

## **ACTC/AGLS Project for a Humanistic, Narrative Approach to Assessment**

This page of the section of the ACTC website that is devoted to its Liberal Arts Institute provides a description and progress report of a project on Humanistic, Narrative Assessment which is designed to capture what liberal arts programs based in core texts and/or general, liberal education programs accomplish in terms of student learning and educational effectiveness.

After a brief history of the development of the project's concept, the pages on the ACTC website turn to implementation of the project and progress reports by various institutions. The progress reports are useful not only as exemplifying the diverse institutional approaches to this project, but also the various stages institutions individually and collectively are going through in order to produce a qualitative, narrative account of liberal education which truly highlights each institution's unique educational achievement. We hope other institutions' core text programs will find the project and implementation to be useful for the articulation and defense of liberal arts education.

### **Conceptual History**

In January of 2010, J. Scott Lee, Executive Director of ACTC, after consultation with ACTC's Board and President, Rick Kamber, sent a letter with a proposal for a joint project in assessment to the Executive Council of the Association for General and Liberal Studies, including its President, Stephen Bowen.

In part the letter read:

Repeatedly, humanists, particularly within general studies programs, observe that current assessment does not capture the liberal learning that they believe they are imparting to students. Acknowledging that strides have been made in capturing some statistical evidence of skills acquisition, most humanists would venture to say that the acquisition of skills is not that at which humanists ultimately aim. "Critical thinking" and "liberal learning" are the two current phrases which probably capture the ends humanists seek. Recently, Steven Knapp, President of George Washington University, spoke before the National Humanities Alliance to characterize more specifically what humanists aim at:

"Again, what is strikingly different about the humanities case, especially when contrasted to the scientific one, is ...[that] their role is not to solve a problem or to answer a particular question, but to illuminate the topic: to deepen and at the same time complicate our understanding of it; to advance the conversation about it."

These words did address the role of humanities scholars and researchers, but properly adjusted they would adequately describe the aims of undergraduate, liberal education in so far as the humanities are concerned.

If this is so, illumination, complication, and advancing conversation about topics of concern to cultures, arts, and disciplines is not likely to be adequately captured by the favorite modes of evidence of current assessment – usually some form of statistical tabulation. It will not inform very much to learn that "illumination is up 23%." But it would be of interest to humanists to learn and read evidence that in the judgment of their colleagues, students were acquiring the arts of liberal education on topics of concern to that education.

A rich supplement to current assessment practices would be the construction of narrative cases, or "briefs," on the development and acquisition of liberal learning as humanists conceive of it. One imagines as a result of such assessment work, less a report filled with tables, than a book or

monograph of case studies illustrating the stages of learning by students delivered through examples of student work.

Here, we need stipulate something obvious: institutions go to great lengths to craft liberal learning, general education programs that are distinctive: informed by institutional traditions, institutional missions, and intellectual distinctions which, combined, are pertinent to the form of liberal education being offered by a given institution. So, a book or monograph exemplifying liberal learning would, at the same time, exemplify institutional differences in approach and achievement.

Such a book, monograph, or study would, then, help humanists to articulate their achievements in general liberal education and to direct their further development or improvement into the future for it would speak to what humanists care about.

It is my judgment that the AGLS's "Improving Learning in General Education: An AGLS Guide to Assessment & Program Review" is the proper vehicle to make the production of assessment products discussed above available to the academic, general public.

The process outlined by the Guide has similarities to the work of AALE in the late 90's and 01-03 on institutional/programmatic assessment with which I am familiar. The basic advantage of the guide is that almost all its questions are really qualitative questions: not "how much," but "what" and "how." Almost all the questions can be answered by narrative description augmented by examples. The very structure of the Guide suggests a common narrative of institutional, programmatic development which could be used to compare one institution's development or program to another: Institutional Choices, Action Steps, Informed Judgments, Further Improvements. And, indeed, within the guide, there is a sense of the narrative nature of liberal learning development that is the principle of the guide's use: "It's the *journeying* that's important here" (p. 8).

Another important feature in this process is the recognition that in the process "the presumption is that a group of 'concerned citizens' at an institution will work collegially to answer the questions." ACTC has programs which are – by definition – cooperative efforts of faculty to work together in general liberal education not only to produce a curriculum, but to achieve liberal learning goals. These are the core text programs within wider, general education programs of colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

I believe that application of the process to core text programs would be welcome by our institutions for it would precisely address, in a narrative fashion, both the reasons for the programs' existence (that is, their academic justifications) and whether the learning that goes on in a program conforms to its design. I also think the process would work very well to encourage faculty to become "reinvested" in core text programs.

There are other advantages: generally, core text programs offer the "constants" of texts and, sometimes, pedagogical practices. They become, thus, stable platforms out of which to begin to draw conclusions not only about liberal learning in the program, but the relations of courses and practices to liberal learning within more variegated general, liberal education. The production of narratives of liberal learning acquisition will have the advantage of providing arguments, examples, and vocabulary to humanists and general education programs to justify and warrant the learning that is done through these modes of knowing and education.

On behalf of the AGLS Executive Council, Stephen Bowen replied shortly thereafter:

The Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS) Executive Council met on February 12<sup>th</sup>, 2010, and voted to accept your proposal on behalf of the Association for Core Texts and Courses for a joint ACTC / AGLS project to develop a narrative-based approach to outcomes assessment in the post-secondary humanities curriculum through

use of the AGLS Guide to Assessment and Program Review. John Nichols has agreed to serve as project co-director for AGLS.

AGLS has enlisted 10 institutions who will be examining general, liberal education programs.

### **Implementation and Progress Reports**

ACTC offices asked ACTC Liberal Arts Institute members and, then, ACTC institutional members supporting the Conference to join (see: <http://www.coretexts.org/organization/institutional-membership/>) the project until 10 institutions had agreed to participate. Those ten institutions are indicated, below, under the progress reports.

ACTC is concentrating on core text, liberal arts education programs that are embedded in general education. In terms of the size of the degree and depending on the curriculum, these range from two-course sequences to a majority of the entire degree.

Essentially, ACTC, in cooperation with AGLS, will seek to produce a monograph, of which 10 chapters will be about ACTC, core text programs. The ten ACTC chapters will narrate the mission and goals of the liberal arts, core text program of each institution. They will indicate the syllabi and course content, including texts used. The chapters will narrate the formation of an assessment committee or group responsible for conducting the project. Each institution's goals having been determined by the group or committee, the various methods of collecting insights into the core text education being offered and learned by students will be specified. Finally, both expected and unexpected outcomes in relation to goals will be presented, less with or even without numerical data, but, rather, with examples drawn from student learning as exemplified in papers, projects, or records of discussions. Again, the object is to present a qualitative, narrative "brief" of a program's liberal arts, core text education – from goals, through courses and texts, to learning achieved.

As part of the solicitation materials for gathering its institutions, ACTC indicated the value of the AGLS Guide and centered on four, modified questions in the Guide which would (a) help to highlight core text, liberal arts program's achievements, and (b) help to provide a flexible, pluralistic framework which can, eventually, relate the widely variant achievements of the different participating institutions to each other within the monograph to be produced.

The four questions to be adapted to particular core text programs were organized by four steps of an assessment process indicated in the Guide:

Under Institutional Choices: To what common student learning objectives (reading this as ends, mission, goals, or objectives) are we committed for all students... in our programs and as an expression of institutional mission?

Under Action Steps: How do our planning and operational processes for [our core text program] produce a curriculum that is purposeful, coherent, engaging, rigorous and cumulative [as expressed not only in its goals, but in its syllabi and reading content]?

Under Informed Judgments: What is our evidence...that our graduates (or our matriculating students) have acquired or are acquiring the knowledge, arts, and skills in core text programs expected by the institution and faculty?

Under Further Improvements: To what extent do our faculty examine the results of assessment, discuss their implications, and use them to adjust or improve the program?

Attentive readers will do well to note that there is no mention of *measurement* in those questions. This is not to say that the ACTC emphasis cannot admit of measurement or that some ACTC institutions will not employ statistical measures. But "measurement" need not be done in terms of numbers or percentage, and, more importantly, the project means to make it clear what the substance – potential and actual – of various liberal arts, core text educations are. That will be achieved through narration and exemplification, not (only) through statistical tables.

## **Progress Reports through February of 2011**

### **SHIMER COLLEGE**

#### **From: Report of the 2010-2011 Shimer College Faculty on the Core Curriculum and Related Matters**

**Contacts: Barbara Stone, Dean, and Albert Fernandez**

#### **Introduction**

The review of the core curriculum carried out by the Shimer College Faculty during the 2009-2011 period was the fourth since the inception of the semester system at Shimer five decades earlier. The first such review took place during the summer of 1978, when the faculty decided to codify the contents of the core curriculum after some years of experimentation. The product of that two-week review was a document stating which books would be read in each of the core courses offered during the Fall 1978 semester, excluding only Natural Sciences 4, a course which had been thoroughly revamped during the previous year and which was not offered in Fall 1978.

During the 1980s, works other than those on the 1978 list were gradually introduced in several of the core courses. At first those works were ones that had been utilized prior to the 1978 review, as with the selection of novels and modern plays in Humanities 2. Over time, works which had not previously appeared in the Shimer core curriculum were introduced with approval by the appropriate course staff and/or the Dean of the College.

Additionally, a new course, Integrative Studies 1 (“Analysis, Rhetoric, and Logic”), was introduced in 1982, evolving in subsequent years in a manner somewhat different from that first envisioned by the faculty. These events led the faculty to decide that another full review of the core curriculum would be in order. That review took place during the two-year period 1989-91, and its process and format set the tone for subsequent curricular reviews.

In order to produce a document that would inform the selection of books for a reasonable length of time, the faculty decided as a result of the 1989-91 review to allow for the possibility of alternate selections for some works in many of the courses. It also made provisions for the curriculum to be reviewed again a decade later. The subsequent review, which took place in 2000-2001, retained the format of the previous one while approving certain changes to core course descriptions and booklists, again with the expectation that the process would again take place in another ten years. In the opinion of the current Shimer faculty, that format has served the College well. Hence it has once again been retained for the current review.

The changes from the last review to the present one, as has usually been the case, are noticeable but not in most cases substantial. The most significant is the elimination of Integrative Studies 1 (“Analysis, Rhetoric, and Logic”), a course that had not been offered since before Shimer’s relocation to Chicago in 2006, in favor of mandatory for credit work on the Senior Thesis. While a Senior Thesis has been required for graduation from Shimer since the late 1970s, academic credit for it has been offered only on the 3 basis of student request. Beginning with the 2013-2014 academic year, students intending to graduate must register for credit for the thesis. Regularly-enrolled students, normally seniors, will be required to register for 2 credits of Thesis Preparation (“Thesis Prep”) in the Fall semester and 3 credits of Thesis in the Spring semester. Any student completing her or his thesis, even if not regularly enrolled, will be required to enroll for at least 1 credit. Any course entitled “Thesis,” regardless of the number of credits, will be graded (A-F) based on the judgment of the thesis advisor in consultation with the second reader.

Thus the requirement of a minimum of 125 credits for graduation, with 85 of those being comprised of core credit for BA candidates and 65 for BS candidates, will remain intact. With respect to the replacement of credits due to the elimination of Integrative Studies 1 from the core curriculum, the faculty considered several options other than mandatory credit for the Senior Thesis. The two most-discussed alternatives were in the areas of mathematics and foreign language. While it was decided in both cases that introducing (or, in the case of foreign language, reintroducing) a requirement was not in the best interests of the College at this time, the faculty committed itself to buttressing offerings in these two areas. A member of the faculty will henceforth oversee mathematical studies, directing student tutors who will become a major resource for math-learners and perhaps offering occasional short courses in mathematical topics. Concerning foreign languages, the faculty approved a motion to offer at least one language on a full-year basis every year, with classical Greek or Latin offered at least once every two years beginning in 2011-12.

While the aims of most of Shimer's core courses are largely unchanged from the 2001 review, a number of less substantial revisions have been made. Almost every course description and booklist has been revised in some respects during this curricular review, as have several course titles. One course, Humanities 4, is explicitly designated as entering an "experimental" phase. In addition, learning objectives and assessment methods are indicated for every core course and sequence and for the core curriculum as a whole, and laboratory exercises and demonstrations are indicated for the Natural Sciences courses and Integrative Studies 2. This has not been the case with past curricular reviews. Those portions of this report should be regarded as works in progress, which is not the case with respect to course titles, descriptions, and booklists. Given that the current faculty retains the expectation that another thorough core curricular review will take place approximately ten years hence, and barring any unforeseen changes in the structure of that curriculum (such as adding or dropping a course), we foresee the following three-year phases:

1. Use of this document exclusively or almost exclusively, under conditions specified in the next section (2011-2014);
2. Use of this document conditionally, with suggestions for unlisted texts to be implemented under specific circumstances (2014-2017);
3. An "experimental" phase, wherein faculty members may add or delete works to core courses with appropriate approval (2017-date of the next review).

Course staffs, composed of those faculty members assigned to teach a given course in a given semester and anyone else whom the Dean sees fit to appoint, will continue to confer about the readings for each core course. During the first period indicated above (2001-2004), members of the respective course staffs will jointly decide upon the works to be read in each course, all of which must be selected in the approved manner from those listed in this document. The only exceptions to this will be (1) if the course staff and the Dean agree that a desirable reading has been inadvertently excluded from this document; (2) in the case of Humanities 4, since it is in an avowedly "experimental" phase; (3) occasional inclusion of articles or other short readings which are not the main focus of class discussion. In the first case, addenda will be made to this document as appropriate; in the second, the faculty will reconsider the course following the Spring 2014 semester.

Beyond these considerations, decisions concerning the works to be read in each core course are to be based on the principles of collegiality and commitment to a faculty approved core curriculum as a defining characteristic of a Shimer education. The members of each course staff should strive for uniformity in syllabi, particularly within different sections of a given course in the same program (Weekday or Weekend). At the

same time, the faculty should be aware that there are virtues other than uniformity.

Course staffs are therefore accorded some autonomy, not only with respect to choosing texts from the booklists but also in permitting non-uniformity when that seems desirable. In all cases, however, only the works listed in this document may be used during this initial period.

The second period (2014-2017) will mark a phase that might be termed “transitional but not yet experimental.” While the general assumptions of faculty responsibility with respect to the works listed in this document will remain in effect, the decision-making process will allow for somewhat more flexibility. If a member of the faculty wishes to use a book or article in a core course without omitting any of the “required” texts, he or she is welcome to propose this to the course staff. If the course staff agrees to give it a try, it will be used in all sections of the course in question. If not, the faculty member is still permitted to use a single book or article in her/his section(s) on an experimental basis if the Dean approves and the other members of the course staff do not object. Other emendations to the works listed in this document, or to the description or content of any of the core courses, can be proposed for full faculty consideration at that time.

During the final stage leading up to the next Core Curriculum Review, course staffs and individual faculty members will have more flexibility with respect to the specifications of this curricular review. For example, books in the “required” section of each course might occasionally (if infrequently) be omitted in favor of others approved by the course staff.

Uniformity of syllabi for a given core course is likely to decrease as more experiments are made by individual faculty members with the blessings of the course staff. The practice of collegiality and the commitment to the principles of a core curriculum will continue to be very much in evidence, but will be tempered with the perception that any amendment of such a core is best undertaken on the basis of faculty expertise and interest as well as actual classroom experience with “new” works.

Because the Shimer College core curriculum is a unified whole whose sequential structure is designed so as to make its unity manifest, that curriculum must demonstrate a relatively high degree of stability. That is one of the key reasons why full-scale review of the curriculum takes place on only an every-ten-year basis. However, the Shimer faculty has for many years endeavored to combine the advantages of stability with those of flexibility, and the virtues of a set curriculum with those of appropriate innovation and collegial decision-making. These goals have largely been met by the two previous curricular reviews. The faculty therefore expects the report that follows to serve as the basis of Shimer’s core curriculum for the remainder of the present decade.

## **The Humanities Sequence**

Description: The four core Humanities courses acquaint students with imaginative representations and systematic explorations of the conditions of human existence. Students view great works of art, listen to great works of music, and read classic works of poetry, philosophy, and theology, all of which are then discussed. Students learn to recognize and understand various techniques of persuasion, then to apply their understanding to their own oral and written communication.

### **Learning Objectives**

1. Demonstrate awareness of the Western humanistic tradition and its role in comprehending the meaning(s) of human experience.
2. Speak and write with accuracy and precision about the various humanistic disciplines.
3. Demonstrate skill in logical argumentation.
4. Demonstrate appreciation of the nature of creativity.
5. Show awareness of the place of both formal analysis and spontaneity in thinking and writing.

6. Experience major humanistic texts and artistic creations critically and sympathetically and assess them critically.
7. Compare the subject matter and methods of the humanities with those of the natural and social sciences.

#### Assessment Methods

1. Class participation
2. Papers
3. In-Class Presentations
4. Basic Studies Comprehensive Examination
5. Humanities Area Comprehensive Examination

#### *Humanities 1: Art and Music*

**Description:** Humanities 1 consists of investigation of the elements and forms of the musical and visual arts. This course is primarily dedicated to the tasks of active listening and viewing. No previous training in music or facility at drawing or painting is presumed. Working with fundamental concepts in music and painting, students develop a rich vocabulary with which to discuss, describe, and experience music and the visual arts.

#### Learning Objectives - Visual Arts

1. Show understanding of the fundamental concepts of form and color.
2. Demonstrate and explain basic principles of single-point perspective.
3. Experiment effectively with color.
4. Distinguish between what the eye can see in a visual work of art and what the mind might imagine about it.
5. Show awareness that mere looking is not a sufficient condition for seeing.
6. Use basic aesthetic vocabulary to describe the expressive content of major works of art.

#### Learning Objectives - Music

1. Identify and define rhythm, melody, harmony, consonance, dissonance, variation, repetition, and development.
2. Experiment effectively with sound.
3. Describe the basic behavior of sound and explain why different strings and string lengths produce different sounds.
4. Distinguish between what the ear can hear in a piece of music and what the mind might imagine about it.
5. Use basic aesthetic vocabulary to describe the expressive content of major works of music.

#### Assessment Methods

1. Class participation.
2. In-class drawing and experimentation with color.
3. In-class experiments of sound and calculation of consonant and dissonant intervals, with a report on a sound experiment.
4. Two in-class presentations, one on a work of the visual arts and one on a piece of music.
5. Two papers, one on a work of the visual arts and one on a piece of music.

#### Booklist

##### Texts in the Visual Arts\*

Albers, *Interaction of Color*

Alberti, *On Painting*  
Leonardo, *Notebooks*  
Rilke, *Letters on Cezanne*  
Steinberg, *Leonardo's Incessant Last Supper*  
Taylor, *Learning to Look: A Handbook for the Visual Arts*  
Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*

Music Texts\*

Bach, *The Well-Tempered Clavier* (selections)  
Beethoven, Symphony #6 "Pastoral" (cd)  
Cooper, *Learning to Listen: A Handbook for Music*  
Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess*, Libretto and DVD  
Mozart, "Twelve variations on the French song „Ah, vous dirai-je, Maman“" (KV 256)

Music Manual containing selections from Helmholtz, Galilei, Vincenzo, Mei, Rameau, Rousseau, Schönberg; a short page of basics in musical notation

Stravinsky, "The Rite of Spring"

Required Aesthetics Texts

Plato, *Ion*

Tolstoy, *What is Art?*

Optional Aesthetics Texts

Balzac, "The Unknown Masterpiece"

Hoffmann, "Councillor Krespel"

Kafka, "The Hunger Artist"

\*The texts in the visual arts and music are not distinguished in the above lists as "required" or "optional." In the visual arts, Albers, Alberti, and Taylor are required. The Leonardo and Cezanne material are the two units that have been developed thus far to round out the visual art component of the course. However, the course staff might choose another representative of the High Renaissance, for example Michelangelo or



**UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS**

**Contact: Kathleen Burk, Associate Dean, Constantin College of Liberal Arts**

**GOODHART'S LAW AND MEANINGFUL METRICS  
ARE THE HUMANITIES NOW A LUXURY?  
ACAD/ΦBK CONFERENCE  
CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA**

**KATHLEEN BURK, Ph.D.  
ASSOCIATE ACADEMIC DEAN  
CONSTANTIN COLLEGE OF LIBERAL ARTS  
UNIVERSITY OF DALLAS**

**11 NOVEMBER 2011**

As if anticipating joining us today, C. L. Max Nikias, the president of the University of Southern California, and his colleague, William G. Tierney, recently made their case in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* for answering the thematic question of this conference in the negative. They even quoted Aeschylus and John Henry Newman. I expect this sort of behavior from the people in this room, many of whom work at institutions like mine, Great Books and Honors programs, Liberal Arts Colleges and Universities. If ones such as we had written the essay I should not have been surprised, but the president of a large, public, R1? I admit: it got my attention. I commend Nikias' and Tierney's essay, entitled "Now More than Ever, a Need for a Bold Ambition" to you; today I want to use one of their "bold ambitions" as a starting point for my remarks.

They issue a challenge to "[r]e-define...the undergraduate curriculum," and "drop the simple accumulation of credits as a proxy for learning, and instead develop reliable indicators of learning aimed at developing creative, inventive, and entrepreneurial graduates." These graduates "must be grounded in timeless human values in order to create timely innovation. They must be grounded in not just the sciences or social sciences but also in the oft-overlooked arts that fuel the human imagination," paying special attention to "the history of the democratic experiment, going back to its Greco-Roman roots" (3). I have no desire to disturb the truce in the culture wars. The state of the academy these days reminds me of the stately elegiac moment in Book 7 of the *Iliad*, in which the carnage and loss on both sides has been so supernatural that the enemies agree to lay down their arms in order to breathe, grieve, and bury their dead, if not yet their weapons. No one wins. Instead, I will focus on what seems to me the salient phrase in Nikias' (Greek. Accident?)

and Tierney's remarks. They call for "reliable indicators of learning." In fact, the culture wars have died down because the assessment wars have heated up.

Nikias and Tierney insist that immersion in the *arts* is indispensable to education because the arts "fuel the human imagination." At the risk of sounding hubristic, providing such an education has been the mission of my institution for more than 50 years, and I can attest to its success. I find it somewhat amusing to hear it described as a bold ambition for universities. UD's particular focus in the ACTC/AGLS project is, in fact, to reliably indicate that fostering imagination leads to wisdom, which is one of the goals articulated in our mission statement, and defined, for this purpose, as intellectual maturity.

Imagination is that capacity to synthesize sense experience, academic training, and individual consciousness conducive to the achievement of *Μέτανοια*, showing the whole to be greater than the sum of the parts. The whole person so informed is the *telos* of education. Our current project is a challenge to demonstrate that success as a "learning outcome." How does an institution go about measuring the immeasurable? How do administrators and faculty answer a question posed to them in a language in which they lack fluency? It seems, at first, a task better performed in dactylic hexameter verse.

We hope to make a start by doing two things: fighting for the validity of words and insisting that Learners  $\neq$  Persons. Our mission statement calls for personal (trans) formation that is not value-neutral. The purpose of education is not a simple transfer of data from a sender to a receiver. *Metanoia* is best described as the moment in which students become aware that their value as persons is enhanced by time spent in contemplation of meaning, a realization of the importance of the *content*, as opposed to the process, of study. Achieving this desired outcome must involve a direct, even personal, engagement with the ideas that have shaped and directed the world we all share and with a mentor/teacher who models the expected and desired behavior. Such a guided direct study of those most significant primary texts, core texts, elicits, we hope to show, an active response from students: what I am learning to call an open-ended response (IR Directors and Regional Accreditors cringe at this because it is so much harder to process than quantitative data, and just as easy to manipulate.). I understand better now why, when faced with the same directive, that is, to justify the teaching of *ideas* to the young rather than more utilitarian information, Socrates drank the hemlock.

In attempting to articulate the good of educating citizens in the liberal arts to an audience that considers empirical data analysis the only reliable, verifiable—true—means of measuring anything I have learned a new term. I gather that in business, finance, and the like, the term is in common parlance, coined, as it was, by a banker. The term is Goodhart's Law, which states that, according to its author, “any observed statistical regularity will tend to collapse once pressure is placed upon it for control purposes.” In other words, as another commentator put it: “When a measure becomes a target, it ceases to be a good measure.” One sees examples of Goodhart's Law everywhere. For example: a college degree was, at one time, considered a good measure of intellectual competence. College degrees, therefore—by any means necessary—became the goal, and concomitantly ceased to be a reliable measure of intellectual competence. (How's that for understatement?) Similarly, selectivity, as indicated by the ratio of acceptances to admissions, is one of the criteria of excellence measured by rankings like those in US News and World Report. Schools began implementing strategies to greatly increase the number of applications received, while not increasing the number of students accepted, in order to appear more selective according to that criterion, and thereby earn a higher ranking. There are many more examples, the most insidious ones have to do with grades and test scores and the explosion of cheating. The morass of NCLB comes to mind. We are lavish in our allocation of limited resources (At least they are limited where I work. I don't know about you) toward collecting data by which to measure continuous improvement, and the moment we identify what we are measuring, it ceases to be a reliable measure. This is really a pedagogical corollary of Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Also of the myth of Sisyphus.

The broad expectation of the ACTC/AGLS project in Alternative Assessment is to positively influence the national discourse on the value of maieutic education; the imminent goal is to develop an alternative, qualitative/narrative instrument of assessment that speaks the value of wisdom, truth, and virtue in terms comprehensible to my regional accrediting agency: to please both Socrates and SACS while somehow sidestepping Goodhart's Law. It is, trust me, laborious, although, candidly, I have been surprised and deeply gratified by the silo-busting, inventive interaction and cooperation of entities within the university that typically do not have much to do with one another. It has served as a reminder of our shared dedication to important work. It's not a raise, but it is a reward.

I would like to think that Liberal Arts Colleges & Universities could come to rely on R1 administrators like Nikias as allies in arguing for a shift in the emphasis of the public discourse

on this topic, as the great warrior, Aias, shields his younger brother, Teukros, an archer, behind his great shield against the torrent of violence in battle (8. 266-272). Indeed I am encouraged by the composition of our panel this morning, as an example of how very different institutions united by a commitment to core text-based liberal arts education, can work together to achieve this goal. Our hope for this project is to deepen the national discourse on the goals of education and to argue persuasively—poetically?—that the great American experiment in republican government predicated upon respect for the worth of each and every person is in danger of collapse when those goals are obfuscated, even by those who most ardently defend the value of education, by an emphasis on conversion to currency. This seems to me like the triumph of totalitarianism. Perhaps the most we can hope for is to demonstrate the importance of the humanities, and most especially core texts, by what is absent from public discourse as a result of their diminishment: a society in which we cannot establish justice because we do not reflect sufficiently on the nature of justice, a society which fails to meet human needs because we do not reflect deeply on what it is to be human.

What we really want to articulate is this: what have students accomplished when they have completed their undergraduate study that fills us as deans and faculty with pleasure and satisfaction in knowing that genuine good has been accomplished? How has foundational reading in core texts augmented students' wisdom? In the end we are attempting to say that fruitful education is manifest in who our students are, not simply in what they do, aware, certainly, that such evaluations, fraught as they are with value laden, subjective language, are not expressible as data sets. As an institution we are willing to participate in this project for the opportunity it presents to join with other institutions in influencing the national conversation about the *telos* of education, which might be summed up in a phrase from *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*: “the priority...of persons over things.”

ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT PROJECT  
INTERMIM REPORT TO  
SACS ASSESSMENT OF LEARNING GOALS COMMITTEE  
KATHLEEN BURK  
14 MARCH 2012

PROLEGOMENA:

*With students we are not cramming their heads full of facts and theories but more fundamentally showing them ways of looking upon things and the world that gives them freedom of action. We have to show them that they needn't be overimpressed by first impressions and the brute presence of things, that they can instead see them according to their typical ways of appearing and the possibilities and necessities these ways bring. More than ever their education needs to provide them with resources sufficient to see the world in its amplitude and live there accordingly.*

*This is a fundamental goal of good pedagogy and especially of higher education, and it is more forward looking than anything coming from education agencies and think tanks. It is also a model that is at the heart of the University of Dallas and the way it was founded and then refounded. Fritz Wilhelmsen made clear to me that higher education must cultivate imagination in order to show students the way to reason's highest purposes. Louise Cowan, by her words and her example, made clear that the UD curricula present some of the finest works of Western and world imagination in a disciplined way, not just to train students for professional life but to expand their capacities, their minds, their hearts, their souls, so that they might be capable of recognizing, perhaps even embracing, what is essential to a good and civilized human being.*

*Dennis Sepper  
2012 King Haggar Address  
17 January 2012*

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

Hypothesis: an undergraduate liberal arts education grounded in and anchored by deep reading in primary core texts augments students' attainment of intellectual maturity. This intellectual maturity is precipitated by experience of *Metanoia*: a coming to awareness based on observation, study, empathy that prompts deepening of insight, action that implies more than strictly rational knowledge acquisition. The Oxford English Dictionary defines *Metanoia* as: "a reorientation of one's way of life." Synthesis of reason and emotion, intellect and sense perception, requires act of imagination that speaks uniquely of embodied wisdom that recognizes common humanity and extends

outward in love. That is to say, the end of an education rooted in imagination is spiritual, ethical (trans)formation of human beings who positively contribute to society by acting thoughtfully, virtuously, justly.

A representative sample of students write under controlled conditions at three points in their undergraduate careers: before enrolling, after year 2 (completion of core curriculum), and after year 4 (graduation; completion of major disciplinary study).

Baseline essay is written in response to one of 6 prompts in a one hour session. Mid-point and final essays will be administered using Blackboard, allowing schedule flexibility, thereby encouraging participation, while still allowing a timed writing opportunity.

Evaluators tally indicators of increasing intellectual maturity according to rubric. Results tabulated.

#### TIMELINE UPDATE:

AY 10-11 Research and development of Alternative Assessment Project

Research indicated e-portfolio project unfeasible

Focused project using *existing resources* formulated

ASAP Exams

Blackboard

Cooperative effort

Provost, Constantin College Dean

Agree to support project

Reinforce institutional position at the forefront of core text education

Provide meaningful data for regional accreditation

review

Constantin College Associate Dean

Research, develop, implement project, report results

Director of Institutional Research

Design, collect, analyze data, report results

Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Admissions

Provide, facilitate sharing of data, evaluators

#### Summer 11

Baseline essays obtained from Office of Admissions, continuing student files.

Rubric finalized

Evaluators hired, trained in rubric use

Data Collection Begins

Data Point 1: Baseline writing sample

ASAP Exam Essay

Rising High School Juniors write an essay in partial completion of a competitive exam that makes them eligible for scholarships. Essays obtained from Office of admissions in hard copy form. Evaluators complete rubric form on-line.

In cooperation with Office of Undergraduate Admissions, ASAP essays for 2012 cohort (current HS seniors), still in hard copy, evaluated first. Results shared with Admissions for scholarship award decisions.

Evaluators proceed to ASAP essays of previous cohorts that have been scanned into .pdf files.

#### Fall 2011

- Presented interim findings at ACAD/ΦBK Conference
- Data Collection ongoing
  - Essays from earlier cohorts scored
  - Intake of ASAP exams from 2011 cohort

#### Spring 2012

- Reviewing available resources
  - Reviewing value of data derived from 2<sup>nd</sup> data point vis. available resources
    - Funding
    - Work/Hours
    - Responsibilities of researchers
- Collection of Narrative Data
  - Dr. Crider cooperating GST 1V40
  - Shaping final writing prompt
  - Sharing scoring responsibilities
  - Videotape of lectures, including, Q&A and discussion, available

#### Data Collection ongoing

- Data Point 2
  - Contact continuing students from 2010 Cohort
  - Explain nature and purpose of project
  - Identify students willing to participate
  - Administer timed opportunity to write on same prompt

#### Data Point 3

- Contact continuing students from 2008 Cohort
  - Data Point 2 data unavailable
  - Schedule focus groups for qualitative data

#### Summer 2012 (anticipated)

Compile data from scored essays

Possible summer assistant

Compile and evaluate qualitative data from 2008 cohort focus groups

Grant Proposal?

Proposing presentation at SCASCOC (Dec 12 in Dallas)



## **ST. BONAVENTURE UNIVERSITY**

**Contact: David J. DiMattio, Dean, Clare College**

### A Franciscan Identity in a Liberal Arts Curriculum

As indicated in our mission, St. Bonaventure is a Catholic university dedicated to educational excellence in the Franciscan tradition. We are committed to our innovative liberal arts core, which we introduce to students as Clare College. Since 1998, Clare College has been the core curriculum totaling 36 credits or 12 core courses. These courses represent general education skills (Composition and Critical Thinking Part 1 and 2), seven core areas of the liberal arts including Western and non-Western traditions (Natural World, Western World, Good Life, Social World, Religious Texts, World Views, Arts and Literature) and three liberal arts courses directly related to our Franciscan identity (Intellectual Journey, Catholic- Franciscan Tradition and University Forum). In addition to these core courses, all students must complete a mathematics/quantitative reasoning requirement of at least one course yet this typically sets in the plan of study for a major. Clare College is the common ground that unites the undergraduate experience for students in all of our programs, including the traditional liberal arts and sciences, as well as professional studies. We have also found that it provides an academic home for those students, particularly in first year, who are not yet ready to commit to a major field of study.

In late 2009, our Faculty Senate and its Curriculum Committee started discussing a formal review of Clare College. This type of work had not been conducted since 2003-2004, when Clare College went through a self-study in connection to its accreditation with the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE). Preliminary steps were taken to reinvestigate the curriculum, our assessment practices, and the realization of a changing educational system as we enter the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It was at this point that St. Bonaventure became involved with the

cooperative AGLS/ACTC project. It had always been a struggle to properly report on a core curriculum and its influences on our students. That is, mechanisms exist to measure learning outcomes when one discusses writing, reading, analysis, and understanding. *But can we comment on how our Catholic Franciscan identity and our core liberal arts curriculum influence students and ultimately their lives on a journey outside our 4-year institution?*

To begin, a committee representing students and faculty of the campus community referenced the AGLS guide for review and assessment. As an institution, we ask the question “By what means do we ensure that these student learning objectives align with our mission, vision, and philosophy?” And at the same time, we ask “how do the humanities best exercise their strengths within our institution, and can students take those learning objectives beyond graduation and into the future?”

We continually remind ourselves to ask students some very primary questions as they journey into higher education. Where do you come from? Where are you going? How did you get here?

Clare College has been modeled after the work of St. Bonaventure, the 13<sup>th</sup> century scholar whose text *Itinerarium* provides a template to liberal learning at St. Bonaventure University. Bonaventure wrote the *Soul's Journey into God* as a response to his personal difficulties, to the problems within the Franciscan Order at the time, and the problems the Order faced as a result of criticisms from without. The *Itinerarium* is thus a *summa*, or, Bonaventure's summary expression of his world view, his understanding of human life in the world, and the relationship of all reality with its source and goal. Bonaventure's approach is based on a Christian-Franciscan conviction of faith, that God exists, that God created all that exists and that God has in mind a future of peace for all of creation.

Being at peace implies that all things seen in right order, i.e., right relationship to/in harmony with everything that exists. This implies that one is in right relationship with all levels of reality. Ultimately, Bonaventure seeks WISDOM on the journey – insights that can help one

on their search for meaning in a world that is complex and difficult to unravel. The journey occurs as :THE WORLD OUTSIDE – steps 1-2, THE WORLD WITHIN – steps 3-4, THE WORLD ABOVE – steps 5-6 Bonaventure attempts to show how the aim of human life (perfection or happiness) is the gradual experience of the presence of the divine in all levels of reality. His Seventh Step is more an acknowledgment of a completed journey and implication that a new journey is to begin. In a student's journey through academics, s/he seeks wisdom in a complex surrounding. But within Clare College, they must experience a journey in the liberal arts analogous to Bonaventure's. The World Outside- investigation of the natural world and aesthetic surrounding. The World Within- Seek the Social World and human's interactions with others and their cultures. The World Above-Seek how we live are lives, beyond the physical world (To live a Good life)

So our core areas are set out to provide students a sample of the complex world. It is the hope that on the journey, a student can attempt to unravel some complexities they might encounter as they progress into a major. The Intellectual Journey course is a microcosm of this model. It introduces students to the model acknowledging a world outside, within and above but through a vessel of primary texts. Students sample core texts that deal with the natural world or the social world, or the religious world. Through this primary introduction, students are exposed to more than just the Clare curriculum model, but also original texts that provide a path into the liberal arts. Appropriately, our first objective with this foundational course has been: to introduce the foundation, structure, and methodology of the core curriculum. Thus, it is a priority that our faculty introduces students to this template or mapquest as they begin their own Journey through academics.

As our committee reexamined the existing curriculum including their core objectives, we wished to isolate those courses which best related and articulated our institutional identity. The Intellectual Journey course is a unique component to the core and should be by definition. However, it was determined the core areas unique to our institution and its mission are the

Catholic Franciscan Heritage, The Good Life (an ethics course), and The University Forum (the capstone to the curriculum which addresses global issues in a multidisciplinary perspective). So, the committee reexamined the objectives within these four core areas, which we now refer to as the core of the core. In order to best articulate the model of Clare College and its connection to the *Itinerarium*, obvious overlap should occur in these core areas.

As example: an objective to the Intellectual Journey is that students will examine major issues in the context of the spiritual vision of Bonaventure. An objective in the Catholic Franciscan course states students will develop ability to dialogue with other traditions on contemporary moral issues. An objective to the Good Life course states student will foster systematic reflection on the nature of a moral life as addressed through major traditions, including the Christian and Catholic-Franciscan traditions. And with the University Forum students are to analyze a contemporary issue in depth from a multi-disciplinary perspective. So within these 4 courses, real integration of themes will occur using the lens of the Franciscan identity. The moral questions raised in Catholic Franciscan tradition will be reexamined at a greater level in Good Life. The major issues of Intellectual Journey will be seen in the others but reexamined more fully in the Forum course, not just through a Franciscan lens but through the lens of a student's discipline. This is ultimately a living example of critical thinking. Students are being taught to formulate their own positions from a major's perspective but also thru multiple perspectives related to the real values that come from our Catholic Franciscan tradition.

In the final chapter of the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure speaks of the joys of discovery and learning. He realizes that Christ's self-giving love is the center point of all reality. In order to find peace, therefore, one must continue on this journey: in a sense, to begin again. For Bonaventure, to know the world outside oneself, to know the world within oneself, and to know God (or the world above oneself) is to know peace, the peace that was always present. Bonaventure suggests in this final chapter that for humans there is no fulfilling knowledge without love, and love is a surrender of the self to another. Knowledge must reflect the totality of

reality (below, within, and above).

The core curriculum also includes a capstone course that invites students to use their skills, including the perspectives from multiple disciplines, to engage contemporary issues. This “University Forum” course culminates our students' liberal arts education at St. Bonaventure and is aimed synthesize several outcomes, including the development of intellectual skills, of knowledge about a broad range of cultural issues, and of a strong desire for inquiry as a means to sustain learning throughout their lives. Faculty and students examine how global issues affect us all and that anyone can contribute to a solution because often more than one solution is needed. Like Bonaventure himself, students realize that even though their particular journey through the liberal arts and sciences curriculum will end, they will use what they learned on the path over and over.

As work progressed, several action steps were examined: how are course syllabi reviewed to assure that the common learning objectives are included in these courses? How do we make departmental faculty knowledgeable about the purposes and goals of our program so they can reinforce and build on previous learning in their advanced courses? How can our faculty use the core learning objectives as standards for grading and otherwise evaluating student work?

To start the discussion, the committee has suggested common skills requirement within these core areas. Minimum of pages of writing, Use of technology incorporated into assignments, Presentation options (class presentation, active learning discussions), and demonstration of critical thinking exercises which allows students to articulate positions on various interdisciplinary issues. In addition, teaching modules will be available to past, present and future instructors as a resource to all “core of core” participants. Examples of assignments, exams, presentations, evaluation mechanisms, bibliographies will be available at a centralized location. Faculty and staff will be urged to reference these materials as well as contribute towards the data banks. Workshops will be required for all faculty and staff who wish to participate in these core courses. It will be necessary not just for new faculty but for experienced faculty. Our primary

objective will be to educate individuals in areas they might not be aware. Since we desire to have obvious overlap for students by way of objectives, it will be important for instructors to understand the methodology within the other core courses.

At this point in our discussion, the inclusion of core texts and primary sources became very necessary. One obvious way to reinvestigate a major issue in these courses will be through core texts that students had been exposed to in the Intellectual Journey. What better way to explain the concept of critical thinking but to have students look at primary texts in various perspectives: through a lens of faith tradition, through a lens of ethical and moral struggle, through a lens of cultural understanding.

As example, students are introduced to Plato's Allegory of the Cave in our Intellectual Journey. But when students reach the Catholic Franciscan Heritage course, the text is reexamined as students are confronted with new images of God and new images of the world. Students read parts of the New Testament, including the Sermon on the Mount. Yet, the text is reintroduced in the Good Life course as a question of ethics. Bonaventure's *Itinerarium*, a core text in itself, is referenced and reexamined in each of the core of the core courses. Aldo Leopold's "On Reading the Forest Landscape" has been reintroduced as well in all four core courses but through various lens: a lens of great literature, a lens of diverse faith, a lens of ethics and a globalization lens. Great works of Augustine and Marcus Aurelius ask the questions of person. Martin Luther King Jr's "Letter from Birmingham jail" examines a person in society and the question of reconciliation.

Core text inclusion also allows for basic uniform assessment to be conducted through sections of a core area as well as through the core curriculum itself. The thread that binds these courses provide a mechanism for our faculty to conduct assessment throughout the curriculum.

As pointed out previously, our committee has taken a closer look at integrating core of the core objectives. So starting with the existing mechanisms for these two core courses, we will continue to develop further rubrics for the other two 'core of core' courses in a similar process.

Yet one notes, since core texts appear in several core courses, they will provide a path into an assessment mechanism that can be utilized throughout the curriculum.

But as we conclude on weaving a thread amongst these core of the core courses, how might we still approach the question of “can students take learning objectives beyond graduation and into the future? And how did a Catholic Franciscan education develop their understanding of the world?”

Again, we refer to our Institutional core text, since in the *Itinerarium*, Bonaventure lays out a philosophy of education, of life. He argues that “study” involves 7 core activities “in order that you might not assume that reading is sufficient without unction, speculation without devotion, investigation without admiration, examination without exultation, industry without piety, knowledge without love, understanding without humility, study without divine grace, merely mirroring things without divinely inspired wisdom.” So we draw attention to 7 core activities: reading, speculation, examination, investigation, industry, knowledge, and understanding. Given Bonaventure’s threefold distinction within higher reason: are we as concerned with content mastery as a student’s ability to make/see connections, make practical connection? Are there moments and opportunities when students are invited to wonder, see and experience what cannot necessarily to explain? It is along this philosophy of education that we wish to continue the development of our core.

### **An update, 1/26/2012**

The Clare College Curriculum Committee continued to meet and inspect the core objectives with respect to the remaining courses that are not part of the “core of the core”. It has been our intention to ensure that these core objectives can still connect to the Clare College goals but also integrate themselves into the four “core of core” objectives. The committee has been attempting to map what we call a “values” objective onto these other areas so that there will be connection to the institution’s identity as a Catholic Franciscan school in the liberal arts tradition.

Note: Core of core courses include Intellectual Journey, Catholic Franciscan Tradition, Good Life, and University Forum. Other core areas include: Composition and Critical Thinking 1 & 2, Inquiry to Natural World, Inquiry to Social World, Foundations of Religious Texts, World Views, Arts & Literature.

In addition, subgroups have been formed within the two internal “core of core” courses. (Good Life and Catholic Franciscan Tradition) These working groups are redeveloping syllabi in light of the endorsed core objectives. This group is also investigating primary/core sources to use in all sections of a core course. Most members are considering revisiting texts used in the Clare 101 Intellectual Journey course but in connection to their curriculum. As example, excerpts of Aristotle found in the Journey are now being reintroduced in the Good Life course.

Finally, all parts of the core curriculum are studying the AACU value rubrics as basis for collecting quantitative data. Rubrics measuring inquiry/analysis, integrative learning, intercultural knowledge, foundational skills are being modified to fit into the existing courses.

Summer 2012 will be used to finalize these projects in efforts to have modifications enacted for Fall 2012-Spring 2013 academic year.



## **ASSUMPTION COLLEGE**

**Contact: Molly Flynn**

### **Fortin and Gonthier Foundations of Western Civilization Program**

#### **Assessment Proposal**

**Molly Flynn and Geoffrey M. Vaughan**

**September 2011**

#### **Summary**

Our project is part of a joint endeavor, sponsored by the Association for Core Texts and Courses (ACTC) and the Association for General and Liberal Studies (AGLS), to develop non-quantitative assessment tools to better measure the type of learning done by students in text-based, liberal arts core programs. We have developed a list of questions for students to answer on-line. These questions are meant to assess the recognition of key figures and terms as well as reveal student perceptions of the Program.

#### **Background**

Assessment models are being and have been developed throughout the country in response to the Spellings Commission recommendations. Many, but not all, of these models rely upon quantitative measures of learning in relation to stated learning goals. They are, for the most part, specific to either individual courses or to individual departments. An interdisciplinary program such as Foundations requires a different model.

We note four presuppositions about the value of a liberal arts education. These guide the development of this assessment model and explain why assessment for a text-based, liberal arts core program:

- (1) Some important learning our students do in our courses is not directly quantifiable and is susceptible to being obscured by quant-heavy assessment models.
- (2) Some important learning our students do in our courses is unplanned side-effect rather than fulfillment of teacher plans and objectives and is susceptible to being overlooked by goals-focused assessment models.
- (3) Much important learning our students achieve in college is by core or general education requirements, which is not identified as a major and not the special purview of a department; this learning is susceptible to being ignored by major- and department-centered assessment models.
- (4) The learning goals of core programs are achieved through what students can take from one class and apply to another; they are not hermetically sealed and isolated from one another.

Furthermore, if assessment informs or even dictates curriculum adjustments, then we must not be

mislead by assessment models that might systematically overlook or undervalue the benefits of text-based, interdisciplinary, liberal education.

### **Details**

We will implement an assessment device that addresses itself to a text-based, interdisciplinary core program (Assumption College's Fortin and Gonthier Foundations of Western Civilization Program), in a way that invites narrative and reflection from the students. We intend that this information, in conjunction with more "objective" or quantified modes of assessment, will help us get a better sense of what the Foundations Program accomplishes or fails to accomplish for our students. This method is chosen for two reasons: (1) assessment is already conducted within the departments that offer the classes; (2) the value-added quality of the Program arises, if it does arise, from the interplay of two or more courses rather than from each one individually.

Our questionnaire will have three pages/levels of question and a page to collect student data. Because the Foundations courses are two-semester sequences, it will be administered every summer, that is, at the end of a sequence. Any student who participated in a Foundations Program class will be invited to complete the questionnaire, and any who respond will receive their choice from a list of books or classic music.

The sample questionnaire follows.

The following questionnaire should take you 5-15 minutes. The 1<sup>st</sup> page requests fill-in-the-blank responses. The 2<sup>nd</sup> asks a few questions answerable by no more than a paragraph. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> pages request only quick-click responses.

You do not need to complete the survey in one login. When you complete the questionnaire, you can choose which book or CD you prefer.

Thank you for your time and thought.

### **Section I. Demographics**

Which Foundations courses have you taken?

- ART/POL 150 Art and Politics I
- ART/POL 151 Art and Politics II
- HIS 116HF Foundations: History of Western Civilization I
- HIS117HF Foundations: History of Western Civilization II
- CLT205 Literary Foundations of the West I
- CLT206 Literary Foundations of the West II
- PHI/THE205 Religion and Philosophy I
- PHI206 Religion and Philosophy II
- FND300 Special Topics in the Foundations of Western Civilization

Are you seeking a

- Minor in Foundations
- or
- Honors Certificate in Foundations?

How many semesters of college have you completed?

- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

## Section II. The Role of Great Books

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary political developments.

- I can't think of one
- NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary economic developments.

- I can't think of one
- NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary literary developments.

- I can't think of one
- NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary artistic developments.

- I can't think of one
- NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary philosophical developments.

- I can't think of one
- NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary religious developments.

- I can't think of one
- NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary international developments.

I can't think of one

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand 20<sup>th</sup> century or contemporary social or ethical developments.

I can't think of one

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

Please name a classic primary source that helps you understand your identity and life.

I can't think of one

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

### Section III. The Foundations Program

Your paragraph reflection for each of the following questions will greatly help us understand the strengths and weaknesses of the Foundations Program:

Please describe what you like about the Foundations Program.

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Please describe what you dislike about the Foundations Program.

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Please describe the primary benefits of the Foundations Program have been for you.

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Please tell us what you think the goals of the Foundations Program are.

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Please explain whether you think the Foundations Program meets these goals.

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#### Section IV. Familiarity with Great Authors

Of the following persons, objects, and events, please indicate which you have become familiar with in your Foundations courses. Have you encountered these through primary sources?

	Familiar (1 low/5 high)	Primary Sources
Socrates	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Plato	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Aristotle	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Homer	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Aeschylus	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Sophocles	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Cicero	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Virgil	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Epictetus	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Lucretius	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Augustine	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Alfarabi	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Maimonides	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Aquinas	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Dante	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Luther	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Calvin	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Erasmus	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Machiavelli	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Marlowe	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Shakespeare	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Hobbes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Domat	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Locke	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Descartes	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Pascal	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Milton	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Rousseau	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Jefferson	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Madison	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Goethe	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Marx	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Flaubert	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Dostoevsky	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Nietzsche	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
C.S.Lewis	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No

Weber	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
T.S. Eliot	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
O'Connor	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Joyce	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Arendt	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Benedict XVI	<input type="checkbox"/> 1 <input type="checkbox"/> 2 <input type="checkbox"/> 3 <input type="checkbox"/> 4 <input type="checkbox"/> 5	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No



## **FRESNO PACIFIC UNIVERSITY**

**Contact: Greg Camp**

The General Education Committee met weekly during Fall 2011 to review and revise the learning objectives for the program. This was part of a broader university process undertaken by each academic program unit. The previous outcomes for the GE program were derived from the program description and were inadequately articulated. This ACTC project provided an opportunity to do comparative examinations with other institutions and to address areas that were lacking or where internal friction had developed about existing areas. It maintains the integrity of the existing program but is more capable of articulating the goals of liberal education. The members of the GE Committee are excited about the progress and direction of proposed changes. We look forward to the discussions at ACTC.

The GE committee includes faculty from the schools of Humanities/Religion/Social Science, Natural Science, and Business, a student, and a representative from the Registrar's office. The process following completion of a proposed revision by the committee includes presentations to the school caucuses for feedback, and presentations to the Undergraduate Academic Committee and the Senate for approval. Once a set of revised outcomes are approved, the committee will work with faculty to identify appropriate assessment methods and tools. The goal is for a preliminary plan by the end of Spring 2012.

The distinctive characteristic of the GE program is a component titled "Stories of Peoples and Cultures". The other components included "Tools", "Modes of Inquiry", and "Stewardship of the Body". The current outcomes are tied to the four areas. This was cause for discontent due to inadequate recognition that courses contributed to outcomes in other areas. The proposed revision promotes greater cooperation among courses and areas to meet program outcomes. The result is a more robust understanding of "Stories", "Modes", and "Stewardship". The GE outcomes are also more clearly linked with university outcomes.

## **LYNCHBURG COLLEGE**

**David Freier, Chair, Lynchburg College Symposium**

### **Narrative Assessment Plan For GS 435 Senior Symposium [spring 2012]**

This project is a coordinated effort through ACTC (Association for Core Texts and Courses) and AGLS (Association for General & Liberal Studies) to develop a means of narrative assessment centered around an understanding of student progress in the area of higher ordered or critical thinking as it develops in students through the use of humanistic learning. The end result of this work is to have a published volume, a book or monograph of case studies 10 drawn from ACTC institutions and 10 drawn from AGLS institutions.

#### **PLAN FOR SPRING 2012**

1. Students in GS 435 will complete and return their Student Perceptions of Writing Survey. Participating instructors will use this to select 6 seniors who identify themselves as follows;
  - 2 with low writing confidence
  - 2 with moderate writing confidence
  - 2 with strong writing confidence
2. Using these 6 students individual instructors will keep a copy of all submitted written work for the semester to be delivered to David Freier at semester's completion.
3. Approximately weekly the individual instructor will keep a written narrative analysis of the development of student thinking skills during the course of the semester.
4. During the semester we will meet at least twice to discuss progress, issues and development of this project.
5. At semesters end each participating instructor will complete a short (1 page or less) narrative summary of the student progress during the course of the semester. This final summary, notes and copies of the written submissions of each student will be given to David Freier so that he can complete the end of semester report which will go to Scott Lee of ACTC.

#### **Other Items**

The individual summaries for each student should also take into account when the students lead class discussions and the nature of their individual participation during the weekly discussions.

## **SAMFORD UNIVERSITY**

### **Contact: Rosemary Fisk**

At Samford our committee consists of Rosemary Fisk (administration and English), Jason Wallace (History), Doug Clapp (Classics and chair of *ad hoc* committee on General Education), and Allison Hepola (Philosophy). At a fall semester meeting of the faculty who teach Cultural Perspectives (CP -- our interdisciplinary core sequence that all freshmen take), I distributed the following explanation of the project and asked for volunteers:

*Our participation in the ACTC narrative assessment project will be a final exam question for CP 101, to be repeated in CP 102 as a form of narrative assessment of what our CP students are actually learning, as opposed to what we think we are teaching. You may give this writing assignment as a take-home or in-class portion of the final exam—your choice. Likewise, you may weigh it as you wish. You should be willing to share the students' work with other participating faculty at the end of the spring semester so that together you discuss what these collective responses reveal about the strengths and weaknesses of the CP program.*

#### ***Final exam prompt:***

*If CP 101 tells a story, how would you describe the narrative? If it doesn't, why not? Where does the story begin, and where does it end? As part of this narrative, what would you say are the most important ideas and themes in CP 101? How do these themes connect through history from the ancient world to the renaissance?*

Participating faculty then decided to assign this prompt as an extra credit assignment as part of the final score on the final exam. We now have collected these prompts from four classes of 22-24 students each. We will collect a similar number from these faculty at the end of the spring semester, but many of the students will be different. Thus the results should tell us something about the overall program rather than about any individual student's progress. The assessment format is simple because we do not need rubrics or technological help from Institutional Research personnel. We do not know what a comparison between fall and spring responses will reveal, but we're open to this chance to look honestly at what students perceive to be the most meaningful connections among disparate texts.

## **UNIVERSITY OF ST. THOMAS**

**Contact: April O'Rear Hart**

As a Catholic Liberal Arts institution, the University of St. Thomas highly values the importance of reading, studying, and applying literature (particularly classical, philosophical, and theological) across our curriculum, as evidenced in part by our Core. We are, however, in the earliest stages of considerations directly associated with the ACTC initiative. Previous to our new membership with ACTC, we reworked our Core and are continuing to determine optimal implementation adjustments and assessment tools as related to that venture. Additionally, we have recently formed an academic effectiveness committee, both faculty and academic assessment focused, to consider how to best implement ACTC ideas within our organization. The members of the Institutional Effectiveness Committee are Ms. April O'Rear Hart – Chair; Dr. John Palasota – Chemistry Faculty and Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs; Dr. Jean Philippe Faletta – Political Science Faculty; Dr. Shannon Forbes – English Faculty; Dr. Catherine Barber – Education Faculty; and Dr. Beena George – Business Faculty. Additionally, Dr. Dominic Aquila – Vice President for Academic Affairs is a regular contributor and participant to our committee meetings. Meetings of the committee have been infrequent to date but are expected to be scheduled monthly in near term. As furtherance of our efforts to get a better understanding and vision for ACTC's possible expression at UST, Dr. Faletta, who will be presenting at ACTC at the 2012 ACTC Annual Conference, will also participate in the scheduled Assessment workshop at the conference.

## **SAINT MARY'S COLLEGE OF CALIFORNIA**

Assessment at Saint Mary's Seminar  
Charles Hamaker, Director, Collegiate Seminar

The plan for assessment of the outcomes of the Collegiate Seminar program has been subordinated to a major revision of the program, a result of an extensive revision of the College's core curriculum. The revision of the program and the core, with implementation to begin in 2012 – 13, mandates development of assessment measures for the goals and outcomes of the core and for the Seminar program. Unfortunately the revision process for the four semester Seminar sequence, required of all undergraduates, has consumed the program's energy, delaying pursuit of assessment development.

The two major aspects of the Seminar Curriculum, which remain the priorities of the revised curriculum, are participation in the student-driven discussion of the core texts that are read and writing essays (usually three or four of length 3-5 pages) that are typically thesis-driven. Comparison of outcomes for the new and old curriculums will be a major priority for the program. Assessment of writing outcomes will be done by tapping the repository accumulated by the use of TurnItIn . Samples of selected students' work through their progression through the assessment can be rated both by program rubrics and by normed narrative assessment. Some recordings of past class discussions exist, and the core curriculum standards require that systematic assessment of achievement of program outcomes. Development of protocols for assessing student discussion, building on past efforts, will be undertaken in the immediate future, so that effectiveness of the new curriculum can be determined.