To: Beverly Wendland and Ed Schlesinger, Co-Chairs of the CUE2
From: Gabe Paquette (Provost’s Fellow on the CUE2) and Janet Schreck (Assistant Vice Provost for Education)
Re: Second Memorandum on Undergraduate Education
Date: August 16, 2017

It is an exciting and propitious moment to re-think, re-imagine, and reform undergraduate education. There is no shortage of good, provocative writing on the future(s) of higher education, especially undergraduate education.\textsuperscript{1} As described in our first memorandum, faculty, students, and administrators on many campuses are engaged in processes that resemble our CUE2, and some universities have begun to re-design the curriculum and undergraduate experience as a whole. In fact, indicative of this flurry of activity, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences has convened its own commission to study undergraduate education in the U.S.

In the first part of this memorandum, we offer an overview of new approaches to teaching and learning and how these are informing debates about the future of undergraduate education. We offer some examples from across the spectrum of higher education institutions to suggest how the new scholarship on teaching and learning might find institutional expression. In the (considerably shorter) second part of the memorandum, we examine how the relationship between the liberal arts education and professional education/vocational training/non-academic has been conceived. As our first memorandum adumbrated, some of our peer institutions are experimenting with infusing the liberal arts curriculum with training programs more generally associated with professional schools/vocational training as well as reviving the once-robust (but now somewhat atrophied) civic dimension of a liberal arts education.

Please share this memorandum with the members of the CUE2 if you believe that it would helpfully inform the Commission’s work.

**PART I**

*New Approaches to Teaching and Learning: “High-Impact Practices”, “Active/Engaged Pedagogies”, Technology’s Enormous Potential, and the Role of the Faculty*

**A. Definitions and Approaches**

“For a long time,” former Harvard President Derek Bok observed, “methods of teaching were largely matters for conjecture, intuition, and personal experience rather than careful testing”\textsuperscript{2}. This is no longer the case. The past decade has witnessed an explosion in scholarship on learning technologies and the pedagogical practices to achieve optimal learning outcomes. Numerous

\textsuperscript{1} The new literature is vast and expanding at a frightening rate. For a curated sample, see the pieces in the \textit{Chronicle}, \textit{Fast Company}, and the \textit{Washington Post}, along with this report by the firm Deloitte. \texttt{Georgia Tech} even has a center devoted to the future direction of the university!

\textsuperscript{2} Derek Bok, \textit{Higher Education in America} (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2013), 203.
institutions are refashioning their curricula (and undergraduate experience as a whole) to take into account the new insights offered by recent research. A useful point of departure is George Kuh’s *High-Impact Educational Practices* (2008), a study that has informed the work of those contemplating and undertaking the sort of reform that CUE2 is charged to study. Kuh, a professor at Indiana University, identified 4 learning outcomes: broad knowledge of human cultures and the physical and natural world; intellectual and practical skills (from written and oral communication to quantitative reasoning); personal and social responsibility (including civic engagement and ethical reasoning); and integrative and applied learning (“synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized study”).

Kuh’s research indicated that these learning outcomes were best achieved through a series of practices/methods. **Broad Knowledge** was best acquired via common intellectual experiences (exploring “big questions”); undergraduate research; learning communities (multiple courses linked to a “big question”); and a capstone experience. **Intellectual and Practical Skills** were best inculcated through first-year seminars; writing intensive courses; collaborative assignments and projects; and undergraduate research. **Personal and Social Responsibility** was cultivated by means of common intellectual experiences; service and community-based learning; collaborative assignments; and opportunities to exercise/employ ethical reasoning. **Integrative and Applied Learning** was best fostered in learning communities; undergraduate research; service-learning and community-based learning; internships and capstone experiences. It should be noted that a single type of learning experience/pedagogical approach (e.g. learning communities) can help to achieve multiple learning goals. Kuh himself suggests that ideally students will engage in 2 or more such “high-impact practices” during their college careers, most urgently in the freshman and senior years.

High-impact practices are also examples of what some scholars call “engaged learning”, which “involves ongoing experimentation rather than just passive absorption of information”. Service Learning, Learning Communities and Undergraduate Research are prime examples of engaged (sometimes called “active”) learning pedagogies. Service-learning is a form of “experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development”. The case for service-learning (or community-based learning”) as a key “engaged learning” practice is encapsulated in a [2007 article](#) by former Bates College President Donald Harward. Learning communities “involve a group of students who share common classes and/or co-curricular experiences, but they vary greatly from campus to campus in terms of the number of linked classes, the incorporation of a residential component and the use of a thematic focus

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3 The Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning at Harvard offers a [good overview](#) of research-based teaching methods, with links to relevant scholarly literature.

(e.g. environmental conservation, social justice). Undergraduate Research is “defined broadly to include scientific inquiry, creative activity and scholarship … undergraduates are responsible for co-creating knowledge through the process of inquiry, as opposed to receiving, memorizing and re-presenting knowledge from faculty experts”. It should be added that the common feature of all of these practices is deep and sustained faculty engagement, which creates an environment in which students are unafraid to “fail” and in which alternative metrics of success (beyond GPA and traditional markers of classroom “achievement”) are recognized and valorized.

While some scholars have studied the types of teaching practices that advance learning outcomes for students over the duration of their time in higher education, other scholars have focused on the types of course/syllabus/classroom-specific practices that optimize learning outcomes. How Learning Works (2010), by Northeastern’s Susan Ambrose and her colleagues, is perhaps the most comprehensive and influential book in a rapidly expanding field. Ambrose and her coauthors identify seven principles they claim are key to ensuring that learning outcomes sought are achieved. These are: Students’ prior knowledge can help or hinder learning; how students organize knowledge influences how they learn and apply what they know; Students’ motivation determines directs and sustains what they do learn; To develop mastery, students must acquire component skills, practice integrating them, and know when to apply what they have learned; Goal-directed practice coupled with targeted feedback enhances the quality of student learning; Students’ current level of development interacts with the social, emotional and intellectual climate of the course to impact learning. Sometimes, Ambrose claims, faculty’s lack of awareness of these principles leads to gaps that hinder learning. For example, metacognition (i.e. “the process of reflecting on and directing one’s own thinking”) often falls through the cracks: “metacognitive skills tend to fall outside of the content areas of most courses, and consequently they are often neglected in instruction”.

While Ambrose’s principles are applicable to all disciplines, other scholars have sought to devise principles with their own branch of learning in mind. A key example in the Sciences is the recent work of Nobel Laureate Carl Wieman of Stanford University, which has attracted considerable attention. Wieman summarizes the essential elements for effective learning in the Sciences in the following way: “Students must strenuously and explicitly practice the cognitive components of expertise. This includes the unique disciplinary knowledge, the discipline-specific structures by


6 There is a burgeoning literature on the importance of “learning to fail” and its connection to learning outcomes, resilience, and improved student mental health. Here is an article in the New York Times about Smith College in Massachusetts and here is a piece by Southwestern University president Edward Burger in InsideHigherEd.com. Harvard and other universities are undertaking a joint project on student resilience.

7 Susan Ambrose et al., How Learning Works: Seven Research-based Principles for Smart Teaching (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010), 4-7, 190-191.
which knowledge is organized and applied, and the ways in which experts monitor their thinking when learning and problem solving; students must receive effective feedback to guide their thinking while carrying out such practice; students must be motivated to do the hard work of learning; instructional activities need to be consistent with the basic mechanisms and limitation of how the brain processes and remembers information.”

Johns Hopkins’ Gateway Sciences Initiative also generated and disseminated numerous strategies that serve as best practices for teaching undergraduate STEM and gateway science courses, inspiring a pedagogical culture-shift toward active, collaborative learning. In a report to the Council of Deans in Fall 2016, a recommendation was made to apply GSI findings from its 23 instructional enhancement and pedagogical innovation projects and expand them to the university across four main lines: Encourage the differentiation of introductory course options to meet the varied nature of incoming students and ensure that every student can succeed; Increase options for first-year research experience to promote learning through discovery and build expertise through scientific exploration; Institutionalize PILOT learning program across the curriculum and support its continued expansion; Provide more active learning spaces by reconfiguring a portion of traditional classrooms to ensure that every active learning class has an available learning classroom.

B. Obstacles to Adoption/Implementation of “High-Impact” etc. Practices

To what degree have these insights infiltrated and informed the university curriculum? Though it is too early to know whether, for example, Wieman’s work, which has garnered national attention, will have an impact, the early returns are not promising. As a recent book surveying university teaching practices concludes, “Neither [Kuh’s] list nor the other rich research on effective pedagogies has produced a revolution in the undergraduate experience. NSSE results, for instance, reveal only a modest increase in the number of students participating in high-impact practices from 2006 to 2012, and the proportion of first-generation college students engaging in these practices continues to lag behind the rates for undergraduates who have college-educated parents”. Why have universities, as a whole, been slow to adopt these insights and adapt their practices accordingly? One answer, to be sure, is that large universities are anything but nimble “start-ups”: changes happen slowly and incrementally. Michael Crow, the enterprising president of Arizona State, notes that “inherent design limitations in our universities hamper rapid change in response to real-time demand, impeding our potential to develop appropriate organization structures and trans-disciplinary curricula”.


9 Peter Felten et al., The Undergraduate Experience: Focusing Students on What Matters Most (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016), 21.

10 Michael Crow and William Dabars, Designing the New American University (JHU Press, 2015), 306; William Massy notes that another obstacle to change is “over-decentralization of
Another factor precluding adoption is cost. Fortunately, technological advances may mitigate that obstacle, as Part C of this section indicates. But there are other explanations. Wieman contends that “the largest barrier to faculty change is the formal incentive system”. For him, the department is the key determinant of change: “the primary determinant of departmental success was the overall quality of organization and management within the department”. Drawing on his experience with the SEI, Wieman contends that a “substantial competitive grant program for departments to improve undergraduate education was clearly effective”, particularly when coupled with the presence of “science education specialists (SESs) with expertise both in their discipline and in teaching embedded in departments to work with the faculty”. The notion of incentivizing departments, instead of individual faculty, has gained traction elsewhere. The University of Louisville, for example, gives a $30,000 reward to an academic department or unit on its campus that “works collegially and collectively on teaching and learning”. We might extend Wieman’s analysis of incentives and teaching more generally. As a past president of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, Ernest Boyer noted almost 3 decades ago, “[t]o bring teaching and research into better balance, we urge the nation’s ranking universities to extend special status and salary incentives to those professors who devote most of their time to teaching and are particularly effective in the classroom. Such recognition will signify that the campus regards teaching excellent as a hallmark of professional success”. It is clear that the modern research university is far from realizing that vision. Clark Kerr, the legendary Chancellor of the University of California, more than half a century ago described the “cruel paradox” of the research university, in which “a superior faculty results in an inferior concern for undergraduate teaching”. Part of the problem, as is generally acknowledged, is the nature of graduate training, especially at top research universities, which puts only slight emphasis on pedagogical training, leaving newly-minted PhDs ill-prepared for the classroom. As former Princeton President William Bowen remarks, “[i]t is a bit shocking that so many college faculty are let loose on undergraduates with practically no training in the work of teaching— itself a sign of the regrettably low esteem in which the main work of most universities is held by too many of those who lead and manage them”. Indeed, if a recent (clever if hyperbole ridden) book is to be believed, the contemporary university is straying ever further from Boyer’s ideal, almost reveling in Kerr’s “cruel paradox”, and supplying further cause for Bowen’s shock.

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12 Felten, *Undergraduate Experience*, 61.
14 Kerr, quoted in Andrew Delbanco, *College: What it was, is and should be* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 2012).
16 “The large (and even small) lecture hall is nowadays the site of an unspoken student-professor conspiracy. Many professors want to focus on research and get their teaching over with. As a
But will training faculty (and graduate students on their way to faculty careers) in new techniques, technologies and pedagogies be enough? Would well-funded, empowered, and renowned Teaching and Learning Centers—such as those at Vanderbilt, Notre Dame, and Harvard—prove a panacea? There is good, data-supported reasons for believing that it would help a great deal, and is therefore partial solution. Some experienced commentators have asked whether the very structure of the university needs to be rethought to optimize undergraduate learning outcomes. Jonathan Cole, former provost of Columbia and leading writer on higher education, has remarked that “[t]here should be far greater integration of the curriculum across fields … the absence of integration reflects the current structure of the university, which is divided into ‘knowledge units’ that are defined by individual disciplines rather than the knowledge needed to address complex problems”.

As our first memorandum made clear, some of our peer research institutions are heeding this call. Some small liberal arts colleges (SLACs) already have programs in place. A good example is Southwestern University’s Paideia Program, which inculcates a propensity to make connections across disciplines through a firstyear seminar and related coursework.

Some analysts believe that reforms such as these do not go far enough. Some commentators, like Kevin Carey, contend that the modern university in its current incarnation is irreparably flawed and incapable of responding effectively to forces portending its “disruption”. Roger Schank, a noted cognitive scientist and artificial intelligence theorist, calls for eliminating departments, majors and even courses, as traditionally conceived, since the chief object of education (in his view) is the development of cognitive processes that underlie learning (e.g. prediction, modeling). From a different yet still radical perspective, Columbia’s Mark Taylor proposes to organize problem-focused departments, or “zones of inquiry”, which might include “Mind, Body, Law, Information, Networks, Language, Space, Time, Media, Money, Life and Water”.

C. Efforts to institutionalize new pedagogies

Georgetown’s Randy Bass observes that the challenge facing universities is “how to make courses more closely resemble high-impact practices, with similar results”. He asks “how do we reverse the flow, or flip the curriculum, to ensure that practice is emphasized at least as early in the curriculum as content?” As our previous memorandum described, Bass is spearheading the curriculum re-design effort at Georgetown. Other institutions have sought to integrate or

with a professor’s ability to avoid teaching undergraduates … Doing a lot of teaching is construed as a sign that one is not doing well”. In Jacques Berlinerblau, Campus Confidential: __________________________

result, they don’t demand too much of students … My appeal to students is to recognize that professors who game the transaction this way are not good teachers, no matter how knowledgeable or entertaining they might be. Remember, it’s easy for a professor to skim your essay, to scribble a few illegible comments on it, to sleepwalk through a lecture, to overlook your many grammatical infelicities and your appalling failures of logic. The system is set up for professors not to care about you. And, ironically, it punishes those who do … While teaching undergraduates is normally a very large part of a professor’s job, success in our field correlates
How College Works, or Doesn’t, for Professors, Parents and Students (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2017), 140-141, 190-191. Berlinerblau is a professor at Georgetown.

17 Jonathan Cole, Toward a More Perfect University (New York: PublicAffairs, 2016), 49. 18 The university is “a deeply flawed, irrational institution designed to be bad at the most important thing it does: educate people”. See Kevin Carey, The End of College: Creating the Future of Learning and the University of Everywhere (New York: Riverhead Books, 2015), 36.


respond to the insights proffered by Kuh, Ambrose and others. Many of these are SLACs. While not research institutions, several have implemented innovative programs from which Hopkins might learn. It is clear that the potential of new pedagogical technologies is being realized. “Adaptive Learning”, for example, is gaining adherents. It has been described as a “more personalized, technology-enabled, and data-driven approach to learning that has the potential to deepen student engagement with learning materials, customize students’ pathways through curriculum, and permit instructors to use class time in more focused and productive ways”. Former Princeton President William Bowen concludes that “carefully designed adaptive learning structure with multiple feedback loops can yield essentially the same learning outcomes as a traditional course but with much less face-to-face staff time and less time invested in the course by students”. 17

Carnegie Mellon, for example, launched an “Open Learning Initiative”, consisting of “online courses that automatically adapt to an individual student’s performance through intelligent tutoring systems that provide personalized feedback and hints as students struggle to master course content and skills” in a way that resembles the best practices enumerated by Ambrose and others. Faculty members use this data and then spend face-to-face time with students more productively. At least two dozen courses in statistics, biology and other core/foundation subjects have been designed. As the OLI’s director, Candace Thille has stated, “I think of this as a combination of a TA and a book. We spend a lot of faculty time on activities that a computer can do better”. 18

The University of Texas’s Institute for Transformational Learning is engaged in

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18 Felten, Undergraduate Experience, 63; Selingo, College (Un)bound, 95-96; While technology’s potential for improving pedagogy is infinite, irresistible, and irrefutable, higher education leaders recognize the complexity of its impact. See the interesting lecture by former Stanford President John Hennessey, for example, in which he speculates on the ways that new technologies will (and will not) transform higher education in the coming decades. Furthermore, the words of former JHU Dean and latterly President of Williams College, Adam Falk, should be heeded: “We should fiercely resist the reflexive conclusion that because our students come to Williams with different modes of encountering and absorbing information (multitasking, multimedia, short attention spans) we must become like them if we are to reach them and educate them. Rather, I believe our task to be the opposite: to understand both the advantages
similar project, but aims to provide similar feedback across courses, for the duration of a student’s college career, to shape their overall experience, functioning like a data-driven advisor (as opposed to the “TA” model used at Carnegie Mellon).

Several enterprising SLACs have integrated “high-impact” and related practices, in some cases overhauling or fundamentally restructuring the undergraduate experience. For example, the Odyssey Program at Hendrix College in Arkansas requires students to pursue at least 3 experiences composed of pre-approved activities in the following six categories: Artistic creativity, global awareness, professional and leadership development, service to the world, undergraduate research and special projects.\textsuperscript{19} Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania redesigned its curriculum in response to the NSSE results. All students experience 6 high-impact practices and often all of them. Its “Central Curriculum” is a proxy for a core, but emphasizing learning practices instead of (disciplinary) content areas. The rest of the curriculum built around it.\textsuperscript{20} Elon University in North Carolina created an impressive Center for Engaged Learning, which directs the university’s effort to integrate undergraduate research, learning communities, and co-curricular activities (e.g. internships) into the student experience, thus fundamentally recasting it.

Several institutions have drawn on Ernest Boyer’s work on “learning communities”, with its emphasis on intensive, sustained relations between faculty and students and within student cohorts.\textsuperscript{21} Dickinson College, a SLAC in Pennsylvania, has made a significant investment in the “learning communities model”. At Dickinson, “Learning Communities are an extension of the First-Year Seminar Program. Two or more seminars are linked or clustered around a theme. They enroll students in a common residential learning environment. The Learning Communities at Dickinson allow first-year students to participate in a community with other students who have an opportunity to work closely with faculty, staff and other students. By selecting to participate in a Learning Community, students and faculty commit to taking the learning out of the classroom and into the residence hall, the community, and the wider world”. In 2017-18, the Learning Communities themes are “Resisting Exclusion and Social Inequality” and “Humans and the Natural World” and there are 46 seminars from which to choose. Loyola University Maryland launched its award-winning, first-year “Messina” program in 2013. Messina is a mandatory first-year experience that features two linked seminar courses connected by one of four themes. Students live in residence halls in close proximity to other students enrolled in the same seminar courses. Messina offers opportunities for students to participate in events, performances, and excursions designed to extend learning beyond the classroom, build stronger

and deficits that this new world of continuous information flow provides and use the brief opportunity of students’ time in college to reinforce the capacity and disposition for slow, reflective and difficult engagement with ideas. In fact, our students are, more than ever, hungry for just this sort of experience” See Adam Falk, “Technology in Education: Revolution or Evolution?”, in Rebecca Chopp, Susan Frost and Daniel H. Weiss, eds., \textit{Remaking College: Innovation and the Liberal Arts} (Baltimore: JHU Press, 2014), 97.

\textsuperscript{19} Felten, \textit{Undergraduate Experience}, 106.
\textsuperscript{20} Selingo, \textit{College (Un)bound}, 197-198.
communities around learning, and establish deeper relationships with faculty, administrators and fellow students. The recipient of a $500,000 NEH grant, the Messina program has collected copious assessment data to document student learning outcomes. In order to provide undergraduate students an “opportunity for deeper, more meaningful, and connected learning in a shared residential and academic environment,” the **University of San Francisco** has expanded living-learning communities beyond the first year, offering living-learning opportunities to students throughout their four-year experience. **Wesleyan University** in Connecticut does not have “learning communities” per se, but rather “colleges” that span the disciplines within a particular division (i.e. **College of Social Studies**, **College of Letters**). The Colleges use a cohort model where each cohort takes a prescribed sequence of writing-intensive “tutorials” and “colloquia” characterized by frequent faculty-student interaction. Sophomores entering a college take the same set of courses for the entire year. There is a capstone research requirement in the senior year.

SLACs and universities built on Jesuit educational foundations are not the only institutions drawing on “high-impact practices”, as our first memorandum on US-based peer institutions made clear. **The University of Toronto’s Munk School of Global Affairs** has launched a cohort-based, first-year seminar model (involving 2 seminars and a lab) called **MunkOne**, which emphasizes collaborative problem-solving, small-group activities, and intensive interaction with the faculty. **UCLA** recently launched a “**Freshmen Clusters**” program is a year-long, collaboratively taught, interdisciplinary program featuring an array of linked small seminars and group tutorials. And the **Hopkins Medical School** has experimented with learning communities for over a decade!

Finally, it should be said that many SLACs have experimented with required short, intersession (“January”) terms to enhance undergraduate education, provide a space for supervised nonacademic co-curricular work, and/or courses that provide opportunity for breadth across the curriculum. **St. Mary’s College** in California has created a mandatory intersession. Students take a single course that does not fulfill any requirements of the student’s major. As director of the program states, “This is the time they explore anything but what they are specializing in”. **Colby College** in Maine requires students to complete 3 intensive “**Jan Plan**” terms over their four years, everything from less traditional academic courses to community-based learning to Study Abroad experiences and more.

**PART II**

*Liberal Education, Professional Education, and Post-Graduate Employment: to partition, to bridge, to combine or to align?*

There has been a fair amount of skepticism, if not outright opposition, to the notion of combining (or at least blurring the boundary separating) the liberal arts and professional education (to say nothing of vocational training). This critical stance dates at least to John Henry Newman’s

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22 Selingo, *College (Un)bound*, 196.
classic *The Idea of a University* (1852) where liberal knowledge was defined as “knowledge which stands on its own pretensions, which is independent of sequel, expects no complement, refuses to be informed (as it is called) by any end, or absorbed into any art, in order duly to present itself to our contemplation”.\(^{23}\) Stefan Collini, a professor emeritus at University of Cambridge, has updated Newman for our times: “making it obligatory to pursue certain narrow forms of economic and social impact in the short term ends up damaging the quality of research and thereby reducing its benefit to society … Society actually obtains the greatest benefit from universities by encouraging them to concentrate on the things they are particularly good at, and not by trying to turn them into some form of company laboratory or apprenticeship scheme”.\(^{24}\) Other US-based commentators have offered analyses that complement that of Collini. Columbia professor Andrew Delbanco, for example, argues that “rising pressure on colleges to show measurable results such as job attainment and post-college earnings is already pushing aside other values” less easily measured.\(^{25}\) Anthony Kronman, former dean of Yale Law School, pushes back against any utilitarian conception of the university, which is “not just a place for the transmission of knowledge but a forum for the exploration of life’s mystery and meaning”.\(^{26}\) Harvard’s Louis Menand argues that “the divorce between liberalism and professionalism as educational missions rests on a superstition: that the practical is the enemy of the true. This is nonsense”. But Menand warns that it would be a “catastrophe” if “the culture of the university will become just an echo of the public culture … [academics] need to ignore the world’s demand that they reproduce its self-image”.\(^{27}\) Universities thus need to maintain a delicate balance, unafraid to engage with the world while not entirely surrendering the benefits of the cloister.

A different approach to the connection between liberal education and professional education has been to reject the premise that the liberal arts (the Humanities especially) and professional schools (and post-university, non-academic employment) are incompatible as faulty. Universities might maintain their distance from the non-academic world, the argument goes, because what students gain from a liberal arts education (whether capabilities, competences or “skills”) is more than adequate to succeed beyond the university quad. Many prominent business leaders, including Hopkins alumnus Samuel Palmisano (former CEO of IBM), have offered full-throated endorsements of a liberal education as extremely useful preparation to post-university employment based on personal experience and anecdotal evidence. More in-depth surveys and a recent book on how liberal arts majors thrive in Silicon Valley appear to confirm.\(^{28}\) Gallup has done some interesting work to measure the impact of college education on the “well-being” of alumni, instead of a narrow tracking of post-graduate employment success and income. These are valuable insights. Still, there is great demand from prospective and current undergraduates for

\(^{23}\) Quoted in Delbanco, *College*, 34.


\(^{25}\) Delbanco, *College*, 184.


\(^{28}\) Selingo, *College (Un)bound*, 155-156.
training that has immediate applicability in postgraduate, non-academic jobs. There is nothing in
the literature that indicates that such training cannot be added on top of (or be provided in
addition to) a liberal arts education. The debate heats up when the question of integrating
professional or vocational training into the curriculum arises or when it is proposed to re-align a
liberal arts education to meet more explicitly the demands of the market.29

From a different angle, some prominent university leaders have called for greater engagement
with the wider world, arguing for the crucial civic function (and societal benefits) of liberal
education. As Derek Bok argues, “Faculties currently display scant interest in preparing
undergraduates to be democratic citizens, a task once regarded as the principal purpose of liberal
education and one urgently needed at this moment in the US”.30 A number of universities have
heeded this call and have sought ways to erode the boundary separating “pure” and “applied”,
“theory” and “practice”, viewing those divisions as either arbitrary and artificial or else
unattuned to the anxieties and aspirations of today’s students.

There is no shortage of university programs seeking to bridge the gap between the world of the
liberal arts and the world of non-academic work, whether private sector, public sector or
nonprofit sector. We described some of our peer institutions developing such programs. Here we
mention some models drawn from SLACs. Wagner College in New York has developed a
program called the “Practical Liberal Arts”, “where the liberal arts provide the aforementioned
breadth and depth of the human experience, professional education promotes conceptualization,
design, implementation, assessment, reflection and revision”.31 Mt. Holyoke College’s “Making
the Lynk” program seeks to connect the liberal arts with post-graduation employment: “Drawing
on research about integrative learning and high-impact practices, faculty worked together
through a planning process that ‘imagined curriculum-to-career that was not just an add-on that
was delivered beyond the faculty—parallel to the regular curriculum—or in one specialized
program serving a few students’”. It has entailed a significant degree of curricular and
pedagogical change. Departments now collaborate with the career center, academic advising etc.
to ensure that “the curriculum-to-career idea is embedded strategically: in assessment initiatives,

29 The debates are fascinating, if discomfiting. There may be unintended consequences to such an
orientation. As Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa note, “if we treat students as consumers, will
they in fact prioritize academic learning at the core of their institutional demands? There are
many reasons instead to expect students as consumers to focus on receiving services that will
allow them, as effortlessly or as comfortably as possible, to attain valuable educational
credentials that can be exchanged for later labor market success”. See Arum and Roksa,
Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses (Chicago: University of Chicago
30 Derek Bok, Universities in the Marketplace (2003), quoted in Delbanco, College, 149; see also
Michael Roth, Beyond the University: Why Liberal Education Matters (New Haven: Yale
University Press, 2014).
31 Barry N. Checkoway, Ricard Guarasci and Peter L. Levine, “Renewing the Civic Purpose of
Liberal Education”, In Harward, Transforming, 112.
communication plans, staffing and infrastructure decisions, alumnae relations and ongoing curricular development.”  

**Bates College** in Maine is implementing a similar program, called “*Purposeful Work*”. According the college’s website:

> “Purposeful Work is a college-wide initiative that helps students identify and cultivate their interests and strengths and acquire the knowledge, experiences and relationships necessary to pursue their aspirations with imagination and integrity. Purposeful Work encourages collaboration and risk-taking. It supports failure and reinvention. When coupled with a liberal arts education, Purposeful Work prepares students for success in the modern economy. At Bates, Purposeful Work begins with Orientation, continues through our First Year Seminar, and spans a student’s college career with opportunities to explore, reflect and build their skills. It includes skill-specific courses taught by alumni and industry leaders. And it includes a network of Bates internships that are available to every student”.

**Wake Forest University** (NC) also makes post-university careers a focus from beginning of freshman year. The university anticipates the question liberal-arts majors often have: “What can I do with a major in …?” As the university administrator overseeing the program says, “The feeling is that if it’s not a practical major they are unemployable and that’s sad”. Wake Forest collects job data on graduates with various majors, conduct web-based panels with alumni who majored in a given discipline. Wake Forest complements this effort with a robust career development program, replete with a credit-bearing course that helps students demystify the job search, budgeting etc.

Some universities have focused efforts on capturing learning beyond the traditional transcript as a way to bridge the gap between the academic training and employment. The Education Design Lab at **Georgetown University** houses the *21st Century Badging Challenge*, a project that is creating models for nonacademic credentials in order to send a “united signal to employers.” Partnering with numerous public and private colleges and universities, the Design Lab engages faculty members and about 40 students from each participating institution to identify the skills and criteria needed for the badges. They also determine the kinds of rigorous assessment used to determine whether or not students have earned a badge. Employing this approach, badges have been developed for collaboration, creative problem solving, critical thinking, cross cultural competency, empathy, oral communication, and resilience.

Similarly, universities and colleges seeking to integrate the liberal arts and public/community service are not far behind those institutions more oriented to vocational training. The **University of South Carolina** has created the “*USC Connect*” program. It offers 4 learning pathways outside of the classroom: community service, global learning (study abroad), research, and peer and civic engagement. “Starting with a first-year seminar, University 101, students are

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33 Selingo, *College (Un)bound*, 204-205.
challenged to learn in integrative ways and to use e-portfolios to document the products of and reflections on their learning experience in and out of class.” Students can graduate with a “graduation with leadership distinction” on their diploma and transcript. They earn this distinction by performing 100s of hours of community service, completing related coursework, making public presentations, and presenting their e-portfolio.³⁴

³⁴ Felten, Undergraduate Education, 91.