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# Paths to Engagement: Provoking Intellectual Ferment through Pedagogies of Social Participation

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# Paths to Engagement:

## PROVOKING INTELLECTUAL FERMENT

*through Pedagogies of*

## Social Participation

By William M. Sullivan

**B**etween 2013 and 2016, the Teagle Foundation underwrote an extraordinary project of research and development called “A Larger Vision for Student Learning: Education for Civic and Moral Responsibility.” The initiative sought to understand and compare a range of teaching practices in liberal education. Each of these was consciously designed to engage students in order to expand their knowledge and skills with the aims of gaining sympathies and deepening their sense of civic responsibility. As part of this ambitious effort, the Teagle initiative also explored promising strategies to support faculty and staff commitment to these ends.

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This article describes some of the promising discoveries that initiative made possible. These findings expose the scope of the pedagogical challenges that a liberal education for our time must surmount. But they also offer encouraging news for those eager to reignite liberal education’s great promise.

### THE CHALLENGE: STUDENT ENGAGEMENT WITH LIBERAL EDUCATION

The problem this initiative sought to address is now familiar. As considerable research has documented, far too many college students are unable or unmotivated to use what they learn, particularly in their “liberal arts” or general education courses, to meaningfully engage with the discontinuities and complexities of contemporary life (Arum & Roksa, 2011; Arum & Roska, 2014). The concepts many students encounter in higher education remain largely inert ideas. In the face

of increasing disruption in once-assumed career trajectories, an education narrowly focused on workforce preparation alone is not enough. Students need to grasp the importance of ideas for making sense of their lives and discovering the dimensions of their own responsibility. But higher education seems surprisingly weak in providing reliable paths toward this needed engagement.

It is perhaps surprising, then, to find a similar educational gap identified a century ago by the philosopher and mathematician, Alfred North Whitehead. Educators, complained Whitehead, overemphasized the learning of intellectual content and techniques in sterile isolation. They too often failed to enable their students to grasp the significance of the ideas they encountered in their courses of study. They were inept at the all-important task of motivating students by showing them the power of ideas. He was writing about what is today called the problem of “student disengagement” with learning (Keeling & Hersh, 2011).

“Education,” wrote Whitehead, “must essentially be a setting in order of a ferment already stirring in the mind: you cannot educate mind *in vacuo*.” Too often, he argued, the educators of his day focused narrowly on instilling what he called “precision” in organizing facts and applying concepts to them without realizing that for most of their students these ideas had no traction. These educators were failing to have impact on the students’ outlook on life.

Whitehead called the crucial missing element “Romance.” By this he meant, “...an emotion that is essentially the excitement consequent on the transition from the bare facts to the first realization of the import of their unexplored relationships.” His example of this mounting excitement as new possibilities for meaning and connection begin to appear was the memorable scene in which a shipwrecked Robinson

Crusoe first discovers footprints in the sand of the desert island. Education so construed means that cognitive growth has to be understood as part of the larger project of personal maturation (Whitehead, 1967).

### EXPLORING ALTERNATIVE PEDAGOGIES OF IMAGINATIVE ENGAGEMENT: A PHILANTHROPIC INITIATIVE

In pursuit of this goal, the Teagle Foundation’s “Larger Vision of Student Learning” initiative supported nine projects, each of which involved multi-campus consortia of institutions that ranged from community colleges to liberal arts campuses and research universities. Each was to focus on a specific approach that intended “to equip students to deal effectively with some of the large cluster of ‘great questions’ of meaning and value, and of purpose and responsibility...” The initiative especially sought programs that embodied commitment on the part of institutions and faculty to “coherent programs of study” which served these goals. Assessment was part of all the projects. And while not all fully succeeded in the ways the participants had intended, collectively the projects provide new insights into how different approaches to exciting students’ interest in liberal learning can better achieve their goals.

The initiative addressed the major problems of student engagement and faculty commitment to liberal learning from several different, but complementary, angles of approach. Specifically, one project involved two interacting consortia, one of research universities and one of liberal arts institutions, that focused on entering the liberal arts through seminars around the discussion of core texts. A second set of projects emphasized several approaches using experiential, community-engaged pedagogies, one concerned with

## In Short

- Programs that use pedagogies of structured social participation to provide a coherent introduction to liberal learning can motivate students to serious intellectual exploration by focusing on questions of purpose, value, and responsibility.
- Students reported that seminars centered on core texts gave them a stronger sense of the value of broad learning and the personal relevance of joining with faculty and peers in rigorous thinking.
- Experiential, community-linked programs that blended participatory pedagogies from professional schools with liberal arts approaches proved effective in providing students with new insights and personal strategies to engage, rather than avoid, the impacts of contemporary social dislocations.
- Role-immersion simulation game pedagogy appealed to students’ imaginations, drawing them into intellectual encounters with other points of view, and stimulated students’ existential exploration of new ways to be in the world.



**The initiative addressed the major problems of student engagement and faculty commitment to liberal learning from several different, but complementary, angles of approach.**

inter-religious dialogue, another introducing new forms of collaboration into community college curricula, and yet another working through an international consortium that involved professional as well as liberal arts programs to equip students with a humanitarian perspective. A third project explored institutionalizing simulation pedagogy in liberal arts curricula through role-immersive games.

In addition to these, the initiative also funded research on directed reflection, the effects of moral identity on student learning, and the effects of faculty involvement in developing more coherent academic pathways for civic education. The rich discoveries of these efforts deserve to be better known.

### **ENTERING THE LIBERAL ARTS THROUGH DISCUSSION OF GREAT TEXTS**

“It’s the teacher who makes or breaks the Core,” concluded a student in Columbia University’s Core Curriculum, one of three programs in the *Core Curricula in the Research University* project. The other two are the Core at the University of Chicago and the Directed Studies Program at Yale University. The Columbia undergraduate was expressing a sentiment that research showed to be common among both current students and alumni of the program. What seemed to matter to students was that “the professor really cares, wants people to understand...is open to any kinds of questions... is passionate about the works we’re reading.” The essential teaching method used in the program is intended to bring students into practices of critical reading, comparison and contrast, discussion and writing, of a series of books that are judged to exemplify central values of the cultural tradition of the West, complemented by great works of East Asian tradition.

The faculty are therefore central to the program—but not as the much-maligned “sage on the stage.” Each class consists of around a dozen students and one or two instructors. For many students, the pedagogy is a new experience. They are learning to read not only for information or for entertainment (or even just to boost their grade-point average) but in order to gain and be able to demonstrate that they can use

insights from the reading, analysis, and discussion to understand self and world. The instructor serves both as guide to this unfamiliar landscape and mentor and coach in learning these distinctive practices of thinking and communication.

Students often see the seminars as highly demanding, finding it hard to keep up with the readings. However, at least one student realized that this situation made her more likely to discuss the works with her peers between classes, if only to see how well she was getting the drift from admittedly inadequate time spent preparing! “Reading these texts,” one student said, “I see the complexities of life but I didn’t expect to be so confused.” This can be personally disorienting. With perhaps a bit of exaggeration, the student continued: “I devote all my time to figuring out what other people think but I have no idea of what I think. The Core really opened my eyes, but all I see is a swamp.”

Other students acknowledged the challenges but saw them as a large silver lining. One noted, “I have my problems with the Core, everyone does, but I am a better thinker because of them.” Or as another student put it, “I’ve learned to question things, to go in another way and rethink everything around me.” And another said, “I realized that I know so little about everything; it makes me want to go on learning...it’s a joyful introduction to the joys of intellectual discovery, the life of the mind...these works will keep coming back [for me].”

The Columbia Core program, over a century old, is the original “great books” curriculum. It was carried to the University of Chicago and also gave rise to a smaller-scale, honors program version at Yale University. These three programs share a distinctive way of teaching, the text-centered seminar method of small groups with faculty and graduate student leadership. As faculty participants noted, it is quite distinct in its style and intellectual emphases, and students quickly realize that the experience is quite different from what they usually encounter in their introductory courses to various disciplines.

Each program could trace its history back to the first part of the twentieth century when, already, the disciplinary organization of the research university was felt to threaten the eclipse of the tradition of a holistic liberal education that was civic in orientation. However, the Teagle “Larger Vision” initiative was the first time the three programs had ever engaged in sustained conversation about their common purposes.

The initiative has changed all that, probably decisively. In several-day meetings—appropriately organized as seminars with their programs as “text”—and held each semester rotating among the three universities, participants sought to assess the quality, challenges, and future of their common endeavors. The initiative has brought the programs out of their isolation—including being often viewed as foreign enterprises by faculty on their own campuses—into a dialogue based on the mutual recognition of their common concerns and values. As Roosevelt Montas, director of the Columbia Core, put it: “All the programs discovered that they aimed above all to make these ideas come alive for students, to counter the perception of liberal arts as stale and antiquated.”

In parallel to this project, the initiative also supported another consortium of campuses invested in text-focused seminars as their way of introducing students into liberal learning. This second project, *Gateways to Liberal Education*, was based in four smaller, also largely residential institutions committed to the liberal arts: Ursinus College, Rhodes College, Lawrence University, and College of the Holy Cross. The primary aim of the project was to develop new prototype courses that could serve as models of how to structure core text-based seminar classes as a common introduction to liberal learning for all students at the participating institutions.

The director of the project, Paul Stern of Ursinus College, described the positive effects of his college's ongoing focus on a common core curriculum as "enabling faculty to experience the satisfaction of thinking hard about what they want students to learn and be able to do—the very things that brought most faculty into college teaching in the first place." The particular value of seminars around core texts is, in turn, their ability to stir up an intellectual and moral energy in students. This is because, as Stern puts it, "the pedagogy is about enabling students to see these texts as speaking to their own most vital concerns."

Participants at the other campuses made similar assessments of the value of the project. Timothy Spurgin, who directs the two semester Freshman Studies program at Lawrence University, stressed the importance of "stimulating intellectual curiosity" among students, noting that this was best done by "teaching by example, as when a professor, say a social scientist, lets students see how she learns and prepares to teach something—as commonly happens when studying core texts together—out of her field, such as figuring out how to introduce reflection on a work of music." As much as anything, it was the students' discovery of new relationships with faculty and peers, centered on participating in a common quest, that gave the seminar pedagogy its "romance."

For faculty, project outcomes have also been significant. On all the campuses, the project gave new vitality, and importantly, enhanced legitimacy to consistent administrative efforts to involve faculty in these programs and sustain faculty commitment. As at the research universities, promotion and tenure policies have increasingly been shaped around the research standards of the disciplines, with little attention to the holistic goals of liberal learning. This project has given added impetus to modifying those criteria to ensure that teaching in the core is recognized and rewarded as a valued contribution to the institution's educational mission rather than being taken as what one participant called "just another form of service." For example, at Ursinus and Lawrence the projects helped push through a reform of the structure of faculty incentives and rewards, including revised faculty handbooks.

Such changes hold potentially hopeful implications for the future viability of integrative liberal education programs of every sort, not only core text seminars. However, the projects also revealed a continuing problem faced by these and

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other holistic, transdisciplinary approaches to liberal learning: unlike programs based in specific intellectual disciplines or professional schools, holistic liberal learning such as the seminars provide does not have an immediate or automatic constituency. To meet this challenge, these projects discovered the possibilities for cultivating such constituencies. Ursinus, for example, has made the common core curriculum a centerpiece of their recruitment, alumni engagement, and development programs. Lawrence University, too, has stepped up their involvement of alumni and faculty as it works to spread awareness and build support for this powerful pathway into liberal learning.

### ENCOUNTER, LEARNING, AND SOLIDARITY: EXPERIENTIAL, COMMUNITY-ENGAGED PEDAGOGY

"A Larger Vision for Student Learning" supported three projects that employed experiential, community-engaged pedagogies to initiate students into liberal learning and growth in moral and civic values. One was entitled *Examining Enduring Questions Through Humanitarian Education*. This was a project of an international consortium of three institutions of Jesuit heritage: Fairfield University, Georgetown University, and the University of Central America of Managua, Nicaragua. A second project, *Student Learning for Civic Capacity: Stimulating Moral, Ethical, and Civic Engagement for Learning That Lasts*, was carried out by the Community College National Center for Community Engagement (CCNCCE) through a consortium of six community college campuses spread across the United States: Kapi'olani in Hawaii, Mesa in Arizona, Delgado in Louisiana, Raritan Valley in New Jersey, and Kingsborough and Queensborough in New York. The third, a project of the Interfaith Youth Core (IFYC), was called *Renewing American Democracy Through Liberal Education in an Age of Unparalleled Religious Diversity*. This effort built upon the IFYC's developing expertise in developing pedagogies for engaging students in inter-religious understanding and religious literacy across faith traditions involving 30 campuses and a growing network of faculty and community partners.

Despite quite different contexts and foci, these projects shared distinctive features. At the center of this pedagogy is the premise that, properly prepared and organized, encounters with persons of significantly different beliefs or life situations can provide the needed insight and motivation for students to seek development of their intellectual skills in order to assume a more responsible sense of agency as citizens.

For example, *Examining Enduring Questions Through Humanitarian Education* developed out of the Jesuit Universities' Humanitarian Action Network (JUHAN), of which both Fairfield and Georgetown Universities were participants and in which the University of Central America took part. Project director Janie Leatherman of Fairfield University explained that the project built upon an earlier phase in which the participating campuses had developed courses with an experiential component "as a way to provide students with an affective as well as cognitive appreciation of the value of humanitarian action." She described the current project as going further by experimenting with educational practices "to develop a new generation of student leadership for civic and moral engagement in facing the global humanitarian challenge."

The key aim of the project was to build student confidence in going beyond avoidance or confusion in the face of today's looming humanitarian crises—the millions of refugees and displaced persons due to wars, "failed states," international crime such as drug cartels, and climate change—toward understanding and competent engagement. The project simultaneously set out to enhance faculty competence to lead students in developing their own ability to confront these challenges in rational, compassionate, and constructive ways. It also grounded its teaching in the tradition of human rights law as well as transnational institutions such as the United Nations. To these, the Jesuit universities were able to add the tradition of Roman Catholic social teaching with its values of universal human dignity, solidarity, and a "preferential option for the poor."

The chief pedagogical challenge was to make these ideas vivid and concrete enough so that students would be able to experience their import in actual situations of humanitarian concern. The typical approach in the courses sponsored by the project was to move students to address for themselves what were termed the "three enduring questions" by means of some encounter with actual humanitarian work. Question One: "Why is there human suffering today?" was placed in a theoretical context informed by a variety of relevant disciplines. This gave intellectual depth to Question Two: "What are our individual and collective responsibilities for humanity?" The courses required that students formulate and critically examine possible answers to Question Three: "What actions can we take?"

For example, an introductory-level course at Fairfield University, entitled "The Politics of Humanitarian Action," connected students to a human rights activist who fled Syria and is now a member of the Scholars at Risk network. Students were also introduced to that organization's advocacy efforts on behalf of an Iranian scholar currently imprisoned. These encounters provided a personal motive for students to pursue the intellectual analyses presented in the class. They needed to make sense of the real human suffering they had come to understand close-up. In readings, discussions, and analysis papers, students were confronted with the current state of conflicting conceptions—some based on the idea of intervention across national borders, others rooted in defenses of national sovereignty—and organizational forces at work that define the responses to humanitarian and human rights problems. Students were also encouraged to recognize and cultivate for themselves the skills needed to play an active role in monitoring, advocacy, and analysis.

In addition to weaving the three enduring questions into a variety of such courses and campus activities, each of the participating institutions significantly expanded its support of faculty development. They supported semester-long faculty learning communities whose participants went on to create and pilot courses centered on the common themes.

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The participating institutions encouraged this effort by developing new measures of faculty work that better reflected the importance of this kind of learning.

Similarly, student response was strong on all three campuses, resulting in the formation of study clubs and interchange among students in Central America and the United States. These efforts were also represented in several project-wide workshops that rotated among the three sites to build a sense of common purpose and to share insights and techniques. (The project also collaborated with the Interfaith Youth Core to provide students with opportunity to experience and reflect upon conversations across different religious traditions.)

Also, as a result of these faculty learning activities, which blended faculty from the liberal arts departments with their peers from the professional schools, the project was able to develop and successfully pilot new courses. These blended the analytical, philosophical, and historical perspectives of the arts and sciences with pedagogies from the professional fields such as nursing, education, business, and engineering. The latter faculty brought pedagogical traditions—clinical training in the health fields, practice teaching in education, project-design and implementation in engineering, or organizational analysis and consulting in business—that combine theory with practice.

These pedagogies provide supervised entry into areas of practice. They provide students with a direct engagement in professional activity, especially including relationships with patients and clients. This focus of professional education on learning to intervene in situations with others, as professionals are routinely called to do, and learning from the effects of their action, makes attending to questions of responsibility and purpose unavoidable.

This approach proved enormously supportive of humanitarian education. It provided techniques for developing students' ability to “apply” their learning by reasoning practically in situations. For example, learning how to take in suffering without being overwhelmed by it—a central feature of clinical education in the health fields—proved especially valuable. Adapting this approach to similarly

challenging situations of working with refugees and immigrants enabled participants, faculty as well as students, to begin developing not only the understanding but the personal capacities needed for responsible humanitarian work, combining theory and practice. Students reported expanding their sense of identity and efficacy in the world.

This exchange of perspective among faculty from the liberal arts and professional fields was one of the project's more important contributions. It holds valuable lessons for other efforts to engage students meaningfully in the enduring questions posed by this project.

### **ROLE-IMMERSION GAMES: SIMULATION AS LIBERAL ARTS PEDAGOGY**

One of the most inventive projects in the “Larger Vision” initiative, *Reacting to the Past*, was described by its director, Mark Carnes of Barnard College, Columbia University, as an answer to an unsettling conundrum. Carnes invented *Reacting to the Past* to address the problem of student disengagement in his history courses. He describes *Reacting* as a “role-immersion” game that places students as actors in simulations of historical events. He sees this kind of gaming as a strategy for enticing students toward an outlook expanding their sympathies and encouraging a more responsible engagement with their identities and their world. For two decades he has been gathering a community of over a thousand faculty practitioners who invent new games as well as teach using them along with a network of student alumni at over 30 campuses.

Learning by active participation in simulations is a pedagogical strategy that is relatively new to liberal arts education, though it has long been used in professional fields such as medicine and nursing, business and public management, and in other institutional sectors outside the academy. Students learn through structured social participation that involves intense team interaction. Faculty direct the activities and coach the learners, but the outcomes of the simulations are determined by the “play” of the students themselves.

In *Reacting to the Past*, each game places students in an actual conflict that proved to be an historic turning point,

with students taking the roles of key “players” in the historical debate and conflict. When the pedagogy succeeds, the effect is “role immersion” as students enter deeply into the thought-worlds and motivations of the characters they are assigned to play. The result, Mark Carnes argues, is that students’ consciousness is changed.

*Reacting to the Past* games are sometimes used as a part of otherwise conventional courses at any level in a number of disciplines, including history, political science, philosophy, literature, and the sciences. But three of the games, which take three weeks each, can be used to form an introductory liberal arts course of a unique kind. For each game, the class is focused on a “game book” that includes extensive readings in primary and secondary sources related to the historical incident. During the first two weeks, the instructor leads the students in discussing and writing analysis papers on the readings and the themes they introduce. Considerable attention is given to understanding the major actors, their outlooks, their actions, and their likely motives.

Then in the third week, students are assigned individual roles, typically divided into teams whose characters embodied opposing viewpoints. Notably, the game may fail to end in the same way the actual historical debates did; the game’s outcome remains uncertain. Intentionally, then, the game pits groups of students competitively against each other. In these sessions, as the students become historical characters, the instructor becomes the “game master” who functions as a referee, a poser of questions, and a coach and advisor.

In the heat of play, the games demand spontaneous invention that stretches students’ imaginations and sympathies. The themes and topics can range widely, from the French Revolution, to Socrates on trial in ancient Athens, to a conflict among Confucian scholars at a crucial moment in Ming China, as well as others on scientific controversies such as the conflict between Galileo and the philosophical and

religious establishment of his time. The competitive structure of the games reflects the actual historical oppositions being enacted. This requires students to enter seriously into the outlook, situation, and purposes of their characters. Each of the games concludes with a decisive vote or judgment. Winning or losing these votes becomes highly significant to the student teams that have struggled throughout the game to win the hearts and minds of their classmates.

The results, so far, are impressive. Compared to students in freshman seminars at one liberal arts institution, students from freshman *Reacting* courses outperformed their otherwise comparable peers not only on measures of motivation and involvement but in critical writing as well. The most surprising finding, repeated at several institutions, has been that while students are highly enthusiastic about their learning experience, they rarely elect to “recommend it to other students”—because they estimate that the games made them work harder than their other courses!

Why does this pedagogy seem so effective in getting students to take intellectual work and performance seriously? In his book on the *Reacting* games, Mark Carnes makes a surprising argument (Carnes, 2014). The simulation games tap into a powerful underground source of student energy, which Carnes calls “subversive play.” He uses this phrase to describe the most powerful source of student motivation during the college experience. This is the energy that, often to the chagrin of administrators and faculty, drives student initiative, from pranks to football and fraternity and sorority life, to beer pong and competitive online game worlds. The undeniable vitality of these sometimes “subversive” activities depends upon students’ desires, unreflective and often all-consuming, to belong to the “cool” tribe and be recognized and, if possible, be celebrated as such.

Against this constant, mutually aroused competition from such an enchanted, and often distinctly subversive “play world,” the sober stance of critical detachment typical of academic thinking rarely commands most students’ loyalty for long. Carnes’s contention is that *Reacting* games succeed because they enable the students to draw upon their love of subversive play—their need to be recognized and valued as skillful players in their own worlds—which gets transferred into their performance as characters in intricate dramatic narratives with uncertain endings that willy-nilly excite serious thought.

The Teagle project exploring this idea put forward this form of simulation as a new option for liberal education. However, it was not offered as a total replacement for more didactic approaches. Working by “empathic identification” with other selves, much like drama or literature, is different from the “critical detachment” that is the academic norm. And like drama, the games draw students beyond themselves to consider and take seriously other, even conflicting points of view. Players find themselves in the exciting situation of exploring new ways to be in the world.

Despite their promise, role-immersion simulation games have faced opposition in the academy. While there are often ardent campus “champions” of the game pedagogy,

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resistance from faculty committed to traditional teaching has often prevented the inclusion of *Reacting* games in the core curriculum. And, as with the more venerable text-based seminars, junior faculty often fear that involvement may threaten their tenure and scholarly careers.

Because it often creates strong identification by students with historical figures they may, in other domains of their lives, find questionable or even morally repellant, participation in the games can give rise to unsettling reflections. Can one in good conscience enter deeply—and make one's own—the thinking of historical figures who are today judged oppressors or propagators of violence and hatred? Immersive role-play can give rise to real personal conflicts, unexpectedly challenging students' own beliefs and moral identity. Proactively, the *Reacting Consortium* of participating faculty has formed a *Controversial Conversations Committee* to explore how it might respond in future to the likely challenges around this issue.

## CONCLUSION

Like the other two pedagogies described above, role-immersion simulation games remain a powerful innovation with large potential for addressing the challenge of engaging students deeply with what “A Larger Vision” called “the ‘great questions’ of meaning and value, and of purpose and responsibility.” For example, one student who had the disconcerting realization that participation had led to a deep engagement with two historical characters with radically incompatible outlooks and values. This student had in one game been a leading scholar-official at the Ming court, passionate to uphold traditional Confucian morality. In that role, she had come to recognize the great value of continuity of tradition and social harmony, even in the face of superior power. In another, she had taken the quite opposite perspective of Emma Goldman, the radical anarchist and feminist, in passionate debates that took place in New York's Greenwich Village in the explosive years just before World War I.

When she was later asked “Who was right?,” the student allowed that she was truly conflicted. She could see and feel the worth in the two opposing, rather extreme positions. Asked what she had learned from this experience, however, she noted that, rather than making her confused, absorbing the two opposing perspectives changed her stance in life. She added, “I now have the knowledge to look at our society through the lenses of other perspectives. Not just what I have been taught to believe, but to take a step back and realize that I can think for myself” (Carnes, 2014, p. 120).

Through her struggle with the complexity of conflicting outlooks, this student became more confident that she could live amid such tensions and even draw strength and stimulus for moral imagination. The long-term effect of her empathetic identification with other selves with radically other perspectives, in other words, was neither confusion nor paralysis. Rather, it had produced the kind of metacognition often associated with adulthood. This student had come to value empathetic engagement with others. But she also now understood the importance of the “stepping back” in

critical detachment, not as an end in itself, but as a necessary capacity for opening up the flexibility needed to respond to situations responsibly.

Similar developmental journeys were reported among students who had been part of the core seminar programs, as well as those engaged in the experiential pedagogies described above. Through these programs students developed new habits of mind and a disposition to learn. Academic learning ceased to be simply a matter of inert ideas. These pedagogies encouraged students to look broadly at themselves and the world, to see situations from inside with the intense involvement of the participant, but also apply the critical perspective needed to deliberate freely about their response. Their experiences exemplify the deliberate effort to cultivate the “ferment” that Whitehead argued was the necessary condition for any real education.

These pedagogies hold real promise for surmounting the disengagement of students from academic learning that is the fundamental obstacle to liberal education, indeed to all genuine education. As these examples indicate, institutional and faculty investment in these ways of learning require disruption of some of the most established of academic habits, such as the exclusive concentration on disciplinary specialization and corresponding criteria for reward and tenure. But the experience of the institutions involved in the “Larger Vision of Student Learning” initiative also show that such investment is likely to bring significant rewards for both students and the institution. It can advance mission by making the great value of a liberal education attractive as well as possible for more students. It can also give a distinct competitive edge for the institution. Most of all, it can realize a community of learning that matters, both for the participants and the larger world. ☐

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