science, theology, intellectual history, and ethics. Students from the Program have gone into a wide variety of the professions, service, academic work, and politics. The Program currently has fifteen faculty members, and is Chaired by Prof. F. Clark Power. Just prior to and in conjunction with the ACTC conference, PLS celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

Notre Dame's Core Course

As the centerpiece of general education at Notre Dame since 1979, the Core Course—officially titled *Ideas, Values, Images*—is rooted in the Catholic intellectual tradition of the university. Though contemporary academic culture often dismisses religious concerns or hesitates to bring these to the fore of common intellectual discussion, Notre Dame's Core Course has been one forum at the university where faculty and students openly and vigorously examine these tensions between contemporary thought and the Catholic tradition. Through interdisciplinary dialogue and education, the Core Course engages Arts and Letters sophomores in active inquiry into nature, society, the self, and God from diverse disciplinary perspectives. Such interdisciplinarity serves two purposes: (1) it provides an occasion for students to begin seeing the deeper relationships between ideas and problems that they will encounter in their, specialized, major courses and (2) it promotes faculty collegiality by offering faculty members an opportunity to venture outside of their own disciplines and to converse about teaching and learning.

The Core Course is clearly concerned with values. Through the texts, as well as lectures, art exhibits, concerts, and films, students confront issues of poverty and social justice; war and peace; religion, modernity, and secularization; science and technology. While many of the texts are classics, the Core Course differs from a traditional "great books" program because it is organized around the four overarching themes, or root ideas, of nature, society, the self, and God. Because the Core Course is a year-long seminar experience, with enrollment limited to 15-20 students per section, faculty and students enjoy an opportunity for close interaction in the classroom and for continuing conversation in the dormitories and dining halls. Traditionally, all sections have shared a common syllabus, which includes readings of classic and contemporary works in the social sciences, humanities, and the arts. The Core Course is currently in an experimental period in which small groups of faculty from diverse disciplines are developing and testing one-semester versions of interdisciplinary syllabi. As these one-semester syllabi invigorate the Core Course with fresh ideas, faculty and students are assessing the benefits of various one-semester syllabi compared to a year-long, integrated intellectual experience.

The Great Books Foundation

Founded in 1947 by Hutchins and Adler, the Foundation supports educational programs for people of all ages. The Foundation provides focused group discussions of great literature to strengthen the idea that reading and discussing ideas are fundamental to public and private life.

The GBF assists self-directed adult discussion groups throughout the world through training courses and publishing anthologies of both classic and modern authors. Many college instructors interested in shared inquiry use GBF books. The Foundation has worked with elementary and middle school teachers through the Junior Great Books Program.

The Foundation has promoted public discourse, including a national discussion of de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, and a three-year Latino literature discussion project. In April, 2001, the Foundation will co-sponsor a conference at the University of Illinois, Chicago, on the social and educational context of the Great Books idea. Early this summer, the Foundation will release the first issue of its new intellectual quarterly magazine, *The Common Review*.

ACTC Contributors

Barbara Berfanger
St. Mary's College KS
Nicholas Ayo
Notre Dame University
Jadwiga Krupski
Concordia University
James Vest
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Diane Fourny
University of Kansas
James Woelfel
University of Kansas
Terese Hartman
Lynchburg College
Charles Hill

Affiliations Expand with Sister Organizations and Cooperation with Colleges and Universities

Theo Carlile, Peg Downes, Scott Lee, Stephen Zelnick

Last year, ACTC initiated a meeting of like-minded liberal education professional associations, which has led to visiting other conferences. Theo Carlile, St. Mary's College at Moraga, attended a meeting in Oakland in October of the Association for Graduate Liberal Studies. In a panel on "Building a National Coalition for Liberal Studies," Carlile spoke about the goals, the work on core-text programs, and ACTC. Carlile, endorsed the value of exchange and support across programs. The group supported a loose coalition and shared insights various student populations and their readiness for new pedagogies.

Suggestions included a joint website providing association membership lists and conference titles and schedules, and plans for each association to invite members from other associations to conferences, including a joint sessions at annual conferences.

Peg Downes and Scott Lee attended the Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) conference in Chicago and presented the ACTC efforts on the Silk Road trip to Central Asia. AGLS officials discussed future cooperation with ACTC. Downes, who is on AGLS's Board as well as ACTC's, wrote on the Silk Road Project for their newsletter. Marianne Hopper, editor of AGLS's newsletter, and Scott Lee have agreed to exchange notices about AGLS and ACTC for their respective newsletters. Downes and Stephen Zelnick were invited to a conference in Racine, sponsored by the National Association of Scholars, "Great Books and the Challenge of Academic Pluralism."

ACTC members have also been consulted in program reviews of general education. Several institutions have called ACTC for recommendations for reviewers. Other institutions are calling ACTC members for outside review. Peg Downes has assumed Directorship of the Asheville Institute on General Education, an AACU summer seminar program on institutional reform. Stephen Zelnick traveled to Boston University and National University in San Diego this year to advise on their core programs. Scott Lee reviewed the performance of students in Eckerd College's year-long Western Heritage in a Global Context core course, advised Brigham Young University on reforming its general education program, and traveled to 11 other colleges and universities – including six ACTC institutions, giving presentations from his AALE research on reform in general education.

ACTC Institutional Contributors Exceed All Previous Records

Scott Lee

ACTC thanks our institutional contributors to ACTC. Five years ago, ACTC had 16 contributors, and this year 35. These totals exceed last year's by five and include 27 that have given, at least, once previously, seven contributed five years in a row, six for four years, and eight for a first time, this year. As ACTC's activities expand, institutional contributors have grown in importance.

In the past, the membership of ACTC, has suggested that contributions of \$ 1000 for universities, \$ 500 colleges, and \$ 250 for community colleges be the requested support. Please save this newsletter and carry our request to your administration.

Aga Khan Humanities Project
Boston University
Brooklyn College—CUNY
College of New Jersey
Colorado College *
Concordia College-Moorhead
Concordia University
Eckerd College
Florida A & M *
Great Books Foundation *
Hanover College *
Lynchburg College
Mercer University
Pacific Union
Pepperdine University
Rhodes College
Richland College *
St. John's College
St. Mary's College in California
Saint Mary's University of Minnesota
Saint Olaf College *
Seattle Pacific University
Shimer College
Southeastern Louisiana University
Temple University
University of Chicago
University of Dallas
University of Kansas
University of North Carolina at Asheville
University of Notre Dame
University of Texas at El Paso *
University of the Sciences in Philadelphia
University of the South *
Valparaiso University
Villanova University

(35 total; 27 repeating; * first time contributor)

President's Message

Stephen Zelnick, Temple University

The continued growth of ACTC frankly amazes me. Here we are at Notre Dame for our seventh annual conference and planning for our eighth in Montreal in 2002. The numbers of members and of contributing institutions continue a steady growth. ACTC has membership contacts with from 200 to 300 people and over 100 institutions. Many of those institutions lend generous support through annual contributions. ACTC's contacts with fraternal organizations that share our outlook grow stronger and more numerous. And now ACTC begins to have an international impact not only in Canada but in distant lands in Central Asia. At its origins, when Scott Lee and I set our minds to building a modest organization of like-minded people, we had no such aspirations, even in our wildest dreams.

Why is this happening? Well, much of it has to do with the remarkable talent and unflagging energies of Scott Lee, and with the generosity of Jeff Wallin at AALE and of Temple University, whose Dean of Liberal Arts, Morris Vogel, continues to underwrite ACTC's day-to-day efforts, and to the Intellectual Heritage Program at Temple, whose new Director, Daniel Tompkins, has accommodated ACTC. And, of course there has been the hard work, intelligence, and dedication of dozen of ACTC members who have taken on some leadership over the years.

But another reason for our success now and from the beginning is that ACTC promotes fundamental values in education and society. Our higher education culture continues to be threatened by philosophies that are hostile to the human development of our people, the flourishing of our communities, the civic and political strength and honor of our nation, and peace and decency worldwide. For us, all these themes reside in good education, and good education begins with recognizing the essential importance of the long traditions of brave learning, free discussion, and eloquent expression.

ACTC has always taken a positive approach to advancing the core. We respect those organizations that fight against the incursions of narrow ideologies and self-regarding careerism, and the collapse of standards. ACTC, however, brings us together to share our strength as scholars and teachers and curriculum designers and administrators to educate well. We continue to support core courses and core programs and the people who create and maintain them. In the process, ACTC members make new friends, gather ideas about what they do, and find support for some of our difficult battles.

Some of the ACTC institutions are well grounded in core education with decades of experience, but many others are struggling to accommodate core programs, and some are just beginning to introduce or re-introduce them. In many universities in particular there are arrangements called core curriculum that have no center and no discernable purpose other than to distribute enrollments to various departments. Core education continues to be threatened by a career training theme on one flank and the challenge of super-sophisticated pseudo-learning on another. We have often been obliged to recall our colleagues to their senses.

The wonder of core learning, a learning not subject to disciplinary narrowing and the blindness so many specialists achieve, is that those who practice it are always in a posture of learning about themselves and others, about the legacy of ideas, and about the wider world in all its surprising irregularity, beauty, and spiritual promise.

So, welcome again to ACTC. I hope we will all find again the good fellowship and usefulness of our conference. I invite you all to use ACTC to build your core programs by developing networks of friends and associates, by sharing ideas about books and how to use teach them, by thinking about how to strengthen your courses and programs administratively, and by committing yourself to building your Association for Core Texts and Courses.

ACTC Contributors

Norma Thompson
Yale University
Susan Gillespie
Bard College
Ellen Belton
Brooklyn College
Cynthia Rutz
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Anthony Whall
Salisbury State Univ.
Jeffrey Brautigam
Hanover College
Geoffrey Fidler
Concordia University
Thomas Lindsay
University of Dallas

List as of March 22

Thanks to All!

ACTC Visits Central Asia: Journey to the Silk Road

Scott Lee and Stephen Zelnick

In an historic step for ACTC, last August a team of five ACTC representatives journeyed to Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan to observe the progress of a new core text curriculum developed by the Aga Khan Humanities Project (AKHP). Traveling under an Andrew W. Mellon grant, the team stayed in Almaty, Kazakhstan, and Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, and at the AKHP headquarters in Dushanbe, Tajikistan. The AKHP program, now in its third year, networks nine regional universities and is expanding to the Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg, Russia. Its objective is to renovate the region's outdated Soviet-style higher education structure to develop in students the spirit of pluralistic, civil societies. ACTC and AKHP have been in collaboration for several years before this trip. The hoped-for long-term results will be collaborative efforts on core text courses between ACTC institutions and AKHP institutions.

The Silk Road was an ancient trade route from China through Central Asia to the ancient Mediterranean. Now the Silk Road aspires to establish a global, liberal education that links the intellectual heritage of many nations. Under the leadership of Director Rafique Keshavjee, AKHP helps the region's universities construct curricula that reflect the pluralistic, cultural heritage of Tajiks, Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, and Kazakhs living in these four countries. The universities desire to open themselves to global higher education, to explore Western pedagogy, and in particular to acquire the practice of open discussion and inquiry based styles of learning. The foundation for this educational effort is a pedagogy based on the rich Islamic, Eastern, and Western heritage of texts and traditions which have repeatedly intersected on the Silk Road for over 2000 years.

The visiting team met with government officials, university rectors, and young teachers in higher education. Several rectors have visited ACTC conferences and displayed a hunger for dialogue with the West. Program training, pedagogical instruction and assessment, curricular development, faculty support, and cultural legacies after Soviet withdrawal, all formed part of the discussions. In addition, the team discussed possibilities of exchanges of students and faculty. Stephen Zelnick, President of ACTC, commented that the region offers artistic and cultural richness to the rest of the world: "In stories, visual arts, tapestries, music and dance we can expect an out flowing of treasures as these national traditions become part of the global culture we now see emerging from all over the world."

The Program Officer and Chief Planner for this project was Scott Lee, Executive Director of ACTC. Lee, Faculty Fellow of the American Academy for Liberal Education and Principle Investigator on a comprehensive and historic AALE/FIPSE/Mellon research grant, gathered the ACTC team and wrote the Mellon proposal. Stephen Zelnick, ACTC President, Professor in Temple University's English Department, and former director of the University's Intellectual Heritage Program; Margaret Downes, Former Director of the Humanities Program at the University of North Carolina at Asheville and current Director of the Asheville Institute on General Education; Susan Gillespie, Director of International Institute on Liberal Education at Bard College, and instrumental in establishing the first liberal arts college in post-Soviet Russia, Smolny Institute in St. Petersburg, and Thomas Barfield, Chair of the Anthropology Department and Specialist in Nomadic and Central Asian Studies at Boston University.

At the invitation of Keshavjee and Tom Kessinger, former President of Haverford College and General Manager of the Aga Khan Trust for Culture – the parent organization of AKHP, Stephen Zelnick, with his Russian more highly polished, will be returning this late spring to review classroom practices and to visit Smolny Institute, in St. Petersburg, as well.

AGLS NEWS

The Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) is the national organization of college and university faculty, administrators, and prospective faculty who share a commitment to the centrality of general and liberal education in the undergraduate experience. Established in 1961, the Association advocates and actively promotes the role of general education in the curriculum, stimulating vigorous dialogue concerning the nature, purposes and outcomes of general and liberal studies, and fosters sound teaching practices, curriculum renewal, and programmatic excellence.

The AGLS 2001 Annual Conference will meet in Pittsburgh from October 11-13th. The theme will be "Liberal Education in a Democratic Society." The program will emphasize issues such as: civic engagement, scholarship of application, university-community partnerships, service learning, using technology to build community, international experience and liberal education. For more information on AGLS and the conference please visit the AGLS website at www.bsu.edu/agls.

ACTC Wins Mellon Grant and Partners with Institutions in FIPSE Grant Proposals

Scott Lee

As a part of its Silk Road project, ACTC won a \$15,000 Andrew W. Mellon travel grant to support the air travel to and from Central Asia and some land travel as well. The Aga Khan Humanities Project contributed support for housing, food, and travel in Tajikistan and other parts of Central Asia.

ACTC executive director, Scott Lee, proposed this spring an assessment and demonstration project to the Fund for the Improvement of Post Secondary Education (FIPSE), "Assessing Progress in Liberal Arts Curricula: Using Assessment of Student Learning to Improve Teaching of "Delayed Course-Taking Students" in General Education Curricula." Partnering with five ACTC institutions, Eckerd College, City University of New York - Brooklyn College, University of Dallas, University of Kansas, University of Texas at El Paso, the grant proposal constituted the first effort by ACTC to secure federal funding for a core text project. Instrumental in securing institutional partners were Anthony Brunello (Eckerd), Ellen Belton (Brooklyn), James Woelfel (Kansas), Glen Thurow (Dallas), and Ron Weber (Texas). Many thanks for their efforts.

ACTC has also been named as a partner institution in a grant proposal submitted to FIPSE by the American Academy for Liberal Education, "Liberal Education, General Education, and Community Colleges: Forging a Partnership for Learning Effectiveness in Higher Education." The grant seeks to form consortia of community colleges and four-year institutions to develop faculty-negotiated, trans-institutional, accreditable models of general, liberal education curricula shaped by student learning outcomes as a way insure the integrity of outstanding, unique core curricula brought under state mandates for credit transferability or as an alternative to individually negotiated articulation agreements.

ACTC also endorsed two recent grant applications. Both written by Bainard Cowan, the first was for an LSU summer institute in American Studies on core American texts and their contexts in several disciplines to Louisiana Board of Regents. The second is an NEH grant application for expansion from one to four semesters of a comparative civilization course that interconnects Western and non-Western texts in a cultural study.

Universities and colleges seeking ACTC partnership or advice on core curricular, core-text grants are urged to contact ACTC officers.

ACTC Proceedings

Bainard Cowan, Don Thompson, and Scott Lee

The selected proceedings from New Orleans, to be published under the title of *Uniting the Liberal Arts: Core and Context* have been peer reviewed by Bainard Cowan and Scott Lee. The manuscript should go out to University Press of America by this year's conference weekend. Thanks to Bainard and to his assistants. Notices to authors will have been sent out on or about the time of the conference.

Don Thompson, Pepperdine University, has put the manuscripts of last year's conference, *Universality and History: Foundations of Core* on a website located at Pepperdine for purposes of editing. Significant progress toward publication is expected by early next fall.

ACTC needs editors and reviewers for this year's proceedings. Please speak with Stephen Zelnick or Scott Lee if you are interested.

Books for Tajikistan

Scott Lee

Last fall, ACTC began collecting texts for the AKHP project. Though Russian is the academic *lingua franca* in Central Asia, English is rapidly becoming a viable second language, especially among the AKHP students who tend to be linguistically adept. Several individuals and institutions responded to the call for books with generous offers. These include: Peg Downes, UNCA; Anne Marie Flanagan, University of the Sciences - Philadelphia; Margaret Heller, University of King's College; Lucy Miskin, Copley Custom Publishing; Donald Whitfield, The Great Books Foundation; James Woelfel, University of Kansas.

Interested parties contact Stephen Zelnick who is arranging the book drive.

Thompson Nominated to ACTC Board

Donald Thompson, Professor of Mathematics and Associate Dean of Seaver College at Pepperdine, has been an active "citizen" of ACTC since 1998.

Don has brought other Pepperdine members to ACTC, secured financial support for ACTC, including a co-sponsorship of last year's conference, and is editing the proceedings of the San Francisco conference. He also brought students to last year's student panel to advance plans for an ACTC student conference. This wide ranging effort on his part has earned the respect of the officers of ACTC and they urge members to support the nomination.