From Content to Inquiry: How Three Liberal Arts Colleges Radically Reimagined General Education

Goucher College
Ripon College
College of William and Mary
Common Elements

➢ Shifted from distribution to core curriculum
➢ Skills-based
➢ Coherent curricula
➢ Vertical integration
➢ Capstone
➢ Transdisciplinary
➢ Purpose-built, non-majors courses
➢ Common experiences/cohort model
➢ Inquiry based
➢ Active learning
From Content to Inquiry: the Goucher Commons Curriculum

Leslie W. Lewis, PhD & Robin Cresiski, PhD

AAC&U January 2018
Conceptualization of New Curriculum ‘15-16

• Followed faculty governance process: ad hoc curriculum committee (elected)

• Provost set pace of meeting schedule (intense/weekly). Robust communication to college community for transparency

• Preliminary findings presented to faculty in December with call for vote to endorse continuing work/direction

• At January faculty retreat, working groups created and charge given: to study topic area, make recommendations, back up recommendations with research and data. Over 70 faculty and staff members participated

• Solicited student input including through student-designed focus groups

• From working group recommendations, ad hoc curriculum committee created a vision document with specific recommendations. Positive faculty vote.
The Model: Goucher Commons

- First Year Seminar (1st semester of first year)
- Center Pair Exploration Courses—3 courses (2nd semester of first year through third year)
- Proficiency Areas:
  - Writing (all four years)—3 courses
  - Data Analytics (all four years)—2 courses
  - Foreign Language (all four years)—typically 3 courses
- Common Inquiry Areas:
  - Justice among People: Race, Power, Privilege (all 4 years)
  - Justice and Natural World: Environmental Sustainability (all 4 years)
- Common Experience: Study Abroad (second year or third year)
- Reflection Portfolio and Capstone Experience/Signature Project (fourth year)
Implementation Planning 2016-17

• Created new Center for the Advancement of Scholarship and Teaching (CAST), hired director, charged CAST director to focus on inquiry course development and new pedagogies

• Provided faculty support for curriculum work - summer stipends and guidance through CAST

• Cultivated strong faculty and academic staff leadership—curriculum committee reviewed scores of proposals, Academic Policy Committee created new schedule grid and academic calendar, registrar re-coded courses and reworked catalog, etc.
Proficiency Areas Re-defined

- Principles for course development: scaffold courses and learning, teach for transfer, engage student curiosity early
- Data Analytics—not your ordinary math courses
  - Example: Community based statistical research projects
- Quantitative Reasoning Center joins the Writing Center as another aspect of student support, and both are co-located with Information Research in the newly created and visibly located Learning Commons of the library
Inquiry Based Learning and New Pedagogies

The work of CAST begins: Center Pair Exploration courses working group forms in Spring 2017 to develop CPE guidelines:

• If you were going to create a course that would help students who knew nothing about your discipline fall in LOVE with your field and see its value in today’s world, what would that look like?

• If we want students to integrate their learning and also work well with others to solve complex problems, how do we help foster those skills?
Inquiry Based Learning and New Pedagogies

CPE Guidelines:

• Explore a contemporary, complex problem through disciplinary lens/tools;

• Reflect on your relationship to the problem and learn how others may have distinct relationships with the problem;

• Formulate meaningful questions;

• Work with others toward a path forward.

• Courses must also employ certain pedagogies: PBL, student agency, scaffolding, transparent assignment design, and group work.

*Courses are designed by faculty who engage in Curriculum Development Institutes.
Faculty Revelations, New Courses

CPEs as inquiry based courses...

• In the Natural Sciences:
  Disease and Discrimination

• In the Social Sciences:
  Baltimore ‘68: What Has Changed in 50 Years

• In the Arts and Humanities:
  Shakespeare as a vehicle for studying prejudice
  Art as an exploration of capitalism, philosophy, and what makes us human
Keys to Success

• Build upon existing faculty will
• Provide support financially and in resources
• Frontload the application, the play, the inquiry and awe
Ripon College Catalyst Curriculum

Ed Wingenbach, Dean of Faculty
Andrea Young, Associate Professor of Mathematical Science
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATALYST SKILL DEVELOPMENT</th>
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<th>120</th>
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<td>Integration</td>
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<td>Critical Thinking</td>
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http://www.ripon.edu/catalyst/
Example Courses

Catalyst 110: Writing
- Beyoncé, Black Feminism, and Pop Culture
- The Ancient World, Then and Now
- Reforming Schools in the USA

Catalyst 120: Quantitative
- How Numbers Persuade the Public
- Cosmic Detectives
- The World is Going to Hell
- Dimensions of Life

Catalyst 210: Intercultural
- Pickers & Artists: Culture in Antiques and Art
- American Others
- Fight Club: Peace and Conflict Studies

Catalyst 220: Integration
- Infectious Disease Through History
- Poetry, Prose, Pinterest
- Who Rules the Street?
- Democracy Counts

http://www.ripon.edu/catalyst/
Key Steps: Adoption

- Focus on the student, not curriculum
- Educate faculty about relationship between budget, enrollment, and curriculum
- Define timetable for results
- Iterative and inclusive process
  - Discuss → Design → Endorse → Next
- Delay controversies
- Implementation is planning
- No voting on details -- just framework, up or down

http://www.ripon.edu/catalyst/
Key Steps: Implementation

➢ “Big” professional development
  ➢ Bibliographies and Resources on our website
➢ Adopt hard deadlines for each step
➢ Self-destructing working groups
➢ Ensure work accountable and transparent
➢ Fit within governance, but bend to accommodate needs
➢ Everything is a pilot
➢ Assess

http://www.ripon.edu/catalyst/
W&M COLL Curriculum

John Donahue
Dean for Educational Policy
AAC&U Meeting, Washington, DC
January 26, 2018
Our Liberal Arts Education

- Explore Create Connect
- The College Curriculum
- Your Major
Center for the Liberal Arts

Michael Cronin
Japanese Studies

Silvia Tandeciarz
Hispanic Studies

John Lombardini
Government

Iyabo Osiapem
English

Fabricio Prado
History

Alison Scott
Kinesiology

Barbette Spaeth
Classical Studies

Arthur Knight
English

Gene Tracy
Physics

Kristin Wustholz
Chemistry
Innovation
Faculty Workshops

"Communication Concepts in First-year Courses"

Writing                      Syllabus
Presentation                Learning Objectives
Information Literacy         Assignments
Collaboration                Evaluation
Revision                     Campus Resources

Center for the Liberal Arts, A&S Dean's Office, Swem Library, Writing Resources Center, eLearning Office, Media Center
First-year Experience

**COLL 100**

“Big questions” explore the concepts, creative visions, theories, and discoveries that have shaped our understanding of the world. Students engage multiple ways to communicate their emerging ideas.

**COLL 150**

Through deep readings and group discussions of texts, data, or methods of inquiry, students practice the methods of scholarship and critical thinking. Intensive writing and revision lead to an academic research paper.
First-year Experience

COLL 100
Writing the World in Images

COLL 150
Classical Myth in Youth Literature
Students connect theory to practice and place their work in a global or cross-cultural context.
Innovation

Campus COLL 300 Events

Unlocking the Cage: Animal Well-being, Personhood, and the Law

Steven Wise
President, Nonhuman Rights Project

October 13, 2016
Thursday, 5:00pm
Commonwealth Auditorium

Sponsored by
Samuelson Society
Department of Philosophy
Department of Religious Studies

For more information:
http://www.williamandmary.edu/

The Child Health and Mortality Prevention Surveillance (CHAMPS) Initiative

CHAMPS

1. Based on health and demographic surveillance sites (HDSs)
2. Prospective, open-ended, population-based
3. Cause of death determined by minimally invasive tissue sampling (MITS)
4. Verbal autopsy also conducted
5. "Mortality etiology" – the key to unlock/
   translate verbal autopsy
Innovation

Campus COLL 300 Academic Festival

Each semester ends with students presenting their work and interacting with other students: "How did your course explore the semester's theme?"
COLL 400 Capstone

Full Implementation Next Year

23 seminars
33 senior research/Honors
56 total sections
302 students
115 students
417 total students enrolled

Departments and programs on board:
  Anthropology • Biology • Chemistry • Computer Science
  Economics • Geology • Kinesiology & Health Sciences • Linguistics
  Music • Philosophy • Physics • Psychology • Public Policy • Sociology
# Innovation

## New and Adapted Courses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Seats per academic year/Details</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COLL 400</td>
<td>~ 1,600 seats per academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLL 300</td>
<td>~ 800 seats per academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLL 200</td>
<td>~ 4,800 seats per academic year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLL 150</td>
<td>180 new, adapted courses; 15 students/section</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLL 100</td>
<td>103 entirely new courses; 25 students/section</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
College Curriculum

Explore Create Connect

AP/IB credits apply

College Curriculum

COLL 300
In the World
COLL 200 NQR
COLL 200 ALV

Your Major

AP/IB credits apply

COLL 200 CSI
COLL 150
First-year Seminar
COLL 100
First-year Seminar

3 Elective Courses, 1 in each Knowledge Domain
Why Change?

- Identify what is no longer working in your general education curriculum

- GER system as check-list of breadth requirements; theoretical rationale has disappeared

- Inequity: AP and IB credit used to place out of gen ed requirements

- Mandate: To establish William and Mary’s preeminence as a liberal arts university.
Support from the Senior Administration

• Provost invites outside speakers and W&M faculty for series of lectures/discussions on the liberal arts

• Provost issues summary white paper and charges deans with reviewing undergraduate curriculum: “developing the most vibrant and exciting liberal arts education for our students”

• Be mindful of the central values that have emerged through this process

• Higher administration had thoroughly consulted with A&S faculty, was respectful of committee structure and faculty governance

• Result was collaboration, despite initial faculty apprehension
The Hard Work Begins

- Charge: take up a thorough review of college-wide requirements for the baccalaureate degree
- “Process” is critical: involve as many constituencies as possible
- Curriculum Review Steering Committee (CRSC): faculty from physical and quantitative sciences, social sciences, humanities; students
- Investigate curricula at peer institutions
- Collect data and solicit ideas from faculty
- Survey faculty and undergraduates
- Gather data on current practices, experiences, and resource consequences of any changes to the curriculum
Delivering the Report: A New Way Forward

• Report advocating a new general education curriculum delivered in May 2012 after 18 months of work

• Summarized weaknesses of old system

• Identified aspirations that had emerged: critical problem solving; preparation for independent inquiry; global understanding; effective oral and written communication; intellectual risk taking; ability to look across disciplines for answers

• Consensus that general education should persist through all four years

• New general education curriculum, approved by Faculty of Arts & Sciences in December 2013, acted upon these priorities
Importance of AAC&U as a Resource

• Proposal for a “General Education for the Global Century” grant, funded by the American Association of Colleges and Universities, accepted early in the process.

• Attendance of five faculty members at the AAC&U’s summer institute on general education (to brainstorm on curricular options, innovation).

• Institute played pivotal role by informing our thinking on an “integrated” curriculum.

• Concept of “integrated” curriculum helped to shape our COLL curriculum as a counterpart to distribution requirements.
In Addition . . .

- “Liberal Education and America’s Promise” (LEAP) – guidelines to help universities study, clarify, and strengthen their liberal arts mission

- connects liberal arts education to responsible citizenship and successful work experience

- identifies needs of employers – high-level transferable skills, such as good oral and written communication; intellectual flexibility; evidence-based reasoning

- Several of the LEAP Principles of Excellence corresponded to a remarkable degree with what we wanted to achieve:
  - making excellence inclusive
  - teaching inquiry and innovation
  - engaging big questions
  - fostering intercultural learning
  - emphasizing the ability to solve problems
Discussion

Framing Questions:

1. What elements might support effective learning at your institution?
2. What elements or strategies might be difficult to adopt at your institution?
3. What strategies and innovations can you share with us?