

SUMMER 2002

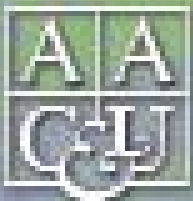
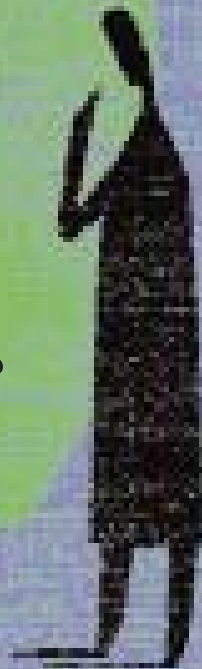
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# peer Review

Emerging trends and key debates in undergraduate education



## The Values Question in Higher Education



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## The essays in this issue of Peer Review

are expressing nothing less than a dynamic re-visioning of the academy. Without exception, the authors call for resisting the pressures to reduce a college education to the facts, tools, and skills needed for future occupational success. Rather, my reading of their ideas suggests that a liberal education ought to be guided by four natural principles that define and shape the human condition:

*We are truth-seeking creatures.* Although the quest for truth is an ongoing enterprise that will hopefully last a lifetime, the authors in this issue suggest that colleges and universities need to do more to equip our students with the intellectual virtues—such as courage and integrity—to pursue truth in a spirit of humility. The question here is not whether one or another religious faith has a lock on the Truth, but rather that colleges and universities need to reinforce the question that Gandhi regularly asked of himself: “What have I done today that expresses my *truth*?”

*A life without purpose is a life wasted.* The college experience ought to help shape and illuminate the vitality of a life lived with purpose. While several authors marshal anecdotal and empirical evidence that the college years are a formative, if not critical, period for cultivating a sense of what I call “noble purpose,” all of the scholars write with great passion and urgency about ways to inspire our students to live a life of purpose and meaning that extends beyond oneself. This dynamic vision of a “purpose-centered education” appears poised to resist the prevailing sentiment that the college experience is solely about maximizing one’s self-interest.

*Educators have a responsibility to transmit core values to their students.* As Toni Morrison and Alan Wolfe argue in this issue, albeit in different ways, the experiment of the 1960s has ended. As Ms. Morrison suggests, it is time for the academy to take seriously and rigorously its role as a “guardian” and “preserver” of our democratic practices and ideals. Her clarion call reminds me of John Dewey’s plea seventy-five ago for educators to “conserve, transmit, rectify, and expand” the heritage of values common to the American experiment. Every one of the essays in this issue, and especially the contribution by the educators at Bridgewater College, provides a compelling argument that the academy is taking up anew Dewey’s prescient understanding of what it means to be an educator.

*We are searchers of the Sacred.* Whether it is the sacredness of our cherished American values (such justice, equality, freedom of speech) or our search for an object, principle, or concept that transcends the self, each of these authors argues that a liberal education ought to be about providing ample opportunities for students to identify, articulate, maintain (and perhaps be transformed by) what is sacred to them and therefore worthy of devotion and commitment. As the philosopher Charles Taylor once suggested: Strong convictions require strong sources.

In sum, while we are a long ways from turning rhetoric and research into widespread practice and lasting change, the vision of what is needed to transform the academy shines brightly within these pages.

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Arthur J. Schwartz is director of character development programs at the John Templeton Foundation.

# How Can Values Be Taught in the University?

By Toni Morrison, Goheen Professor in the Humanities, Princeton University

It is the right question and I think appropriately the first one, glancing away, as it does, from an associated, perhaps even precursor one: *whether* universities should teach values. The “whether” ripples through late twentieth-century debates in several forms. Certain disciplines pride themselves on the value-free nature of their intellectual inquiries, and the pursuit of “objectivity” is at the heart of their claims, claims which are understood to place the stature of these disciplines far above interpretive ones.

Nevertheless, explicitly or implicitly, the university has always taught (by which I mean examined, evaluated, posited, reinforced) values, and I should think will always follow or circle the track of its origins. When higher education leapt or strutted out of the doors of the church (whether by license from the crown, permission of the diocese, or charters from guilds) it was extricating itself from the church’s charge, where monastic schools and libraries were centers of learning and most students were expected to take (and did take) orders—ecclesiastical orders, that is—but it did not slam the cathedral doors or the Calvinist parish gates behind itself. The faculty-cum-clergy carried the same religious principles and preoccupations with them.

Like other institutions of higher learning, Princeton was founded by a collection of laymen and clergy exiting a college founded by other clergy and laymen who made that move because of a dispute concerning religious belief and the dissemination of those beliefs to its student body. The founding of the university was never

understood to be a severance from ecclesiastical scholarship, but rather a segue into the more exciting and demanding realm of the conjunction of faith and reason—applying reason to faith, faith to the worldly, and abjuring the shadow of Scholasticism which tainted both. The history of moral philosophy and its transformation into humanistic studies can be seen as an argument with and among definitions of reason, its status in spiritual life, and its impact not on faith, but on moral orientation.

The genesis of higher education is unabashedly theological and conscientiously value-ridden and value-seeking. There is not much point in and certainly not much time for rehearsing the evolution of the university to its present state of arrest over questions of value and ethics. We can simply note that the academy has, for the most part, shed its theological coat, relegated those high purposes to departments, schools of religion, and seminaries, and wrapped itself instead in a moral cape made of panels of cloth woven in enlightened and pre-enlightenment theses: that knowledge is a good; that the rightly trained mind would turn toward virtue; that the commitment of higher education was to train leaders to envision, if not effect, a desirable future.

The university’s reinvention of itself and its mission responded to major historical upheavals: wars, transformations in economy, new populations, etc., and as newer, better, and more likely provable knowledge accumulated in the sciences, the shift in the goals of universities was dramatic and may have led some to think that the secular education offered by the academy strives only for value-

free, objective, pure, research, analysis and exposition.

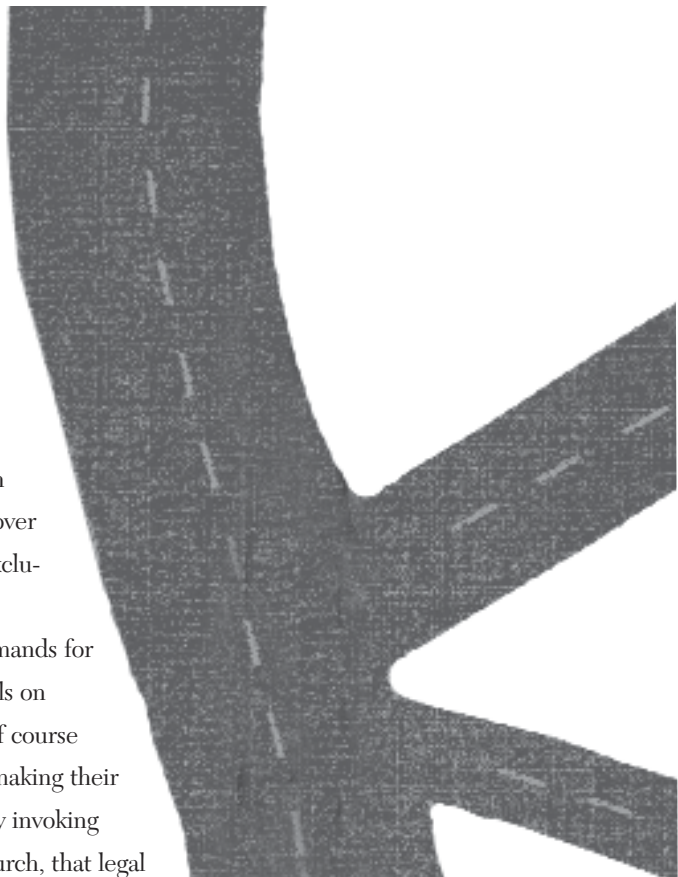
Yet today, biological and medical sciences are being perpetually transformed by their own innovations. Education in the law is similarly scoured by its own practitioners employing new technologies to concepts of justice—all kinds of disciplines are responding to modern ethical issues with the same ferocity as their predecessors, ancient, medieval, or colonial. Although no one would suggest that corporate and commercial interests in the universities are innocent and not vested, it is strongly asserted that those interests serve in some way “the public good.” Thus the real or imagined search for “goodness” in some figuration is still part of the justifying, legitimizing language of the academy.

It is in that context that the question is put: how to teach values. Several initiatives are already in place at many universities which constitute a kind of secular pulpit: the encouragement of voluntarism, an announced high regard and reward for students engaged in public service work; policy measures instituted by administrators to protect and defend their populations from harassment and ever new assaults on their liberty and safety; careful and mediated responses to civil rights legislation; regular voluntary examinations of itself for inequities of representation; the creation of institutes and centers funded for precisely the airing and pursuit of ethical questions and allied problems of inculcating value. These efforts (often bitterly contested) can impress upon the student body the seriousness in which the university holds these

matters—a seriousness which stresses and clarifies the university’s definition of a complete and sophisticated education. But institutional directives can become formulaic and remain phases, courses, and temporary forms of behavior that a student can taste without swallowing. Or, more cynically, they work as “fictions,” folk costumes which the site of learning wears to cover the nakedness of mandarin, exclusionary domination.

Yet as assaults on and demands for school prayer, religious symbols on school property, and control of course curricula become legal cases making their way through courts, frequently invoking the separation of state and church, that legal journey both skirts and displays another question: not whether or how, but which. Which values, in act or symbol, should a public institution of learning reject, endorse, or tolerate? To insist that it endorse none, that it remain neutral, non-judgmental, and tolerant of religions, religiosity, and atheists alike, requires a sensitivity and alertness so intense it can descend to the absurd when not merely distracting. Why should schools close on religious holidays? Why should they be called *holi* as in holy days? Why permit houses of worship to participate in school and academic functions?

I am merely suggesting how porous the “separation” of church and state is, how irrevocably entangled are our lives, our practices, and our language in passionately



## PEER REVIEW

### NEXT QUARTER IN

The fall issue of *Peer Review* will explore issues and trends associated with the use of part-time and full-time non-tenure-track faculty. In particular, this issue will focus on the impact of these trends on the quality of students’ educational experiences.

The issue will be available in November 2002. You can find additional information, as it becomes available, online at

[www.aacu.org/peerreview](http://www.aacu.org/peerreview).

held views of what the good, the ethical, the moral mean or should mean; of the clash of reason and faith; genetics and environment. These are the Great Debates of the twenty-first century as the struggle to improve the world goes on. This is familiar ground upon

violence has its own “beauty” in art, in cultural practice, in politics.

I have no original ideas in this matter or on this score. The route the academy has taken to shake off scholasticism and embrace humanism is its own best evidence

## Like it or not, we are paradigms of our own values, advertisements of our own ethics—especially noticeable when we presume to foster ethics-free, value-*lite* education.

which humanistic inquiry treads. Recent inquiries have considered whether our or any notion of secular morality is “universal.” Whether whole bodies of knowledge are secret agendas of oppression. Whether “evil” is simply another aesthetic; whether

of the magnitude of the question. I tend to think, however, that in the course of teaching, the material I ask students to read, in the dialogue that ensues following those readings, and the threads of argument I nudge students to explore, make up one

part of how I communicate value. But it may not be the most important part. I know, as you do, from having been a student and from observing faculty as well as being a member of many faculties, that the values one personally holds seep through.

Through everything I say, write, and do, however I may try to stand between, to the side, or over issues of ethics and value when discussion is underway, my position is either known or available to be known. If I encourage strictly and only aesthetic readings of literature, then I have left an indelible message of where I place the persuasive, historical aspects of literature. If I insist upon solely political understandings of these readings, that too is a teaching of value. If I am content with or indifferent to the purification rites of the justice and legal system in the way it handles its young, its minorities, that is a powerful value judgment not hidden although it may be unspoken. Is my critique fruitful or merely an elaborate name-calling or put-down?

What I think and do is already inscribed on my teaching, my work. And so should it be. We teach values by having them. Whether or not we drive or seduce or persuade others to share them, whether or not we are indifferent to or accommodating to the ethics of others, whether we are amused by the concept of value being teachable, whether we are open to being argued into supporting values contrary to those we have held—all of these possibilities and strategies matter. The innate feature of the university is that not only does it examine, it also produces power-laden and value-ridden discourse. Much scholar-

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ship is often, even habitually, entangled in or regulated by ideology. Since as humanists we know that that is the case, acknowledgment is preferable to the mask of disinterest. In any case, it becomes incumbent upon us as citizen/scholars in the university to accept the consequences of our own value-redolent roles. Like it or not, we are paradigms of our own values, advertisements of our own ethics—especially noticeable when we presume to foster ethics-free, value-lite education.

Now the question of how to teach values becomes less fraught. How do we treat each other? The members of our own profession? How do we respond to professional and political cunning, to raw and ruthless ambition, to the plight of those outside our walls? What are we personally willing to sacrifice, give up for the “public good”? What gestures of reparation are we personally willing to make? What risky, unfashionable research are we willing to undertake?

The evolution (or devolution, depending upon one’s point of view) of the university into an Internet of higher education, with texts and their explications data-based, with interrogations routinized, with experts taking the place of professors, is not to be confined to fantasy. Ideas for just such expansion are already in practice, and its worth to third world, rural, and underserved communities is hard to gainsay. But a massive conversion to a www.com university may not be our complete or immediate future only because the human desire to congregate is paramount. But another reason for the survival of more traditional campuses (with living, fleshed, as opposed to

virtual persons interacting with students, contributing to something called “student life” and the benefits thereof) is that survival may depend on the move from the *profession* of humanistic intellectual to the *vocation* of humanistic intellectual, regardless of the dangers of demagoguery. If the critical platform remains open, the charlatans will be exposed.

Post-Reagan business centers have turned much academic and public discourse back to nineteenth-century liberalism. To counter the deleterious effects of that combination of nostalgia and hypocrisy, the university need not return to its pre-medieval, medieval, or colonial sources to re-ignite wider and more variable notions of virtue, civitas, response-ability and free-

dom. It can speculate instead on a future where the poor are not yet, not quite, all dead; where the under-represented minorities are not quite all imprisoned. In that recipe of American pie in which a society made up of an increasingly toughened crust of rich continues to rest upon and contain the seething, smarting poor, then strategizing and updating the means by which values are taught becomes critical. If the university does not take seriously and rigorously its role as guardian of wider civic freedoms, as interrogator of more and more complex ethical problems, as servant and preserver of deeper democratic practices, then some other regime or ménage of regimes will do it for us, in spite of us, and without us.

## FROM LIBERAL EDUCATION

### RESOURCES

**Religion on Campus**, theme of the Fall 2001 issue of *Liberal Education*, featured student ideas, attitudes, and practices regarding religion and spiritual values.

**Changing Students in a Changing World**, theme of the Spring 2002 issue of *Liberal Education*, featured articles on the values in public life.

*Liberal Education* expresses the voices of educators, faculty, and administrators in colleges and universities nationwide who are working to enrich liberal learning and undergraduate education. AAC&U’s award-winning journal is the national forum about liberal education—a forum addressing teaching and learning, leadership, faculty innovation, and institutional change all in the service of improving undergraduate education.

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# Of Character and Citizenship

By Bobby Fong, president, Butler University

American higher education has retreated in its vision of what it owes students. Classic liberal education presumed that students were to be trained for civic leadership. With the advent of the research university model, with the increasing careerism of matriculants, with the loss of confidence (rightly, to my mind) that there could be a unitary moral orthodoxy, higher education concentrated increasingly on the inculcation of specific knowledge and skills. Character, like religion and ethics,

**The postmodern challenge is whether the academy is now willing to bear responsibility again for educating students to respond to the moral and political dilemmas of our time.**

became the private concern of the student, not something to be addressed in the classroom, and even citizenship education became suspect as a euphemism for jingoistic nationalism.

The postmodern challenge is whether the academy is now willing to bear responsibility again for educating students to respond to the moral and political dilemmas of our time. In the wake of September 11th, how can the answer not be “Yes”? But if the answer is yes, how can the academy speak authoritatively and constructively to issues of citizenship, service, leadership, and character without imposing a particular model of morality, religious or secular? In the wake of the events of September 11th, how does the academy acknowledge international

pluralism without engaging in impotent relativism?

I believe teaching our students to negotiate issues of ethics and citizenship must be part and parcel of a liberal education. In part, it is a matter of doing what the academy has always done: entertaining diverse viewpoints and perspectives, and modeling how a community can engage in civil dialogue. The ideal of the academy is to be able to represent fairly the viewpoint of those with whom one most disagrees. But dialogue, however necessary, is not sufficient. The unending conversation is what we must, at all costs, preserve in the academy. But our students need to be equipped for living, in most cases, beyond the academy, in a world where moral decisions, in all their contingency and uncertainty, must be made. And in living, and in choosing, character counts. It is the rudder that determines whether knowledge, skills, vocational expertise, and networks of influence will be used for good or ill. How one earns a living should be an extension of the values that illumine one’s life, and there should be continuity between personal values and societal engagement.

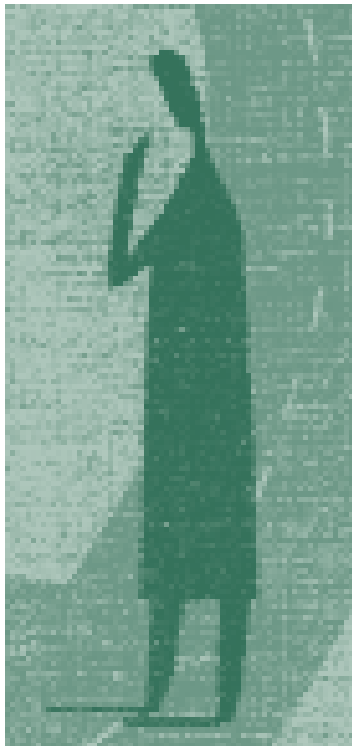
The university must seek to enunciate an ideal of service rooted in values that may be shared across cultural, religious, and political boundaries. Of late, there has been renewed interest in Stoicism, a pre-Christian ethic that affirms such values as the solidarity of humankind, the efficacy of reason, the need for self-sacrifice; personal virtues such as integrity, diligence, and self-control; and social virtues such as justice, tolerance, and benevolence. Such virtues and their resulting behaviors are not grounded in a particular dogma, but they are markers of goodness to which people of various faiths, or no faith, can subscribe.

And yet, in our pursuit for what binds us as a common humanity, we can't forget that we cannot be human in general: We express our humanity in particular, culturally-mediated ways. Language is a quintessential human capacity, but no one speaks "language"; one speaks English, or Chinese, or Swahili. The university must both affirm the claims of universal humanity and uphold a commitment to cultural diversity. It must affirm equal opportunity and value individuals according to their achievement, but it must also strive to give place and voice to different races and cultures, acknowledging that the very definitions of "success" and "happiness" are culturally mediated.

There is a necessary intellectual dimension to values; their study has a long and venerable history. But the study of values alone is insufficient to inspire. Wrote a young man on the eve of his execution by the Nazis, "I want you all to remember—that you must not dream yourselves back to the times before the war, but the dream of you all, young and old, must be to create an ideal of human decency, and not a narrow-minded and prejudiced one. That is the great gift our country hungers for." Let us bring Nobel laureates to campus. Let us bring great artists and scientists and thinkers and peacemakers who have contributed to the bounty of human achievement to inspire students and give them examples to emulate. Let us create programs and systems whereby our students discuss ethics, do public service, and consider how they might use their education to be servant-leaders in the world. But let us

also remember that our students are watching us, and the lessons we dare to teach, and the visions we dare to espouse, obligate us to try and live them as well.

As president of Butler University, I pledge my institution to the pursuit of aca-



ademic excellence, but not simply for its own sake. I pledge that a Butler education will engender in students not only habits of mind but also, in de Tocqueville's famous phrase, habits of the heart which will enable them not only to make a living but also to make lives that are personally fulfilling precisely because they are implicated in the well-being of others. Our final gift to our students, our children, must be to teach them to hope. On the occasion when the

Reverend Doctor Martin Luther King was presented the Nobel Prize for Peace, he said, "I accept this award today with an abiding faith in America and an audacious faith in the future of mankind. I refuse to accept despair as the final response to the ambiguities of history. I refuse to accept the idea that the 'isness' of man's present nature makes him morally incapable of reaching up for the eternal 'oughtness' that forever confronts him. I refuse to accept the idea that man is mere flotsam and jetsam in the river of life unable to influence the unfolding events which surround him. I refuse to accept the view that mankind is so tragically bound to the starless midnight of racism and war that the bright daybreak of peace and brotherhood can never become a reality.... I believe that what self-centered men have torn down, men other-centered can build up.... I still believe that we shall overcome."

As a people, we have been freshly scarred by the terrorism of fanatics. We have seen people betrayed by unscrupulous leaders in whom they put their trust. We find ourselves buffeted about by wars and rumors of wars, by fear of our neighbors and fear of what the future may bring. We wonder about the worth of educating our children for a world that could be darker than the one in which we have walked. In this time, I say let the university be a city on the hill that equips our students in knowledge, in skill, in character, and in hope to work to make a brighter future, to make a world more just, more tolerant, more compassionate, more inclusive than the world in which they were born.

# Athletes and Religion on Campus

By Betty A. DeBerg, professor of religion, University of Northern Iowa

Religion often makes headlines in the sports sections of newspapers these days. And the fact that a large number of professional athletes and coaches self-identify as evangelical Christians is well known. Close observers of professional football games, for example, frequently see players kneeling on the sidelines in prayer.

The burgeoning public display of evangelical Christianity among professional athletes is paralleled on college and university campuses. At the large public research university that I studied in 1996-97, for example, the football team held a prayer meeting with the opposing team after a game, and players knelt at the fifty-yard line in prayer. One regional newspaper ran a full-color photograph of this prayer meeting on its front page. Weeks later another local newspaper ran a color photograph and a story about the team “mixing God and goalposts” on the front page of its sports section. Said one player to a reporter, “The Lord has been in my life before football, and he will be in it afterwards. Jesus gave his all for me so how can I give less?”<sup>1</sup>

This public and newsworthy prayer meeting was arranged when the director of Athletes in Action at the opposing school called the director of Athletes in Action at the university I studied. The director on my campus did not think the meeting would work because the head coach at his university gathered the team together before and after every game to recite the Lord’s Prayer together. But several players were told about the call, and they “just passed the word around the field.”

By the time I met this director of the local Athletes in Action ministry he had already been named the official chaplain by the head coaches of the football and the men’s and women’s basketball teams. The director of Athletes in Action held chapel services for both men’s teams and, with his wife, for the women’s basketball team. He also met with some coaches for prayer and Bible study.

In the years just prior to my research on this campus, the athletics department of the university hosted a Fellowship of Christian Athletes/Athletes in Action Recognition Day. Members and their families received discounted tickets to the football game and anti-drug rally, a sack lunch, and a team souvenir. Athletes in Action publicity on campus carried endorsements by both men’s coaches. The head football coach wrote, “All of the players and coaches join me in expressing our sincere appreciation to Athletes in Action for the wonderful ministry provided each year. We have grown as a family through the Christian environment established by their leadership. We will always be grateful.” The basketball coach said, “Athletes in Action . . . has been an important part of the Athletic Department and we appreciate their support very much.”

I believe that evangelical Protestant Christianity, in the form of Athletes in Action, had achieved a kind of establishment (as in the First Amendment establishment of religion clause) status at this state university. And although I know of no exhaustive study of the relation of

<sup>1</sup> This research was published as Conrad Cherry, Betty A. DeBerg, and Amanda Porterfield, *Religion on Campus* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001). The research team agreed to keep the colleges and universities studied anonymous.

athletics departments and collegiate sports teams and coaches to religious organizations and practices, I suspect that the university I studied is not unique in this regard. Often faculty, academic and student services administrators, and college and university presidents know little about what really goes on in athletics and with student athletes on their campuses.

There are several major dynamics at work that marry evangelical Protestantism to college athletics, even at state-supported and non-sectarian colleges and universities. First of all, there is enormous pressure on coaches to field winning teams. If religious activities, advisors, worship, and prayer seem to boost player morale and confidence, and if religion increases team cohesiveness and unity, then coaches—untrained in the fine points of the First Amendment and in the varieties of American religion—are likely to welcome the attention and activities of campus ministers, especially those that claim special concern for student athletes and special expertise in ministering to them. And the coaches themselves are more and more likely, with the growth of campus athletics ministries, to have experience in these ministries themselves and to be formed in this kind of religious culture.

Second, student athletes lead very complicated and stressful lives. The director of Athletes in Action whom I got to know described student athletes like this: “They try to please too many people—professors, parents, coaches. And high-profile teams face unbelievable temptations—sex and alcohol. Girls just throw themselves at them. Everyone knows who they date, if they fail

an exam.” A starting varsity football player told me this about his life: “The student athlete and the regular student are nothing alike—two different animals really. The reasons first of all are time management. We have to fit everything in. Second, we have so many commitments to keep. Third, our reasons for being in college are entirely different. We’re more well-rounded, more ambitious. We can handle competitive situations. I mean, everything I do is toward football:

the third major factor in wedding of athletics departments to evangelical Protestantism. Athletes in Action is the athletics “arm” of Campus Crusade for Christ International. In May 2002, its Web site indicated that it had chapters on over 120 campuses in the U.S. Athletes in Action, as large as it is, is dwarfed by the Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA). Founded in the 1950s and headquartered in Kansas City, the FCA’s goal is to have a group on every

Often faculty, academic and student services administrators, and college and university presidents know little about what really goes on in athletics and with student athletes on their campuses.

Can I do it before practice or after practice? Everything I eat I eat in order to maintain my weight. I have to do so much lifting each week.” When student athletes attending an Athletes in Action Bible study were asked to apply God’s promises of protection and love to athletic performance, one man said, “It gives me security, especially from injuries. It means a higher power is looking out for you.” Another commented, “Sometimes you get so nervous out there. I say a little prayer.” A woman said, “It puts my sports in perspective. I have a higher purpose. If we lose it’s not the end of the world.”

There is no shortage of Christian organizations that want to minister specifically to student athletes. This rapidly expanding ecology of parachurch groups is

school campus in the country, junior high through college or university. Currently there are 495 college and university FCA “huddles.” Both of these organizations have well-organized regional and national operations, and are tied to large publishing, multimedia, and Internet operations.

But the landscape is becoming more crowded. More and more evangelical parachurch ministries to athletes are making their presence known on the Internet and, hence, on campuses. Morning Star International, founded in 1994 as an association of large evangelical churches and headquartered in Brentwood, Tennessee, sponsors Champions for Christ, a ministry to collegiate and professional athletes. The Competitive Edge International is a min-

istry specifically for female student athletes, and it sponsors a traveling softball team that plays exhibition games with college and university teams and witnesses to Christian faith during these visits. (Athletes in Action sponsors basketball teams that do the same.)

Evangelical Protestants also edit and publish sports-related materials for athletes

Why are evangelical Protestants so active in ministries to athletes and in sports-related evangelism? One reason is that other religious ministries and organizations seem to have left the field to them. At the university I studied, none of the “mainline” campus ministers—Roman Catholic, Jewish, more liberal Protestants—seemed very interested in

who would not typically set foot in a church or sponsored outreach, but will attend a sporting event.”

Given the predominance of evangelical Protestantism, with its enthusiasm for proselytizing and public testimony, college and universities should be concerned about religious coercion of student athletes. Is it possible, really, for players to resist their coaches when it comes to attending team “chapel,” for example? Or to refuse to recite the Lord’s Prayer when the head coach asks the team to do so before and after every game? And will dissenting student athletes be outcast if they dislike the public religiosity of their teammates, and say so? The varsity football player I got to know confided in me that he and other football players who “were neutral, not negative toward religion” sometimes wished other players would leave their religious views out of the newspapers. “They think the public will think all players are religious like this. They feel misrepresented. They want personal credit, or team credit, not credit to go to God.” Yet, this student athlete, himself a practicing Roman Catholic, attended all the team chapel services led by the director of Athletes in Action because, according to the student, the head coach attended them and they were “unspoken mandatory.”

I suspect that colleges and universities have a lot of thinking and research yet to do in considering this complex relationship between collegiate athletics, student athletes, student spirituality, and campus ministries directed to and relying on athletes.

## Given the predominance of evangelical Protestantism, with its enthusiasm for proselytizing and public testimony, college and universities should be concerned about religious coercion of student athletes.

and fans alike. *Christianity Today*, a pre-eminent evangelical Protestant magazine, sponsors a Web magazine, *Sports Spectrum*. Alongside the kind of “normal” sports news that ESPN or *Sports Illustrated* would carry, *Sports Spectrum* runs profiles and interviews of professional athletes who are evangelical Protestants and who speak in public about their religious lives. The Southern Baptist Convention sponsors a similar sports newspaper on the Internet, *(BP) Sports*, whose motto is “Sports with a *spiritual* attitude.” TheGoal.com is a Web site sponsored by Pro Athletes Outreach. At this Web site is an archive of “life stories” and testimonials by professional athletes in sports ranging from aerobatics to football to boat racing, and from announcers, coaches, officials, owners, and cheerleaders.

student athletes or in athletics. Another and probably related reason is that evangelical Protestants are the only ones I hear utilizing the popularity of sports and athletes in our culture as the foundation for particular strategies for Christian outreach. The founders of Competitive Edge International got right to the point on their Web site (May 22, 2002): “Why use sports for evangelism and discipleship? There is no doubt that sports has a high influence on our culture. One survey indicated that nearly 94% of Americans have some sort of interest in sports. Not only is it a great way to connect with and reach people here in the U.S., but sports is an international language we can speak fluently. God has given athletes and coaches a natural platform in which to share their faith. Often times the teams find themselves sharing with people

# Uncommon Values in a Common Course: Difficulties in Sustaining an Interdisciplinary First-Year Experience

By Robert Anderson, director of general education, Stephen Briggs, provost and vice president for academic affairs, and Antonino Scarpati, director of service learning, all at the College of New Jersey

For the last eight years, the backbone of the first-year program at the College of New Jersey has been a distinctive course experience entitled *Athens to New York*. The key values of community, diversity, and service are embodied and advanced through a learning experience that bridges academic and student life areas and integrates in-class learning with community engagement. *Athens to New York* has been recognized as exemplary by various national organizations through awards and invited presentations.

One of the hard lessons we have learned, however, is that the true success of a first-year program rests finally on its credibility with the students and faculty. Although this lesson might seem self-evident, we have learned not to underestimate the transient nature of this credibility. Students each year must be won over to a program's distinctive purpose and value, no matter its conceptual elegance and regardless of any external accolades. This wooing depends wholly on the faculty's genuine enthusiasm for the program, an ardor that though essential, is often frustratingly elusive.

## **Athens to New York (1995-2002)**

The course originated as one part of an interdisciplinary core in a revised general education program that also includes a set of intellectual skills and a distribution requirement with specific diversity courses. The initial version of the interdisciplinary core consisted of three liberal education courses that explored “Understanding

Humanity” as the central theme. The first two courses defined a first-year sequence that approached this theme from the perspective of the humanities and the social sciences. This sequence included weekly lectures combined with seminar sessions based on a highly structured syllabus. By the second year, it was apparent that this three-course sequence was in jeopardy on several accounts. Not only did it threaten to overwhelm available faculty resources, the faculty were dissatisfied with the rigid and inflexible syllabus. In addition, the weekly lectures were not popular with faculty or students and seemed inconsistent with the college's emphasis on high quality undergraduate education.

A decision was made to reduce the number of courses in the first-year sequence from two to one, and to use as an organizing principle for this first-year experience the four principal qualities that then defined the college's vision statement: *Service, Excellence, Diversity, and Community*. During the spring of 1995, a group of twenty faculty members created *Athens to New York*, a core course built around four enduring questions thought to be central to the study of liberal education: What does it mean to be human? What does it mean to be a member of a community? What does it mean to be moral, ethical, or just? How do individuals and communities respond to differences in race, gender, ethnicity, and class?

*Athens to New York* is a general education class with twenty-four students or less. Classes are taught in class-

rooms located in the residence halls. It incorporates common readings from classical Athens—Sophocles’ *Antigone*, and Plato’s *Apology* and *Crito*—and specific attention on New York City as a common example. In contrast to its forerunners, it allows faculty members considerable flexibility; they build their own syllabi around the four enduring questions as they incorporate a sub-topic that begins in Athens, ends in New York City, and “visits” at least one non-Western location along the way.

The course also includes an obligatory service component that has evolved over time. It was appended to the course initially at the request of the college’s president (who has since retired) following conversations with Ernest Boyer. Although it was initially conceived as a simple community service requirement, it soon became apparent that implementing a service program for 1,200 first-year students presented complex challenges. The initial year of implementation was fraught with internal and external problems. The absence of a coherent pedagogical foundation fueled a complaint among faculty and students that service was merely “forced volunteerism.” Inadequate staffing, limited transportation resources, and a lack of proper agency supervision impeded student learning. As a result, nearly 20 percent of students enrolled in the course failed to complete the required ten hours. Either the community service component had to be jettisoned, or it needed to become much more central to the course. A comprehensive program evaluation resulted both in a fundamental reconceptualization of the program and the acquisition of satisfactory resources.

The community service model was replaced by a new service learning model, aimed at giving students an experiential context for critically examining the four questions anchoring *Athens to New York*. Service learning was conceived anew as an *experiential text* by which students could intentionally examine community needs through direct service and reflection (Varlotta 2000). The theoretical focus



shifted from viewing service as charity to envisioning it as a vehicle for social justice, with reflection and reciprocity serving as the guiding principles (Delve, Mintz, and Stewart 1990). An Office of Service Learning was created in 1996 with a Director of Service Learning as well as additional support staff, vans, and drivers.

Students currently are required to reflect on their service learning experiences through written assignments from their instructors. Workshops help professors explore creative ways to facilitate additional student reflection (e.g., promoting effective methods to generate classroom discussion, meaningful oral reports, and effective essay exams). As students analyze the impact of service learning on themselves and those

they serve, they need also to think critically about the root causes of the social problems they encounter.

The concept of reciprocity—ensuring and respecting community voice—was achieved by redefining the college’s relationship to service agencies. Agencies are now considered as equal partners in a mutually beneficial collaboration. Expectations for orientation and supervision of students have been clarified. Feedback from students is shared with agency staff, leading to better student experiences and more efficient agency use of student talent. When agencies are unable to meet the criteria, the partnership is discontinued.

Most significantly, the placement process was revised to allow students to choose their own service sites from a wide variety of agencies, schools, and non-profit organizations. New agencies are continually recruited in response to student interest in working with specific populations, such as abused children and teens, persons with HIV, and individuals coping with addiction and substance abuse.

### Assessing the Record

By most standards, *Athens to New York* has been a highly successful program. Students express satisfaction with the course at levels in the 85 percent range. Initially skeptical about classes held in their residence halls, they soon warmed to the approach and now voice strong support. First to second year retention rates increased from 90 percent in 1995 to 96 percent in 2002—although these exceptionally strong figures may also reflect concurrent increases in the selectivity of the

incoming class (SAT scores for general students rose by thirty-one points in the same period, from 1234 to 1265).

Nearly all first-year students are involved in service to diverse urban and suburban neighborhoods with unmet needs and social problems. The percentage of students who successfully complete ten or more hours has remained at 99 percent. Course evaluations from the 2000 – 2001 academic year reveal that the vast majority of students desire to help less privileged people (86 percent), believe their service contributed positively to the community (91 percent), reported increased consciousness of historically oppressed groups (87 percent), and were more inclined to participate in future community service (83 percent). A qualitative study of more than 200 student service learning journals in 2000 found that 84 percent of students expressed a majority of positive outcomes, including understanding and/or appreciation of diversity, civic engagement and responsibility, emotional growth, and skill development (Paul, Davis, Citro, Blowers, and Scarpati 2002). The program has contributed significantly to the local community, by providing over 98,000 hours of service to more than thirty agencies in the surrounding Mercer County area.

Even though student satisfaction surveys routinely produce positive numbers, the undercurrent on campus has been less charitable over time. Faculty participation and administrative support for the program was initially strong; indeed for the first three years all sections were taught by full-time faculty or academic staff. During a change in administration, however, there was a

period of several years in which other events overshadowed the first-year program. In the absence of a unifying institutional emphasis, departmental pressures and scholarly projects have tended to lure professors back to their disciplinary homes. Not surprisingly, criticisms of the program were voiced by some whose own intellectual interests and range seem limited to the confines of their specialization. More troubling were the concerns and anecdotes related by likely allies of the program regarding a perceived lack

of intellectual depth and rigor in the program as well as doubt as to the value of service learning requirement as a central component of this first-year course. Although not necessarily valid, these concerns resulted in (or perhaps justified) a sharp decline in the number of regular faculty willing to teach in the program. The unfortunate result has been a significant increase in the reliance on adjunct faculty accompanied by a diminished respect for the course among faculty and students.

Despite the successful efforts of a number of dedicated faculty members, integration of service learning into the course has

been inconsistent. Although written reflection is required, not all instructors engage students in guided reflection through class discussion—a significant factor associated with positive service learning experiences. Moreover, the introductory nature of the service experience means most students cannot be expected to grasp the complexities of community problems, develop leadership skills, or see the need to change social policy—outcomes that have been linked to more intensive service experiences

Unless it is designed to embody and advance what is vital to the institution, a first-year course has little hope of holding its own against competing priorities. Of course, the force that works most relentlessly against all such programs is the undertow of the academic major.

(Astin and Sax 1997; Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, and Yee 2000; Elyer and Giles 1999). In addition, despite a visible presence on campus, service learning experiences as such have not yet been incorporated into many of the majors.

### **Rethinking Our Priorities**

Following the appointment of President Barbara Gitenstein in 1999, the College of New Jersey reaffirmed its commitment to community engagement in its new mission statement by declaring its intention to become a “national exemplar in the education of those who seek to sustain and

advance the communities in which they live.” This institutional commitment has inspired a number of faculty members to embrace applied teaching and scholarship in their fields. More than twenty courses have been re-designed to integrate community-based research, a movement that has matured with the formation of the Community-Based Research Collaborative at the college in the summer of 2000. Other faculty members are introduced to strategies for community-based research through faculty development workshops. Significant projects have been initiated through faculty collaborations with the National Higher Education Community Research Project of the Corella & Bertram F. Bonner Foundation and the Center for Campus Community Partnerships.

However, as momentum has gained to embed intensive community-based research initiatives in various majors, questions have risen as to the value of the mandatory first-year service learning experience. Is it warranted given its significant resource consumption, its relative lack of connection with the community-based research projects, and competing priorities in the first year?

At present, the college is moving decisively through a process of comprehensive curricular transformation, with a particular emphasis on reconceptualizing the nature of student and faculty work. As faculty rethink the role of general education at the college, there is renewed interest in the purpose of the first-year program. A key question is whether the elements that currently define *Athens to New York*—the emphasis on a common theme with common questions and a common service experience—are those that should most define the educational experience of students during their first semester at the college. First-year courses are versatile vehicles and can serve many important ends. For example, they can:

- serve as a bridge from high school to college through skill development (critical reading and thinking, writing, and study habits);
- promote a sense of connectedness and engagement on the campus by incorporating residential, co-curricular events, and extended orientation experiences;
- foster intellectual community and inculcate certain values through a common course, set of readings, or activities; and
- introduce the aims of a college educa-

tion through a seminar experience (“significant conversations about important ideas”) or a focus on the concept of liberal education.

However, first-year courses can quickly buckle under the weight of competing and unrealistic expectations. In our case, given highly talented students and a staunch commitment to high quality undergraduate education, how does a service learning experience stack up against the other priorities listed above? From a developmental perspective, when do students need what, and how should learning experiences be buttressed over time?

Decisions of this sort must derive from the core values and aspirations of an institution. Unless it is designed to embody and advance what is vital to the institution, a first-year course has little hope of holding its own against competing priorities. Of course, the force that works most relentlessly against all such programs is the undertow of the academic major. First-year courses need constant succor and support from faculty and administration alike to remain viable. But they are well worth supporting as long as one remains utterly clear-minded as to the essential purpose of the course within the context of the institution’s values and aspirations.

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# The Personal Development Portfolio at Bridgewater College of Virginia

W. Steve Watson, associate professor of philosophy and religion, past director of the Personal Development Portfolio Program, and Arthur C. Hessler, vice president and dean for academic affairs, both at Bridgewater College

Consistent with Bridgewater College’s mission to “educate and develop the whole person,” the Personal Development Portfolio (PDP) program employs the portfolio method to cultivate and integrate the personal growth of students in four dimensions: intellect, wellness, character, and citizenship. The program seeks to enhance existing programs by increasing the level of preparation for study in the liberal arts; by encouraging the integration of various elements of the curriculum and co-curriculum; and by emphasizing reflection as an essential vehicle for personal growth. The PDP program extends to all students. It is the responsibility of each student, in consultation with advisors and other faculty and staff, to pursue and demonstrate personal development during each year of residence. This development occurs in and out of the classroom, and both on- and off-campus.

By encouraging growth in four dimensions, the personal development program emphasizes both skills and values. Students acquire the tools and develop the skills for lifelong learning, emotional and physical health, ethical and spiritual growth, and effective citizenship. As importantly, the program inculcates the central value that a liberal education mandates a set of responsibilities: the responsibility to be intellectually curious, to be healthy, to be reflective about ethical choices and spiritual paths, and to be civically engaged.

In the first year, *every* student is expected to begin the process of personal development, to perform service in the community, and to set goals related to his or her future personal development and career. The program

begins with a three-credit, first-year seminar focusing on critical thinking and the four dimensions of personal development, continues with annual iterations of the portfolio overseen by an advisor, and concludes with the completion of a required final “showcase” portfolio in the senior year.

The faculty members fill two roles in the program. Some are instructors of the first-year seminar; most are formal advisors to students. In addition to providing conventional help to students selecting courses, faculty advisors assist students in the personal development process and also evaluate and provide feedback on annual student portfolios.

## **Integrating the Educational Experience**

As the PDP program evolved, the integration of the portfolio program and its advising network with virtually all departments of the college and all aspects



of student life became an explicit goal. Three areas received immediate attention: leadership training, service learning, and career development. Coincident with the portfolio program, a Leadership Institute was established, an Office for Service Learning was founded, and the ties with the Convocation Program were built directly into the structures of the program.

All students at Bridgewater College experience the impact of the Leadership Institute through its programs and workshops as well as through the involvement of its staff with PDP functions. The Leadership Institute provides speakers at convocations and other events, contacts with leaders, outreach programs involving our students, and workshops for personal


ture and e-mail notices for service learning opportunities can hardly be avoided. For example, “book buddy” programs with local elementary and middle schools have developed, and work in the local home for the aging and in the retirement center has increased exponentially. And many students work for the local rescue squad and the forest service. Moreover, several student service organizations—such as the Community Service Organization, a campus chapter of Habitat for Humanity, and more service-oriented religious groups—have formed on campus.

The development of the portfolio program has given the college the opportunity to integrate other student programs into it. One example is the explicit involvement of the PDP program with the convocation program, which requires students to attend a minimum number of events, such as lectures, chapel, and various artistic programs. Currently, the convocation program is being organized around the four personal dimensions of the PDP program, focusing on one dimension each year on a four-year rotation.

### The Freshman Class

During the fall semester of their freshman year, students receive three credits for a course (PDP 150) designed as an introduction to the liberal arts. Beginning as a conventional college transition course, PDP 150 now emphasizes critical thinking skills through a syllabus of primary readings from a variety of arts and sciences. Other topics include orientation issues, time management, computer network skills, goal setting,

Initially, some faculty members raised concerns about the intense ethical emphasis of PDP and the systematic development of students in the areas of leadership and civic responsibility—areas not always defined as “academic.”



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Whereas most colleges and universities *encourage* service, Bridgewater College *requires* all students to perform a minimum of ten hours of community service each year. Our experience has been that student involvement often extends well beyond the required minimum. The impact on campus of the PDP service requirement is readily apparent. Indeed litera-



the four personal dimensions of PDP, and the required first personal essay. This essay, which must articulate the student's personal goals, becomes the foundation document for later reflection in subsequent personal essays.

Bridgewater's freshman orientation program has changed to reflect the values of the PDP program. PDP faculty have come to serve as advisors to groups of students assigned for the summer orientation visits, and advisors now remain with the same group of fifteen to nineteen students throughout the freshman year. Then, from the sophomore year until graduation, a student is assigned to a faculty advisor in his or her major who serves as an academic advisor and assists the student with both course registration and portfolio development.

Student advisors, along with student residence counselors, provide competent counseling on all aspects of college adjustment and always emphasize the development of the whole person. Along with other benefits of good advising, the college has focused specifically on the issue of retention. And, although assessment must focus on a number of factors in addition to the PDP program, retention figures have improved significantly in the past several years.

### **The Portfolio Itself**

The original student portfolio begun in the freshmen year is revised annually, and the final (senior) portfolio is expected both to reflect a student's development across the four years and to indicate goals set for a

future of service beyond graduation. The college expects each student to begin a process of personal development that will be continued throughout life.

Contents of the portfolio include a reflective essay, supporting items to indicate development in each of the four personal dimensions, a self-evaluation of the supporting items, reflection on service learning, a current resume, and further evidence of career planning. Often, students also reflect on courses in the curriculum that have led to personal growth and include their best examples of research and writing. A variety of practical experiences—including internships—are encouraged, and evidence of participation may also be included in the final portfolio to demonstrate vocational interests or community service.

### **Assessment and the Stimulus for Change**

The PDP program has occasioned a new educational philosophy at Bridgewater, and the college has taken very seriously faculty members' new role as advocates rather than authorities. Initially, some faculty members raised concerns about the intense ethical emphasis of PDP and the systematic development of students in the areas of leadership and civic responsibility—areas not always defined as “academic.” That debate was invaluable to an academic community charged with the responsibility of setting standards for a liberal arts education and determining educational outcomes. Consensus gradually formed around the positions articulated by

the president, the steering committee, and the participating faculty members.

Evidence of agreement emerged through proposals for the new general education requirements written by faculty committees. These proposals directly instituted the educational ideals of the portfolio program.

The assessment of the student portfolios provides further evidence of institutional advancement. In fact, it would be difficult to imagine a better glimpse into the impact of a college curriculum on the development of its students. Because two outside readers are required to review final portfolios, student outcomes are assessed within major departments and beyond. Moreover, those departments and advisors that emphasize the portfolios are quickly recognized. Since Bridgewater faculty have made PDP such a priority, peer review in the form of portfolio assessment may become a major stimulus for change.

### **Conclusion**

The PDP program has been the most direct implementation of the Bridgewater College mission statement. In hiring faculty, the college has been quite explicit about its support for the program and especially for PDP 150. “Ethical lives,” “personal accountability and civic responsibility,” and “high standards of integrity” have become more than just words in a mission statement; they have become meaningful concepts that are implemented in personal student plans, required and modeled by faculty, and expected of students for graduation.

# Values and Conflict on Campus?

## AN INTERVIEW WITH ALAN WOLFE

Heather Wathington, director of programs in AAC&U's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Global Initiatives, interviewed Alan Wolfe for Peer Review.

**Peer Review:** This issue of Peer Review explores the ways colleges and universities are responding to values questions on campus. How do you think we can best foster examined values and grounded commitments given the diversity of perspectives and values that students bring to campus?

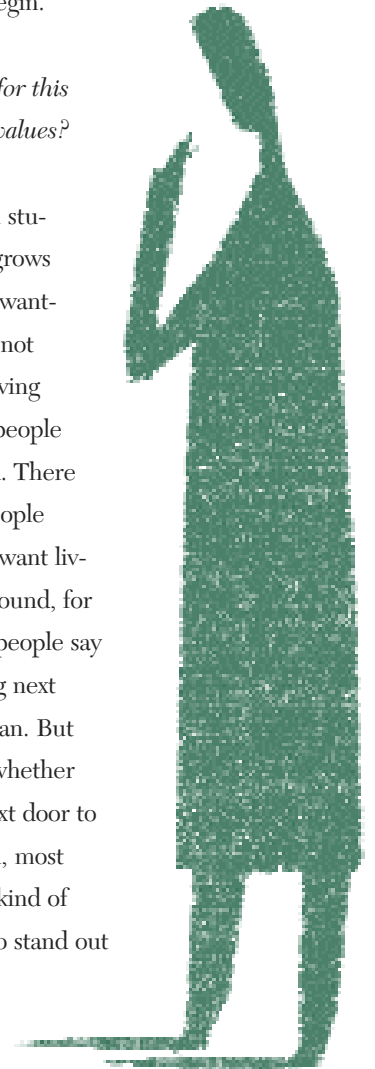
**Alan Wolfe:** Well, some students come to campus without strongly articulated values and are, in a sense, searching for values. We could think about this by contrasting what happens in the classroom with what happens in American life more generally. Take the abortion issue, for example. In American politics, one side has a very clear position, and another side has a completely different yet equally clear position. The two sides do not see eye-to-eye and are engaged in serious conflict with one another. In extreme cases, people even engage in violence.

In my experience, it is nothing like that on most college campuses. Students do not have strong disagreements on values. One student may say, "I think abortion is terrible, it's murder." Another may say, "I think it's perfectly justified because a woman should have the right to choose." And then many other students may say, "I think you're both right; maybe there's room for compromise," or something like that. American students these days are conflict-averse and are not engaged in any kind of strong disagreement over basic values. There are always excep-

tions, but this is a broad generalization with which I would begin.

**PR:** How do you account for this lack of conflict over basic values?

**AW:** I think it comes from students' upbringing, which grows out of wanting to be nice, wanting everybody to like you, not wanting to stand out as having odd ideas that may make people think you are a little weird. There was a survey that asked people questions about who they want living next door to them. It found, for example, that most white people say they would not mind living next door to an African American. But when people were asked whether they would mind living next door to a fundamentalist Christian, most said they would. It is that kind of sense that nobody wants to stand out as being a little weird by having a very strong point of view.



Alan Wolfe is professor of political science and director of the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life at Boston College. He is the author or editor of more than ten books including *Marginalized in the Middle* (University of Chicago Press, 1997) and *One Nation, After All* (Viking Penguin, 1998). His most recent book is *Moral Freedom: The Search for Virtue in a World of Choice*, which was published by W. W. Norton in April 2001.

**PR:** *How do you think faculty best negotiate values questions in the classroom while maintaining their own sense of authenticity?*

**AW:** When I first started teaching, in the late 1960s, the assumption was that students would be the products of religious homes and that they would have strongly held views that they had not really reflected upon. So the professor's job was to undermine students' views. If they were Christian, for example, the professor would talk about being an atheist or something like that. It is very, very different these days. The job of the professor in the current environment is actually not to be critical because students themselves are already so critical—you might call it cynical—that there is not much they believe in. There is almost a need to build students up before they can be torn down. The urge to expose the views of students assumes that there are views there. Yet, in my experience, that is the exception rather than the rule.

**PR:** *In Moral Freedom, you ask: "Are critics of our condition right to worry that we no longer believe in the old-fashioned virtues that once made us great?" Is it the case that today's students simply do not subscribe to "old-fashioned" values but that, nonetheless, we continue to think they do?*

**AW:** Whether the values are old-fashioned or not, students are very reluctant to defend any idea very strongly. If you teach a play, a novel, or a political speech that involves something like self-sacrifice, nobility, or honor—old-fashioned concepts, it often

comes across to students as very, very strange. An act of great self-sacrifice, for example, runs into conflict with the sort of message that students get about maximizing self-interest and taking advantage of opportunities.

**PR:** *Do you think students benefit from diversity? Say, for instance, you've got a Muslim student, a Jewish student, and a Christian student in the same classroom. Does students' aversion to conflict render them unable to benefit from variety of thought?*

**AW:** Well, I think there is not enough of that kind of thing. More often college campuses have parallel cultures. You see this with race, for example. There are white students in one part of the college and black students in another part. On most campuses these days, there are enough of them on either side that they can pretty much have their own experience without all that much interaction with the other. And I think the same is true in many places with respect to religion as well; Christians hang out with other Christians and so on. So to the degree that we are talking about the college serving as a place where students can engage with and really understand others that are different from them, I do not think that that is happening as much as it should.

Part of the reason may involve what we expect from students. We tend to think, "let's sit down and have a dialogue" or "let's have conversation." But if your views are really, really deeply held—which, as I have said, most students' views are not—then

## American students these days are conflict-averse and are not engaged in any kind of strong disagreement over basic values.

dialogue and conversation are not necessarily the easiest or even the best things to have. So maybe it would be better to get students to think about what it means to believe in something before encouraging them to engage in a conversation about it. President Clinton once called for a national conversation on race. But was he, was anyone, really prepared to hear that some people think that affirmative action is a terrible idea? All too often people who call for a conversation know what they think the outcome of that conversation ought to be.

I am all for having Jewish students and Muslim students confront their differences. But if we do so, we should be prepared to accept the fact that they may never come to agreement, that some very ugly things will be said, and that feelings after the discussion will be much more raw than they were before the discussion began.

**PR:** *How then should we approach conflict and differences? How do we get to a point at which we can begin to achieve understanding?*

**October 24–27, 2002**

*Diversity and Learning: Education for a World Lived in Common*  
St. Louis, Missouri

**November 7–9, 2002**

*Faculty Work and Student Learning: Meeting New Challenges of a World in Transition*  
Indianapolis, Indiana

**January 22–25, 2003**

AAC&U's 89th Annual Meeting:  
*The Courage to Question: Liberal Education in the 21st Century*  
Seattle, Washington

**Feb. 27–March 1, 2003**

*General Education Goals, Strategies, and Assessments for Powerful Learning*  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Information about upcoming meetings is available online at [www.aacu.org/meetings](http://www.aacu.org/meetings)

**AW:** Too often, we engage in what I would call premature closure, or premature consensus, on these things. In fact, we have radically different views in life. By all means, let's discuss affirmative action or abortion. But let us do so not to get everyone to agree, but as a lesson in how politics involves tragic

Moreover, the urge to have dialogue can be very coercive. A student who is still wrestling with his or her own views may not be ready to engage in dialogue. Maybe that is not where he or she is at that particular moment.

**PR:** *Certainly a university teaches values. But what position does it take? How should we go about it?*

The urge to have dialogue can be very coercive. A student who is still wrestling with his or her own views may not be ready to engage in dialogue.

**AW:** The university does teach values; it must and it always will. But I do not think there is any one rule about how to go about the task. A rule that says values should never be introduced in the classroom is just as wrong as one that says all you have to do is tell the students what your values are and then you can just pontificate and sermonize. We are talking about teaching, which is an art. I just assume that good teachers are those who can take cognizance of a given situation and know what is appropriate and what is not. The notion that we should be either value-free or confessional about our values strikes me as a one-size-fits-all rule, and I would not go in either direction.

choices. You might believe that universities should represent the racial composition of society fairly and you might believe that decisions about admission should be based on merit. Whenever we seek closure on the issue, we tend to say that one can have both. In real world, you almost never can have both. So pick one. Defend your position. Argue. But don't believe that consensus is right around the corner.

## WELCOME TO AAC&U

The following were approved as members at the spring meeting of AAC&U's board of directors:

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# Moral and Civic Development During College

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## Dimensions of Moral and Civic Development

Research on human development reveals three clusters of dimensions that are critical to fully mature moral and civic functioning. The first is moral and civic understanding, which includes interpretation, judgment, knowledge, understanding of complex issues and institutions, and a sophisticated grasp of ethical and democratic principles. The second area has less to do with understanding what is right than motivation to do the right thing. This cluster includes things like goals and values, a sense of efficacy, emotions such as compassion and inspiration, and moral and civic identity. The third broad category is the domain of practice: the capacity to work effectively with people, and skills like moral and political discourse and political participation.

Heuristically, it is convenient to treat these three clusters separately. In reality, however, the relationships among them are multiple and dynamic; they intersect with and influence each other in multiple feedback loops. For example, we know that part of what gives a person a sense of efficacy is political knowledge and understanding. This sense of efficacy then contributes to shaping interests and values, which then serve to increase the individual's knowledge and feed back to increase the sense of efficacy.

## Moral Judgment and Interpretation

The ability to think clearly about difficult moral issues is important not only for personal morality but also in civic

and political affairs, since they so often entail moral issues such as balancing the rights and welfare of individuals and groups. Although many aspects of his theory have been questioned and revised, and moral judgment has been reconceived as only one component in a complex set of processes, Lawrence Kohlberg's description of the increasing sophistication of people's capacity to think about difficult moral issues remains a useful tool for making operational what we mean by intellectual moral growth.

A large body of research makes it clear that the experience of grappling with challenging moral issues in classroom discussions or in activities that require the resolution of conflicting opinions contributes significantly to the increasing maturity of individuals' moral judgment. This is especially true when the teacher draws attention to important distinctions, assumptions, and contradictions (e.g., Blatt and Kohlberg 1975). When these kinds of discussions and activities are thoroughly integrated into the college curriculum, the sophistication of students' thinking about moral issues is increased.

This approach by itself is inadequate, however, because morality is not always reflective and deliberative. In fact, reflective morality comes into play relatively infrequently, when the right course of action is not obvious and there is time to reflect. In contrast, most moral actions—the many unremarkable moral choices and actions that characterize daily life—are not preceded by conscious reflection, but instead are immediate, seemingly intuitive responses. This everyday, habitual morality

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is based in repetition over time, not only behavioral repetition, but also repetition of ingrained habits of “reading” or interpreting moral situations.

In order to find meaning amid the moral ambiguity of real-life situations, people must develop habits of moral interpretation and intuition through which they perceive the everyday world. The college experience can be a powerful opportunity for students to develop more reflective and mature habits of moral interpretation. Much of the positive impact of programs that foster appreciation of diversity may reside in the power of those programs to make students aware, for the first time, of their previously unquestioned interpretive schemes, to bring their biases to light, and to highlight the inherent ambiguity of moral situations that previously appeared clear-cut. This learning can also take place in the reflection component that is known to be critical to the success of service-learning courses. In reflection discussions and journals, students share with each other their interpretations of the common experience, explore the ways the experience changed their understanding of the people with whom they worked, the social issues they confronted, and their relationship to those people and issues. This kind of activity is ideally suited for revealing alternative interpretations of common experiences and helping students see the personal significance of those alternative interpretations through self-examination.

In addition to programs explicitly designed to foster moral and civic growth, colleges and universities can also transform students’ interpretive frames, for better or worse, through traditional academic course

work. Faculty often talk of transforming student understanding through their teaching. Along with substantive and theoretical disciplinary learning, this transformation can entail changes in students’ frameworks of interpretation. For example, a powerful course can open students’ eyes to global economic interdependence or the influence of opportunity structures on individual achievement. Some of these interpretive shifts may contribute to greater moral and civic responsibility, while others have a potentially negative effect on students’ moral and civic responsibility. For example, a focus on many economic models can lead students to see all behavior as motivated by self-interest, ignoring the complex and ambiguous reality of the economic, political, and moral worlds. Overreliance on this kind of narrow frame to interpret their own experience can affirm students’ cynicism and help them rationalize self-serving behavior. Likewise, an ethics or other moral philosophy course that does no more than critique one theory after another may lead students to believe that all ethical perspectives are seriously flawed and that, therefore, all ethical questions are matters of personal taste and opinion.

### **Moral Relativism**

As students begin to question their unexamined assumptions and appreciate the multiplicity of interpretations inherent in any situation, they may conclude that there are no grounds for evaluating the relative validity of different, sometimes conflicting interpretations. At least some degree of both epistemological and ethical relativism are part of the predictable developmental sequence

that college students go through as they begin to grapple with uncertainty and question the simple absolutes they previously understood as the “right answers” to complex and subtle questions (Perry 1968; Knefelkamp 1974). The research indicates that college students tend to leave behind absolutistic thinking but generally do not reach a full understanding of grounds for intellectual and moral conviction. It is, therefore, not surprising that faculty report a great deal of epistemological and ethical relativism among their students.

Faculty often report a pattern that combines a number of different views into a system which is internally inconsistent but, nevertheless, apparently quite widely held (e.g., Ricks 1999; Trosset 1998). “Student moral relativism” includes elements of cultural relativism (moral standards are relative to culture), ethical subjectivism (“right” means “right for me”), moral skepticism (nothing can ever be *proven* in ethics, since people will still disagree), moral nihilism (there are no truths in ethics), and (surprisingly) an overriding concern for moral tolerance and respect for others’ views. This position may reflect an unwillingness to think hard about challenging ethical questions or a limited understanding of what should count as convincing evidence and argumentation in the moral domain, a related reluctance to have one’s own views and actions subjected to serious scrutiny by others, and an inability to distinguish between making reasoned judgments about the moral legitimacy of actions or views on the one hand, and being judgmental, intolerant, or disrespectful toward other individuals or cultural groups on the other (Ricks 1999).

College students' relativism ought to be cause for concern among educators, because it prevents students from engaging fully in discussions of ethical issues, learning to articulate and effectively justify their views, and adopting new perspectives when presented with high quality evidence and arguments. In essence, "the stakes drop out of ethical deliberation" and students are less likely to take it seriously (Trosset 1998; see also, Ethics in Society Web site, <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/EIS/>).

### Values and Goals

Clearly, understanding and judgment are essential elements of moral and civic maturity, but they are not sufficient to explain what makes a morally and civically effective person. Some people may have the *capacity* for effective action while lacking the *motivation* to act. Although the connection of higher education with moral and civic motivation may be less obvious than its connection with knowledge and understanding, colleges have great potential to contribute to students' development in this area as well.

Despite the pluralism of American values, there are some values that most people would agree colleges and universities ought to promote and support if they are committed to graduating engaged and responsible citizens. These include respect and tolerance for others, including social minorities, respect for civil liberties and other key elements of our democracy, and an interest in politics and in contributing to positive social change. Part of the value of higher education is that it does contribute to these values.

Changes in college students' values depend partly on characteristics of the col-

lege they attend and on students' entering characteristics, including gender, religiosity, and their own and their parents' political views. For example, shifts toward increased political liberalism appear to be greatest in highly selective institutions (Astin 1977; Knox, Lindsay, and Kolb 1988). Even so,

students in most colleges and universities show some common shifts in their values, including increased socio-political tolerance, greater concern for civil rights and civil liberties, more egalitarian views of gender roles, declines in authoritarianism and dogmatism, and more secular religious attitudes. Higher education is also associated with a modest increase in knowledge of and interest in politics. (For a review of this literature, see Pascarella and Terenzini 1991, pp. 269-334.)

This research raises a question for those who would like to see colleges and universities pay more attention to undergraduates' moral and civic development: If higher education is already doing a good job of encouraging these broadly supported values and attitudes, then why should it introduce new programs of moral and civic education? The answer is that despite the undisputed positive impact of higher education, there is still immense room for improvement. Some changes, though statistically significant, are small. For example, the impact of higher education on students'

social conscience and humanitarian values appears to be very modest (Pascarella, Ethington, and Smart 1988; Pascarella, Smart, and Braxton 1986). In addition, some positive shifts during college are not maintained in the post-college years. Sax (1999) reports, for example, that the percentages of

students who rate as very important helping others in need, participating in community action, and influencing the political structure show temporary increases over the four years of college. But almost all of these increases disappear in the five years after college graduation. Finally, the rates of political participation among college educated Americans are higher than among those without a college education. But only a third of the college-educated follow public affairs regularly, and less than two-thirds vote regularly in both national and local elections. Moreover, participation numbers are significantly lower for the youngest cohorts of college graduates.

### Civic and Political Skills

In addition to understanding and being motivated to bring about social change, students need to develop the skills and expertise of civic and political practice if they are to be engaged and effective citizens.

Prominent among the needed capacities are skills of deliberation, communication, and persuasion, including the capacities for

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compelling moral discourse—how to make a strong case for something, ensure that others understand one’s point of view, understand and evaluate others’ arguments, compromise without abandoning one’s convictions, and work toward consensus.

These capacities are much enhanced when students learn in environments of diversity, as the work of Sylvia Hurtado (2001) and others has shown. These capacities also go to the heart of moral and civic functioning because individuals’ moral and political concepts are both developed (constructed) and applied through discourse, communication, and argumentation. And having these capacities not only makes effective action possible, it naturally leads to a greater sense of efficacy or empowerment and leads people to see themselves as politically engaged and, thus, to be further moti-

vated toward engagement. That is, the development of skills contributes to and interacts with the development of values, understanding, and self-concept. Kuh and colleagues (1991) report, for example, that participation in leadership activities during college is the single most important predictor of students’ development of humanitarian, social concern, and values.

The significance of developing these practical competencies is also evident in longitudinal research on civic engagement. In a comprehensive review, Kirlin (2000) found that involvement with organizations that teach adolescents how to participate in society by learning how to form and express opinions and organize people for action is the most powerful predictor of adult civic engagement. Longitudinal studies of undergraduates also indicate that interaction with

racially diverse peers is associated with many moral and civic skills and values, including leadership skills, commitment to promoting racial understanding, and tolerance of people with different beliefs (Milem 1994; Hurtado 1997; Antonio 1998).

## Conclusion

Most colleges and universities have few programs that specifically address the moral and civic development of their students, and a great many students make it all the way through college without participating in any of those programs. If higher education is to have really powerful and enduring effects on students’ moral and civic understanding, motivation, and skills, it must address these issues more explicitly and directly—in the curriculum, in extra-curricular activities, and in the campus culture.

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# Embodying the Values We Teach

By Irena S. M. Makarushka, senior fellow, AAC&U

In the wake of Enron and other highly publicized scandals, students may wonder whether it is any easier to find an honest person now than it was when Diogenes walked the streets of Athens with his lantern. Even a cursory glance at news headlines suggests that ethical choices and values-based decisions are all too often eclipsed by economic and political self-interest. In light of our mission as educators, what ought we do to reassure students and the wider community that we remain committed to our core values and to serving the common good?

“Liberal Learning and the Challenge of Uncommon Values,” the 2002 AAC&U pre-conference symposium, focused on the diversity of values that today’s students and faculty bring to our campuses and explored the role of liberal learning in negotiating among competing notions of the true and the good. Most participants agree that culture, family, religion, and peers shape virtually all the decisions and choices we make. At many colleges and universities, preparing students to engage the world as ethical and thoughtful citizens is integral to their institutional mission.

Currently, fundamental democratic values of free speech and equality before the law are being tested in a climate of escalating global political and economic conflict. Higher education is well positioned to take a

leadership role in affirming the most sacred of American values including justice, equality, civil rights, the right of dissent, and the freedom of speech and religion. These core values have guided and inspired us in the past and must continue to illuminate our path toward the future. Whether we serve as trustees, faculty, administrators, alumni, or staff, we face complex ethical and moral dilemmas. If we have fiduciary responsibilities, we may be asked to balance institutional financial well being with social responsibility as we raise and invest money, assess tuition and financial aid, or determine areas of curricular growth. Whose values, for example, ought to determine the allocation of resources, those of donors or of institutions? Should controversial research be supported in the face of strong political resistance?

Policies that determine access to higher education continue to provoke debate. Those of us responsible for student recruitment, for example, must ask whether race and gender should still matter if support for affirmative action is waning. With regard to the admissions process, how do we negotiate among competing priorities such as the need for tuition dollars, the desire to maintain academic excellence, and the interests of athletic programs, academic departments, and alumni relations? Personnel policies and practices are no less vexed, particularly when institutional values conflict

with personal rights. Should individuals whose views challenge our most cherished beliefs be hired or retained? How can we protect the freedom of speech of those who do not support current orthodoxies? Undoubtedly, these questions have gained significance in the aftermath of 9/11 and the heightened concern for national security.

Challenges, as we know, are also opportunities. As we grapple with contentious issues and ethical dilemmas on our campuses, how we choose to resolve conflicts and arrive at policy decisions becomes what has been described as a teachable moment. Institutions that practice value-based decision making, for example, model a process that includes identifying assumptions, naming priorities, clarifying differences, and weighing options in the interest of making good decisions that lead to effective policies. Core values remain immutable as strategies to manage cultural and institutional change are redesigned. Our efforts to foster a climate of mutual respect, civility, and tolerance among different constituencies on our campuses teach our students to create the kind of community we desire for them as they explore ways to live principled and productive lives amidst change and uncertainty. Embodying the values we hope students will learn is a powerful reminder of Diogenes’ belief that virtue is best demonstrated through action.

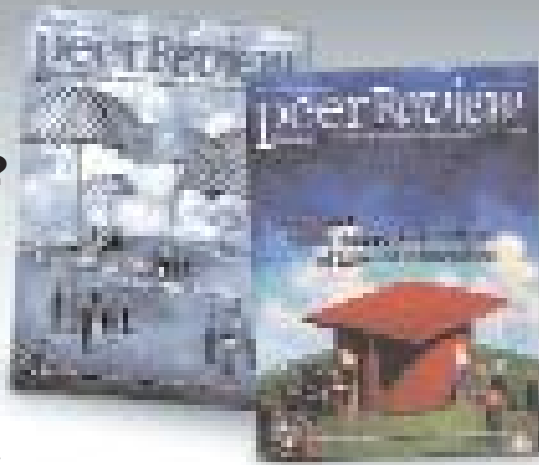
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