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2006 Annual Meeting

Baccalaureate Reform through Integrated Design of General Education, BRIDGE

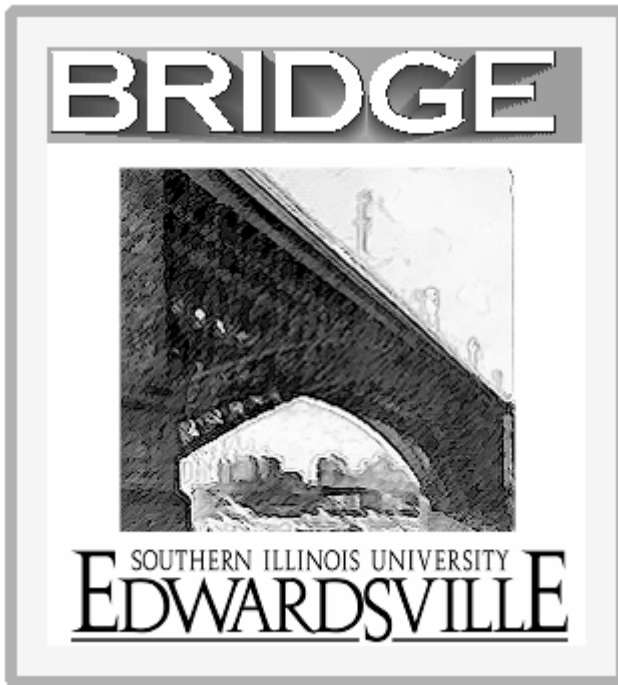
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Baccalaureate Reform through Integrated Design of General Education

As SIUE is about to begin its first top-to-bottom review of our General Education program in over twenty years, we felt it was a good time to update the faculty as to why this is happening now, and how the process will work. We want to assure the faculty that the process of General Education reform will proceed transparently. We will actively solicit broad input from the faculty and be open to suggestions from all quarters. We hope

to develop, nurture and guide a dialogue on General Education that will result in meaningful reforms that improve the quality of undergraduate education at SIUE.



There are two principal reasons that General Education reform is being undertaken at this time. First, while the original 1982 design of SIUE's General Education Program is still in place, the program has drifted over time. With modifications in 1993 and 1999 adding requirements, the program has become complex and confusing. There is general agreement among the faculty that there is need for streamlining and simplifying the structure of General Education. A secondary motivation for reform relates to faculty ownership.

While there is ownership for individual parts of general education, because of recent turnover in the faculty (over 60% of SIUE's full-time instructional faculty has been on campus for less than a decade), there is very little ownership for the conceptualization, design, and implementation of the program as a whole. Most of those who created the General Education Program are no longer on the faculty. Because of this changeover in the faculty, the Provost's Office and the Faculty Senate initiated a process in 2003 for re-engaging the faculty in the design of General Education. The BRIDGE Committee (Baccalaureate Reform through Integrated Design of General Education) was created out of that process. The BRIDGE Committee's function will be to oversee the process of General Education reform. It will not cook up a single General Education plan and seek to impose it on the faculty. Rather it will oversee the development (and solicitation) of a number of plans and will help guide a broad conversation that will lead to the adoption of one of (or some hybrid of) the plans.

-Eric Ruckh, Chair

PO Exercise

During the BRIDGE Committee retreat in Costa Rica, July 2005, the Committee participated in an exercise designed to break through preconceptions and self limiting assumptions about general education at SIUE. The exercise, which is called po, comes from Edward de Bono's *Serious Creativity*. The BRIDGE Committee incorporated a po exercise in workshops during fall 2005 for faculty who were interested in participating in the BRIDGE process.

One of the legitimate techniques of lateral thinking is provocation. There is a need to set up a provocation that does not exist in experience and, perhaps, could never exist in experience. The purpose of this is to take us out of the normal perceptual pattern and to place our minds in an unstable position from which we can then "move" to a new idea. The process is deliberate, systematic, and logically based on the behavior of asymmetric patterning systems. There are formal ways of setting up these provocations: the formal word "po" to indicate that it is a provocation, and formal ways to get "movement" from a provocation. (de Bono, p. 38)

Form into small groups and come up with one to three ideas on how the following Provocative Operative might work. You may use the bottom of this page to write out the ideas.

Beginning proposition: We all know that teachers teach and students learn.

Po, students will be the teachers of a liberal education and faculty will be the learners.

1.

2.

3.

**Course Description—2005 Fall Semester
Southern Illinois University Edwardsville**

**Honors 120: Work or Freedom? The Value of Education
Michael Moore, Assistant Professor**

This course explored the role of a liberal arts education in the development of our lives and our humanity. Students were offered an unusual opportunity: to read and discuss classic texts on the theme of education; and to engage in the university-wide discussion about reform of the General Education program at SIUE. Students were allowed to develop and exchange their ideas with professors and administrators.

Readings:

The Epic of Gilgamesh; Benjamin Franklin, *Autobiography*; Jaroslav Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition*; Jon Krakauer, *Into the Wild*; Harold Bloom, *How to Read and Why*; Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Selected Essays*; David L. Mech, *The Wolf*; Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Colloquies* (selections); *Adages* (selections).

Joseph Addison, "The Education of an Heir" (*The Spectator*, No.123); The Book of Genesis, 1-12; Proverbs, 1-4; Koheleth, 1-5; Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, "My Lost Youth"; Edgar Allen Poe, "Eldorado" (poem); William Wordsworth, *The Prelude* (selections); John Dewey, "Philosophy and Civilization"; Hannah Arendt, "The Crisis in Education" (an essay).

Some Themes of Weekly Sessions:

Becoming Human: The Origins of Education; Education and the Quest for Maturity; Self-Education & Life-Long Education; Tradition and Revolt: What is at Stake in Education?; Education and the Meaning of Life; The Role of the University; The Liberal Arts: a Training in Freedom?

Student Work:

Students read the works listed above, discussing and writing about them. They went on to read and reflect on the general education requirements of SIUE, and to offer suggestions for a reform of the program. Every student wrote a paper entitled "On the Nature and Meaning of Education." This became the basis for an oral presentation in the ensuing "Seminar on Liberal Arts Education." In planning their presentation, students were asked the following questions: What is your current understanding of education? How should education be carried out? What should be the role of a university? What should be done at *our* university?

Seminar on Liberal Arts Education:

During the last two weeks of the semester, the course was converted into a "Seminar on Liberal Arts Education." Administrators, faculty and members of the BRIDGE committee attended student presentations and listened to their reform ideas, exchanging ideas with the students in open forums.

SIUE BRIDGE Design Teams: AY 2005-2006

1.) **Knowledge Development: Patterns and Outcomes**

Provocation: Proposes to organize the general education program to develop four “core patterns of knowing” (empirical knowing, ethical knowing, personal knowing and aesthetic knowing). “If knowledge within any one pattern is not critically examined and integrated within the whole of knowing, the uncritical acceptance, narrow interpretation, distortion and partial utilization of knowledge occurs.”

2.) **University Connections**

Provocation: Proposes to organize the general education program around a linked series of clustered learning communities that would stretch across four years. These clustered learning communities will “encourage a sustained and continuously self-reflective involvement in . . . inquiry . . . [that will] allow for a cumulative building of abilities, skills and intellect.

3.) **Understanding Ourselves, Engaging the World: Curriculum Reform for 21st Century Learners**

Provocation: Proposes to eliminate ‘skills’ courses and teach ‘skills’ in a series of ‘themed’ courses. These theme-based courses would be nexuses for student/faculty communities. “Groups of students will take many of these general education courses together and have a common advisor.”

4.) **Balance on the BRIDGE: Graduating Students for the Future**

Provocation: The general education program must be balanced, flexible and simple even as it serves as a foundation for both discipline based learning and various ways of knowing. Proposes that all students take 6 credit hours of English and 6 credit hours of Math that cannot be biased through tests; for example, if students place out of English 101/102, they must take 6 credit hours of English at a more advanced level.

5.) **Simplifying Our Successes (SOS)**

Provocation: Proposes to model the entire General Education program along the same lines as our Dean’s Scholars program to promote “student flexibility in designing their own educational experience while giving a breadth to their education that should be an expectation” for all college graduates.

6.) **From Awareness to Action: Promoting Critical Thinking and Citizenship in Baccalaureate Education**

Provocation: Proposes that all general education courses have a type of service learning project. This requirement will be the foundation for a requirement that “students will design a senior project that integrates a community-based service

learning project with their major area. Such a project would encourage citizenship throughout the entire academic experience, thus promoting connections between the university and community.”

7.) Depth and Breadth: Inter-skills and Inter-disciplinary Education

Provocation: Establishes core competencies taught in introductory courses and then reassembles these competencies through inter-disciplinary work later in the students college career. Attempts to combine “the scholarly discipline (academic distribution) model and the competency-based effective citizen model” of general education.

8.) Enhancing Core Competencies in an Integrated General Education Curriculum: It Takes A Seed Producing Fruit to Plant an Orchard

Provocation: Establishes inner and outer core competencies. Integration of the two cores “occurs with pedagogic shifts to student-centered learning and the incorporation of assessment as critical components to enhance learning.”

9.) Live and Learn @ SIUE

Provocation: Organizes general education around 4 “learning circles” that link courses from the broad distribution areas with skills. “We proposes that distribution and skills requirements be clustered around themes.” These themes will serve as “anchors” for the clustered courses.

10.) Challenge of a Rigorous Education (CORE): The Indispensable Core

Provocation: Can a large, public university create a set of four core courses (Global, Humanities, Natural Sciences and Social Sciences) at the beginning of the Twenty-First Century? This team proposes that not only is it possible but necessary in order to “pull the academic and intellectual cultures of the University, and surrounding region, up by their boot straps.”

11.) Shrink, Simplify, Assess

Provocation: Can we do more with less in a general education proposal? This team proposes a set of required skills (in writing, speaking, scientific and quantitative literacy) to be followed by a set of broad core courses that introduce students to ways of knowing used in the social sciences, the natural sciences, the humanities and the arts.

Listserv Discussion

During one week in December, over fifty email postings to the SIUE Faculty Listserv discussed (battled over, struggled with) questions of uncertainty. A number of faculty and staff were discomfited by the lack of clearly defined process for the later stages of general education reform, and that discomfort surfaced in the listserv discussions. Postings included titles like, "Will the Bridge Process be Consistent with Itself?" "Voting on Bridge," "Design is Messy," and "The Bridge Process as a Romance Novel." Several excerpts are copied below:

December 3, 2005--We are now approaching that point in the Bridge process at which those of us on Design Teams are required to invest considerable time and effort. It is disappointing to some of us that we are asked to do so prior to the specification of democratic procedures for selection among our various designs. This lack of transparency has raised some concern that for all of our hard work on these designs, the decisions about our new General Education program may be made by a clique of insiders.

December 4, 2005--When embarking in a project of this nature, the most essential ingredients are goodwill and trust. We are entering uncharted waters together and, as a result, a predetermined route would not, in my opinion, be in our best interest. So far, I have found the process to be invigorating and challenging. I have met six colleagues that I did not know before. They are from different departments and units across campus. They are all very dedicated and enthusiastic about this project. The fact that we have 11 (!) design teams is encouraging and gives us the liberty to "dream big."

December 4, 2005--Many good points But don't you agree that it's time to specify the procedures for selecting a design? If not now, then when? Why hasn't this discussion already begun? Why shouldn't it begin now?

December 4, 2005--I believe the idea of obtaining feedback from the SIUE community and the community at large is a core component of this process. In order for the community to provide feedback and help design the process itself, the process must be somewhat unclear and undefined. Otherwise, there would be nothing for the community to shape.

December 7, 2005--The BRIDGE Committee continues to believe strongly that we cannot decide the precise mechanisms for moving from 11 designs to some smaller number at this moment because we do not yet see what the products of the 11 design teams will look like. While it is easy to frame this process as a competition, with winners and losers, there are other metaphors available for framing this process. It may help to think of the steps of the process as stages of drafting. At each stage more and different folk will be involved in 'collectively editing' and refining the proposals. Eric Ruckh, Chair, BRIDGE Committee