

The Hamline Plan: Mentoring, Modeling, and Monitoring the Practical Liberal Arts

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General education is the most important service we provide undergraduate students. It is an ongoing adventure of discovery, adaptation, and challenge. When any part of an undergraduate institution's curriculum—general education or the major—becomes mere routine, devoid of surprise, argument, and resistance, it is dead and ready to be replaced.

In the fall of 1984, I was returning from a year's sabbatical leave as a professor of American literature at Hamline University. Hamline is a comprehensive university affiliated with the United Methodist Church located in Saint Paul, Minnesota, offering liberal arts, education, law, public administration, and other professional fields to over three thousand students. The new dean, Jerry G. Gaff, asked me to join a curriculum task force already a year into its work of revising the general education program. I soon became involved heavily in and committed to the project, its philosophy, its politics, and its integration into Hamline's mission. Sixteen years later, as a new century begins to take shape, I am still involved in the project and its ongoing relationship to Hamline's mission.

Many saw the general education distribution requirement then in place as out of date and ready for replacement. It was a year of freshman English and a "two-of-everything" course distribution among the four disciplinary divisions. For students and faculty alike, general education was a set of requirements to get out of the way with relative ease and very little, if any, coordination. Most courses in most departments, especially introductory and lower-division courses, counted toward the distribution credit requirements.

While university leaders and publications made broad generalizations about the value and virtue of liberal arts, student learning outcomes were assumed but not identified, uniformly articulated, or measured.

The articulation of purpose is a vital key to any successful curriculum. For example, a colleague in Hamline's French program told of a senior advisee who felt at a disadvantage in job interviews because very few employers in the upper Midwest had need of someone with fluency in French. As this colleague's conversation with her anxious student continued, she found herself giving voice to ideas that even she herself, as a faculty member, had never fully realized or articulated. A French major knows how to read and analyze documents carefully, knows how to work in groups and share expertise, and knows how to write clearly and think on his or her feet. Did her advisee not realize all of that? "No," the student responded. "Nobody has ever told me any of those things." Not only were the purposes of general education opaque, but its integral relation with the major was ill understood and often went unexplained.

Those purposes and connections not articulated in the college years had become more transparent with time and distance. The curriculum task force discovered this as part of their work. As they began their deliberations in 1983–84, task force members interviewed Hamline alumni already launched in careers, asking what these graduates still found valuable from their college years. The alumni did not remember much about content knowledge, but they were very much aware that skills such as writing, oral presentations, and analytical thinking that they had picked up in one or several courses had served them well in their professions and careers.

Envisioning the Practical Liberal Arts

From these interviews was born in the task force's working vocabulary the phrase "practical liberal arts" and the vision of a plan that would connect the values and skills associated with the liberal arts with the needs of the various professions and careers into which students might enter over their lifetimes. The "plan" became the Hamline Plan, and the "practicality" of the liberal arts, while politically contentious in some quarters, became and has remained a major guide in Hamline's ongoing educational endeavor.

At the core of the Hamline Plan were a faculty-administered and faculty-taught full-credit first-year seminar program, a mandate that all majors offer writing-intensive courses, and a requirement that all students take at least one such writing-intensive course in each of their four years.

While many colleges have extended the scope of writing from a single composition course to a cross-curricular effort to develop writing, few parallels existed for speech. The Hamline Plan called for a speaking-across-the-curriculum requirement and was one of the earliest ventures in this skill area. Similarly, although computing was in its infancy as an intricate part

of higher education, the plan incorporated understanding the computer as a tool of learning as yet another requirement.

The disciplinary breadth requirement had as its goal student understanding of “the methods of the various academic disciplines and the way in which the different areas of knowledge interact.” The cultural breadth requirement was to ensure that students would gain “an awareness of the experiences and contributions of women, members of racial and ethnic minorities and people who differ in ability, age, class and sexual orientation.” The LEAD requirement (Leadership Education and Development) instituted internships, work issue “seminars in connection with internships and the infusion of work-related experiences into regular curricular offerings.” The purpose of the major was declared to give students a sense of depth in at least one area of knowledge and became incorporated with general education into a comprehensive plan for practical liberal learning. Although the exact wording quoted below came later, the Hamline Plan provided a major means of working toward the college’s mission: “Preparing compassionate citizens of the world by helping students maximize their intellectual, creative, and leadership potential . . . connecting what we believe and what we know to what we do, in order to increase justice, opportunity and freedom for all people everywhere” (Hamline University, 2000, pp. iii, 4, 6–9).

Perhaps the most important and most controversial provision of the new curriculum was that course designations were to follow the instructor rather than the course itself. Individual instructors were asked to take personal responsibility for providing explanations as to how their course or section was to meet one or more of the Hamline Plan aims and requirements.

Governing the Reform

The plan called for the creation of a special committee, the General Education Committee (GEC), to provide academic governance and coordination to the new curriculum. The GEC members included the directors of writing, speaking, LEAD, and computing, each of whom had direct responsibility for their areas. The committee reviewed all proposals for courses to be included in the plan and worked with individual faculty members as necessary to bring proposals into line with overall curricular standards and expectations. By 1990, this work for which GEC had been originally established was thought by most to have been accomplished, and its responsibilities were returned to the Academic Policies Committee, which had overall responsibility for both general education and major courses.

In retrospect, this rather quick return of general education to a committee with numerous other duties and responsibilities was probably a mistake. Writing, speaking, LEAD, and computing had direction, but no one person was designated as responsible for directing either the cultural or disciplinary breadth portions of the curriculum.

Tensions Associated with the Reforms

From the beginning, the Hamline Plan was controversial among the faculty. Supporters pointed to the first-year seminar's goals of introducing the liberal arts and the art of learning to all new students, the plan's across-the-curriculum focus on communication and computing skills, its efforts to establish relationships among disciplines, and its overt and unapologetic focus on specific value issues of cultural breadth. The admissions staff welcomed the Hamline Plan as an outcomes-focused curriculum that was easy to distinguish from those of competitors and to communicate to prospective students and their parents. To the standard question, "What can my son or daughter do with a liberal arts education?" the answer was easy: "Here are the skills they will need in life, and here is how they will get those skills at Hamline."

Nevertheless, some academics were less convinced of the merits of the plan. Some winced at the idea of "practical" liberal arts, sensing an attack on learning for learning's sake and a surrender to vocational training and market pressure. Others, including some key supporters of the plan, worried about the ambitiousness of the changes and the faculty development resources required to make it successful. Still others thought the Hamline Plan was too complex to administer successfully or too intrusive on the instructor's control of his or her own courses. While many expressed concern about the ambitiousness of the plan, others interpreted it as yet another distribution scheme and promptly dismissed it as irrelevant to their interests and their students. Thus, a new curriculum did not alleviate opposing views among colleagues; in fact, it reinvigorated the debate.

All of us, supporters and skeptics alike, had seen from our own limited perspective a piece of the amazing creature we had brought into being. None of us in 1985 fully understood the whole elephant or the far-reaching implications of its establishment. Nevertheless, most of us began to submit course proposals to GEC, either accepting the new curriculum as a *fait accompli* or enthusiastically embracing its call for new courses and new ways of thinking about learning and teaching in general.

From Design to Execution

The required first-year seminar (FYSEM), unlike most other first-year programs, was designed as a content course that was to visibly transcend content in a deliberate focus on skills. Each faculty member was free to choose his or her own topic to use in meeting the course goals: the development of "the skills of careful reading, critical analysis, group discussion and writing," all critical aspects of college learning (Hamline University, 2000, p. 6). In short, the seminar was designed to show students "how to do college." Most departments now offer one seminar per year. Each seminar usually is rotated among departmental faculty. Topics range from AIDS to

extraterrestrial life to crime and punishment to American humor and intercultural communications. Each seminar has a small budget to support social events and field trips for its members.

The professor also serves as academic adviser for the sixteen students in the seminar until they declare a major, sometimes a full year or more after the fall FYSEM. Thus, advising and general education are linked closely. More recently, a “campus colleague,” or cocurricular adviser, assists seminar professors in the advising and mentoring dimension of the course. These colleagues usually are a staff member or administrator, but occasionally include a faculty member from the law school or one of the graduate programs. The FYSEM is viewed as a cooperative venture between academics and student affairs and has proven popular with the students, faculty, and “colleagues” who become involved in it.

Indeed, students often now complain that FYSEM does not continue beyond the first semester of their first year. From the outset, the seminar led to a jump in retention from first to second year. Since the second, third, and fourth semesters are also crucial to retention, we now are studying ways to continue the sense of community and “specialness” that the FYSEM creates.

The planners of the new curriculum felt confident that Hamline Plan courses would permeate the curriculum so that students could fulfill its requirements with little, if any, difficulty. Furthermore, its advocates argued that many courses could meet more than one requirement—disciplinary breadth and writing, for example, or LEAD and speaking. General education requirements could be met in introductory, intermediate, and even advanced courses across the curriculum. An advanced physics seminar that was also planned to be a writing- or speaking-intensive course, for example, would make an extremely strong statement about those skills’ priorities no matter what the majors were of the students enrolled.

Courses meeting more than one general education goal or requiring a coordinated effort between teaching, advising, and mentoring necessitated a faculty prepared and motivated to accomplish these complex tasks. Because course assignments within the plan rotated among faculty members, faculty development and support needed to be broad-based and ongoing. During the early years of the plan, faculty workshops (with base-pay compensation stipends as incentives) helped faculty members better understand issues such as the pedagogical differences between requiring “lots of writing” and a “writing-intensive” course. “Writing intensive” meant that students and faculty alike were asked to focus on the revision of drafts, writing strategies, and the expectations of various audiences. While departments in the humanities and social sciences offered most cultural breadth courses, almost every department offered disciplinary breadth courses. The interest in internships and related issues began to grow. The registrar devised a process of tracking requirements that followed individual instructors rather than course numbers. Students used to the old distribution plan graduated. New students began their encounters with the Hamline Plan in the summer

before their matriculation as they chose their first-year seminars. GEC continued to oversee faculty development and course approval. The new curriculum was launched and sailed forth.

Then and Now

Sixteen years later, the Hamline Plan is still a focus of discussion, still changing, and to some extent still controversial. The joys and liberating powers of learning for learning's sake have not only survived "practicality" but have flourished as preparing students for their eventual involvement in the workplace has become an increasingly important part of the overall general education program. Hamline Plan courses are spread across all departments, although never with quite as many open seats for the more popular courses as we would like. Most important, by firmly establishing the central importance of general education in a liberal arts environment, this skills-based, student-centered general educational program has provided a forum on teaching, making possible ongoing discussion and adaptation to new needs and new opportunities.

Without such a precedent and an environment that invite innovation, we would have found the going increasingly rough in the 1990s and beyond. The issues first brought to our attention by Jerry Gaff in the early 1980s and that stimulated initial work on the Hamline Plan are still with us. The ante for reform has been raised significantly, however, by issues that were just barely on the horizon in 1983, such as program assessment, ever more stringent fiscal accountability, the nature of faculty work, and the now galloping specter/opportunity of technology.

Institutional reform by definition involves compromise. It creates changes that can result in improvement, but it often does this at the cost of leaving old structures and assumptions untouched and by staying away from various sensitive issues and hard decisions. Thus, it may undermine its own chances of permanent relevance. In crafting the Hamline Plan, we had clarified our values and curricular objectives and of necessity had imposed the means by which to attain these objectives. The reforms were set on a system as old as American higher education itself—one built on departmental and disciplinary autonomy, segmented time units of courses and semesters, passive and unmonitored advising, and the primacy and sanctity of the major. General education remained campus restricted, discipline defined, course regulated, time bound, and turf governed. Education still occurred on a campus in physical spaces called classrooms and labs and was divided into segments fifty or ninety minutes long, which combined into larger units ten, fourteen, or seventeen weeks long called courses. The Hamline Plan did not challenge these conventional parameters. As a reform, it came to be applauded by all but defined and constrained by individual disciplines and too often treated a bit like the proverbial unwelcome stepchild. While students were encouraged, even expected, to put together

ideas from various courses, faculty were neither trained nor inclined to model such behavior. If administrators saw the irony, they usually possessed a strong enough sense of survival to leave it alone.

What happened on Hamline's campus between 1983 and 1985 was a first encounter with this world of silos in which almost all of us had been trained. We had sensed changing needs and opportunities and had responded with imaginative curricular innovations. But institutionally, we had not committed to the gigantic and ongoing retooling—faculty development efforts in teaching and advising—that would be necessary to ensure anything approaching rapid or orderly success. We had not built in broad assessment procedures to measure change in outcomes and the general success of the skills-based program. We had not designed an articulation process that trained faculty to effectively help students understand the philosophy behind the new curriculum and how they would benefit both immediately and in the future.

Few among us had fully grasped the fact that in the future, teaching excellence would have less and less to do with professing and grading and more and more to do with mentoring, modeling, and monitoring students' success. In our collective excitement about new prospects, perhaps naively we had not yet realized that this new curricular endeavor was only the beginning of an ongoing effort to keep the liberal arts relevant and competitive as well as joyous and liberating.

Changes Going Forward

We know from all that has happened since that we were on the right path with the creation of the Hamline Plan. We better understand the magnitude of the undertaking and the commitment of resources it required. As an institution, we will remain a largely residential college based on campus, although our educational endeavors will be increasingly centered on the world.

In pursuit of our mission, we will of necessity continue to refine and expand our teaching, scholarship, and service in three areas identified directly or implicitly as part of the vision of the original Hamline Plan: interdisciplinarity and team-based problem solving, international and intercultural teaching and learning across the curriculum, and a technologically enhanced learning network made up of faculty, alumni, students, and community participants. Within this broad framework, strategic initiatives of the next five years include diversity; collaborative undergraduate research; holistic, student-centered advising and mentoring; Web-enhanced learning; and institutional outcome assessment.

We are and will be aided by many new sources of support. We have gotten a bit smarter not only about what we are trying to accomplish but how to accomplish it. Colleagues hired in the past ten years have arrived on campus increasingly well prepared for life in the liberal arts, thanks in part

to the influence of projects such as the Association of American Colleges and Universities' Preparing Future Faculty, and in part to the fact that their own professional lives have been shaped by the same rapidly changing world for which we seek to prepare our students. In turn, Hamline's year-long orientation seminar for new faculty and special series of workshop luncheons for faculty teaching in the FYSEM program provide opportunities to learn institutional ropes and keep in touch with issues, objectives, and teaching strategies in undergraduate education. Hamline's membership in the Associated New American Colleges has provided a forum for the dialogue, exchange of ideas, and study of critical issues, such as the relationship between the liberal arts and the professions and the changing nature of faculty work.

In short, we seem to be reaping the benefits of a second wind in our general education efforts. Aided by an institutionwide and relatively surgical approach to strategic and budgetary planning, developmental resources in the college, including dean's grants, travel grants, and gains-sharing dollars, increasingly fund and reward groups of faculty, staff, alumni, and community colleagues willing to cross traditional lines of rank, department, discipline, and profession to pursue student-centered learning opportunities that contribute to our strategic objectives. There is no department, no field of study or performance that cannot benefit from this broad and opportunity-rich focus.

The Shape of the Second Wind of Change

Even five years ago, Hamline administrators were pleading with faculty to explore such issues and the implications for their work with students. Since then, imaginative and strategically focused proposals are coming more and more often directly from faculty. A number of faculty and faculty-staff projects and proposals already under way exemplify crossing lines and limitations in efforts to realize the Hamline vision of general education in service of its mission.

A recent Fulbright faculty scholar has developed and piloted a joint introductory course in molecular biotechnology for undergraduate science majors at Hamline and at the University of Dar es Salaam in Tanzania. Students from both schools work together by way of a WebCT software platform. The project will eventually involve exchanges of faculty and students from both schools. One of the weaknesses of our original cultural breadth requirement was that the sciences were not involved, at least in clearly articulated ways that students could easily discern and relate to their other cultural breadth experiences. The Dar es Salaam project opens that door a little wider and makes clear by explicitly modeling the connection between science and cultural breadth that general education is not excluded from the major nor can majors be concerned with technical knowledge alone. Combining our strategic interests in technologically enhanced education

with our dedication to international and intercultural programs and opportunities meant to broaden understanding of various dimensions of otherness better, this project also speaks to our interests in tying the liberal arts to the professions and Hamline to the larger world community.

With support from the Ford Foundation and Hamline's Office of Academic Affairs, a faculty development seminar has investigated, discussed, and rethought interdisciplinarity in undergraduate education. Following a year of study and consultation, a group of College of Liberal Arts (CLA) faculty has restructured the international studies program. The new program, Global Studies, focuses on "a *sound general education* [emphasis added] grounded in an interdisciplinary approach, for students interested in the complex transnational political, cultural, social and economic connections and interrelationships that exist among peoples of the world" (Dusenbery, n.d., p. 1; also see Dusenbery, 2003). Although the old international studies major was touted as "interdisciplinary," it was limited mostly to cross-listed social science courses. Little attention was given to the pedagogy of interdisciplinarity itself or to the skills and abilities it imparts to students. The program now includes literature and fine arts courses. Perhaps most important, the opportunity to explore the uses of interdisciplinarity as both a teaching and learning skill are built into the major and supported by internal faculty development funding. In addition, the new program takes advantage of Web-based opportunities to link students and faculty working and thinking together across various disciplines, topics, and even geographical locations.

This newly improved program reveals both where we have been and where we are going in curricular change. Perhaps most important, it illustrates vividly that all undergraduate education—including majors and minors and even special certificates of accomplishment—is general education. At their best, all majors should mirror the values of liberal learning, particularly the belief that the exploration of knowledge is a collective pursuit. The most wonderful and useful gift we can give our undergraduate students, whatever their majors are, is the ability or skill to see and begin to understand connections and the nature of interconnectedness itself.

Not all the implications of a curricular change are immediately apparent. In our enthusiasm for establishing the original vision for the Hamline Plan, we had failed to grasp that very few of us had been trained to model what we urged our students to practice in our disciplinary breadth requirement. Under the conventional strictures of workload and role, too often reward came to faculty not for interdisciplinary exploration but for ever narrowing specialization. Interdisciplinarity as an outcome of liberal education was assumed to happen to or be mastered by students somewhere between courses or outside classrooms. To move beyond content on class time not only interfered with "coverage" but also was professionally risky. The dictum was, "As we were taught, so did we teach." I am reminded of a political science colleague who relayed that one of his mentors in graduate school

strongly criticized him for quoting a novel in his dissertation. Now retired and free of disciplinary expectations, this colleague, who achieved significant recognition in the professional circles of political science, is now writing a political novel. My hope is to get him back on campus to mentor and model for students the risks and the payoffs of thinking both scientifically and artistically about the intersections, paradoxes, and contradictions of politics with the social and cultural context in which they occur.

The French program has challenged the concept of course and time line by redesigning its offering so that students progress at their own speed through the various units, even beyond the traditional drop-dead end of term, and can move between levels within the same semester depending on their progress. Most of the teaching and learning is done around tables in computer labs, with instructors working with individual students or very small groups. On-line aspects of the courses are available anywhere at any time, computer access being the only requirement. The French program has challenged some traditional notions of time and space for learning, has blurred the distinctions between the aims of the major and general education, and has given specific focus to student learning and success through these changes.

For the past year, a group of faculty and staff have been working on a plan for assessing student writing skills. Institutional assessment of specific components of the Hamline Plan has been long overdue, and this is a major step in rectifying this problem. In the fall of 2001, the summer reading for all first-year students, Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* (1997), served as the basis for a writing assessment pretest for all incoming first-year students. An outside reader, usually a specially trained graduate student, reads each essay, and the evaluation is shared with the student as a guide to the further development of his or her writing skills.

The writing assessment project is a first step toward a program that seeks to combine faculty development in holistic advising, mentoring, and monitoring of student program with that in the development of electronic portfolios of student assessments and accomplishments. Supported by effective faculty training, holistic faculty advising, especially in the crucial three semesters following the FYSEM semester, will focus on opportunities for specific skills development, such as internships, team problem solving, off-campus study, collaborative research, graduate school, career preparation, and national fellowships. To be effective, such a holistic system of advising, assessment, and articulation must begin even before matriculation and continue through graduation and beyond. In this manner, those who as students we advised become our advisers in helping the next generation of students prepare for lives as "compassionate world citizens."

Two major grants, one from the National Science Foundation supporting a Hamline partnership with the 3M Corporation and another from the Bush Foundation, have enhanced significantly our progress in providing professional development in support of fulfilling the Hamline Plan.

These grants created exciting and challenging new opportunities for faculty to help prepare students for the workplace while providing them with new models for college and departmental governance and problem solving.

The NSF-sponsored GOALI project (Grant Opportunities for Academic Liaisons with Industry) was patterned from a luncheon conversation several years ago convened by a senior professor in chemistry and a colleague in biology. This event brought together a cross-section of Hamline's science faculty and a dozen representatives from major Twin Cities corporations and successful start-up companies. The dialogue had one simple convening question: "What skills do you want your new employees—our graduates—to bring to your organization?" The answers from this and subsequent seminars have been unanimous, loud, and clear: graduates should possess the ability to communicate, work in teams and in different cultural contexts, and think both analytically and creatively. One corporate vice president for accounting astounded us all when he added, almost as an afterthought, "and a sense of history." This luncheon conversation both reaffirmed the perceptions and goals of the original Hamline Plan, but became the beginnings of what I refer to as our "second wind" of curricular change to demonstrate and articulate the values of a liberal arts education.

While the GOALI grant gave attention primarily to the sciences, a Bush Foundation faculty development grant, "Strengthening Undergraduate Education Liaisons with the Workplace," included departments and disciplines outside the sciences. It furthered efforts to focus on learning projects such as increasing liaisons with the workplace, developing service-learning courses and workshops, developing and expanding internships, and holding workshops to help faculty learn how to use team problem solving as both a teaching pedagogy and a means of making certain faculty duties, such as committee work, more efficient and effective. The NSF and Bush grants were important catalysts to change that dovetailed nicely with and complemented other general education initiatives at Hamline.

For example, one GOALI project team is identifying writing and speaking competencies specific to the sciences and is linking these to classroom activities mentored and modeled by science faculty. "Technical Work, Teams and Conflict" is a pilot course for majors in biology, chemistry, math, and physics team-taught by two CLA professors, neither of whom is in the sciences. The course is designed to "build basic knowledge and skills in areas that have been identified as weaknesses in scientific and technical job candidates and employees: social conflict, team work, and cultural diversity." Generally supported by science division faculty, the course meets three Hamline Plan requirements: disciplinary breadth in social science, cultural breadth, and oral communication. The course also includes four off-campus lab days designed to "immerse students in discussion and interaction with professionals and each other on the themes of [the] course" (Bell and Bonilla, 2001, p. 1).

The coordinator of the Bush grant, circulating among various departments, faculty interest groups, and team initiatives, realized that while numerous groups were involved in shaping the curricular innovations and needed changes, there was little awareness within any one group of what other groups were doing. Thus, the necessity of ongoing communication once again came to the fore and has resulted in a renewed effort to help faculty across the campus to understand programmatic and student needs and opportunities, better appreciate exciting changes under way, and feel more welcome to participate in the reforms. Communication in support of the reforms spreads through invitational lunches, open forums, on-line discussions, and occasional informal faculty chats. As CLA dean, I hold biweekly coffee hours, meetings of department chairs, and faculty retreats to enable a progressively broader base of faculty ownership in various general education projects, thereby minimizing the need for overt administrative or top-down steerage.

Nowhere has broad faculty ownership and the benefit of ongoing communication been more evident than in the cultural breadth requirement of the Hamline Plan, reflecting the belief held by most faculty that diversity broadly understood is essential to any general education program claiming to prepare its students for contemporary life and the future. Like the disciplinary breadth requirement, cultural breadth was instituted without any assessment of student learning outcomes beyond a passing grade in a particular course. There was no mechanisms to ensure that links had been made between various aspects of the topic as covered in class with those made in other classes or anything happening beyond the classroom.

The issue of cultural breadth has been supported by the tenacious dedication of a sizable group of faculty through a variety of means, including the recruitment and retention of faculty and staff of color and examining diversity-related issues of classroom pedagogy and the politics of cultural diversity on campus. Taking the name of a local Italian restaurant where some early meetings were held, the Lido Group has sought and found allies among students, key faculty committees, and CLA administrators.

The Lido Group has held that simply being in favor of a diverse, affirmative, multicultural campus is not enough. Indeed, such lip-service, combined with various forms and levels of intellectual or emotional naiveté, can be counterproductive or, worse, destructive. The group members have urged that we all come to understand our own perspective from the points of view of others and that Hamline as an institution commit time, money, and educational expertise to the development of a diverse campus of students, faculty, staff, and curriculum. This conviction became manifest in the college's 1997 five-year strategic plan in the first of three broad strategic objectives: "To establish and maintain a diverse community." Significant and specific increases in the number of students of color, the number of faculty and staff of color and international students, and the number of Hamline students studying abroad are spelled out in the revised draft of the

plan currently under consideration by the Planning and Development Committee (PDC). In this sense, general education became more permeable and transparent, reflecting and institutionalizing the emergent values of the campus community.

In the fall of 2001, the PDC, with strong support and assistance from the Lido Group and other interested faculty members, arranged the annual two-day faculty conference around a broad array of diversity issues. Relying entirely on expertise from within the college, the university office of student affairs, and the graduate programs, the sessions reflected years of accumulated scholarship and classroom experience relative to diversity at Hamline. All sessions received high marks from participating faculty for both the theoretical background and hands-on practicality provided. There were sessions focused on teaching, scholarship, and service, illustrating that diversity and related issues affect each of the three traditional areas of faculty work.

Like the cultural breadth requirement, the first-year seminar program has also evolved since its inception. The one-semester course has proved to be generally popular with students, their parents, and most of the faculty who teach it. Each FYSEM instructor is strongly encouraged to choose a topic for his or her individual sections that will fulfill the FYSEM goals *and* relieve the instructors from the temptations, obligations, and limitations of "covering the topic," as that term is usually understood in curriculum development and college teaching. A colleague in the religion department, for example, teaches a FYSEM about the Civil War as a cultural phenomenon. A chemist offers hers on "Feeling Minnesotan," which considers issues of regional identity. For several years, I offered "The Mighty Mississippi," which, instead of focusing on literature, used such topics as the origins of the milling industry in the St. Anthony Falls historic district of Minneapolis and the politics and engineering of sewage treatment in the Twin Cities today. These give but a taste of the topical platform on which the FYSEM stage was constructed.

The challenges of such a course are those of a multisectioned course conducted by an interdisciplinary mix of instructors and topics. Can instructors from twenty or more departments and programs, each teaching a different topic, provide learning experiences that incorporate common goals and outcomes? Can all students enrolled in these various sections come to understand that they are in the same course regardless of section, that the bar is equally high in every section, and that the work and rewards are similar regardless of the particular topic of a particular section?

These issues of focus and quality control require constant attention. The ever rotating FYSEM faculty, with the assistant or associate dean as coordinator, has met regularly for years, very much like a department, in the spring to discuss and plan the next fall's sections and in the fall to share concerns, accomplishments, and problems in the currently offered sections. Individual sections are now offered at a common hour on either a Monday-Wednesday-Friday schedule or a Tuesday-Thursday schedule

to encourage interaction between and among sections. All instructors are asked to include certain common projects or assignments. One such FYSEM activity common among sections is the major exploration assignment, in which each student does a short research project on a possible major, including interviews with faculty in the appropriate department or departments and students currently majoring in that subject.

The highlight of each fall's FYSEM program is the Fall Fair, which can most easily be described as a poster session with cotton candy. Designed as a celebration of learning and as the first in a Hamline student's development as a scholar and citizen, the fair combines interactive and sometimes highly entertaining poster presentations prepared by the students in each FYSEM along with departmental major-minor tables staffed by both faculty and students. The event is widely advertised across campus as well as to local prospective students and their families, who are special guests. The fair cuts across the campus dinner hour, guaranteeing the consumption of great quantities of pizza, soft drinks, cotton candy, and other assorted foods against the sounds of diverse music both live and recorded. The added colors of appropriately costumed presenters and performers add a carnival-like atmosphere to the more serious academic framework of the event. Students working their particular poster or exhibit become teachers. Moving from exhibit to exhibit, professors, administrators, and visitors alike become students. Most important, the FYSEM students get their first taste of sharing what they know and what they are learning with a diverse and supportive general audience.

The fair is the first event in a sequence that for many students will include an initial independent study, usually in the sophomore year, a collaborative research project with a professor during the junior or senior year, and a departmental honors project, with recognition at commencement, during the senior year. Thus, the foundational skills of close reading skills, analytical thinking, teamwork, and learning through discussion, introduced during the FYSEM, expand and intensify throughout a student's four years. As a part of the increasing emphasis on the articulation of goals and expectations and as a preview of coming attractions and possibilities, we also urge FYSEM instructors to tour with their first-year and sophomore advisees the Spring Honors Day poster sessions. Seniors who are doing more advanced collaborative research and departmental honors projects organize these sessions.

Over the past fifteen years, general education has moved from a consideration of which great books or which survey courses constitute a proper or essential liberal education toward a skill-based restructuring of both form and content across the entire curriculum. How to teach—whether to first-year students or to seniors—has become as important as what to teach. Pedagogy itself has become a legitimate field of scholarship in higher education as it has always been in the K–12 classroom. What we are learning is that teaching now and in the future is less about professing information or even interpretation of that information. Rather, it is about mentoring, modeling, and monitoring.

It is about mentoring students in their own discovery process: helping them learn that questions are more important in the educational process than answers and helping them to see that failure is sometimes the greatest aid of all to learning, but only if they get a chance to try again.

Thus, teaching is also about modeling the skills we wish students to learn by writing with our writing students, experiencing the off-campus workplace with interning students, and doing primary research with all students.

And finally, teaching is about monitoring the outcomes—measuring what students know when they come to Hamline and correcting our course as navigator teachers in accordance, taking full advantage of such new aids as the computer and reconstructed concepts of “class” and “hour” to let students learn in a way that best works for them. These lessons are not necessarily easy for any of us, especially those of us who grew up in the world of oaken lecterns, yellowed lecture notes, and final blue books. But they are lessons that are absolutely essential to learn as we consider liberal arts and general education

After all the vision statements and curricular reforms and strategic planning, I am convinced that the ongoing and enthusiastic ownership of the Hamline Plan by faculty as it is articulated to colleagues, students, and staff alike is the single most important ingredient in the success of our general education program, as it is in the success of any other liberal arts program.

This is general education for the future. Another way to say this is that the future is general education. Preparing students to master their lives in this new century means helping them from their first-year seminars through their senior seminars to master the skills of formulating questions, making connections between ways of learning as well between facts, working in culturally and professionally complex teams, and “connecting what we believe and what we know to what we do, in order to increase justice, opportunity and freedom for all people everywhere.” This is the practicality of the liberal arts.

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