

“and the end of our exploring/ will be to arrive where we started/ and know the place for the first time” (T.S. Eliot)

To know more about others and our world is not only to be more in touch with *them*, but also to be more in touch with ourselves, both past and future.

Columbia’s mission is a critical one. Arguably, arts and media are among the most powerful tools through which our citizenry are educated about both the past and the present. Artists and media professionals, in their future work, will be among the major architects, conveyors and interpreters of culture, ideas and events. The education of those who will fill these roles in society must be well-rounded and must include a strong foundation of coursework that will give them historical perspective and comparative knowledge, encourage critical thinking and impart the development of strong communication skills.

The roles of arts and media products and practices in reconstructing, interpreting and passing on history, in developing and questioning social values and structures, in communication and semiotics, and as emblems of philosophical debate, provide critical and exciting intersections between artists and media professionals, and professionals in the liberal arts and sciences.

Background

It has been suggested that the average worker will change her/his career four to five times over the course of her/his working lifetime. In addition, it is estimated that 30% of college graduates may eventually work at jobs that *do not yet exist*. In the words of Bobby Fong, President of Butler University, “...training in a specific career is insufficient as preparation for lifetime employment.”¹ Does this mean we discontinue training students for specific career outcomes? It certainly does not. What it does mean is that we also must educate them broadly in ways that impart, to quote our Columbia 2010 Vision Statement, “knowledge, skills and attitude literacies” that equip them to be critical thinkers, life-long learners and engaged citizens of the world.

Over the course of the twentieth century the relationship between liberal and professional education in the United States has changed profoundly, as have the demographics of those able to access higher education. Pre-professional and professional education have become far more integrated into the academy and today’s students are as much concerned with immediate career outcomes as they are with being liberally educated and as they are with preparation for post-graduate education. In the words of Elisabeth Zinser, incoming president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU), “...we are challenged to rebalance and better relate our principal aims for universal education in America. [Recent] public policy and public opinion have emphasized work preparation as higher education’s most important aim. Preparing students for work and careers is very important. But twenty-first century education for all

¹ Fong, Bobby, “Liberal Education in the 21st Century” in Liberal Education, Vol. 90, No. 1, Winter 2004, p. 10.

students must entail more than technical knowledge and on-the-job skills if we are to achieve high ideals for corporate responsibility and just governments.”²

In speaking of the relationship between liberal and professional education, Sheldon Rothblatt, professor emeritus of history at the University of California, Berkeley, writes “We could argue that liberal education as preparation for living provides professional education with perspectives other than career advantage, and professional education offers liberal education an opportunity to adjust its orientation to practical concerns and issues.”³

Martha Nussbaum, Distinguished Professor of Law and Ethics at the University of Chicago Law School, writes “I want to reflect broadly, here, about why the idea of a liberal education has been taking root around the world in this time of anxiety...a classroom that teaches the virtues of critical analysis and respectful debate can go at least some way to form citizens for a more deliberative democracy...[and this] is all the more urgently needed if we are ever to create, together, a world community to work on the solutions to urgent problems.”⁴ Columbia’s mission statement was much ahead of its time in declaring, in part, that it educated its students in arts and media fields within the context of an enlightened liberal education to “...serve an important civic purpose by active engagement in the life and culture of the city of Chicago” and by inference, in the world, by “[educating] students who will ...shape the public perceptions of issues and events and who will author the culture of their time.”

In fact, at most colleges and universities, including conservatories and arts and technical schools, much (if not all) of the first two years of students’ education takes place in the liberal arts and sciences. This happens for a number of reasons. First, most students need more practice to hone their communication skills. Second, the experience of reading widely provides a broad palette of knowledge for students to access as a foundation for critical thinking. Third, introduction to the scientific method and mathematical modes of thinking increase students’ ways of knowing and of analyzing information. Fourth, taking liberal arts and science subjects in their first two years has been shown to increase student retention and to result in better grades later on. Fifth, students often need time to truly decide on their major subject area. Sixth, liberal arts and science courses form the core courses shared by all students, thus, whether students change their major, transfer out of the school, or “stop out” for a short period of time, they generally will be able to retain the credit for these courses and not increase time spent in their progress to graduation.

After a period in the 1960s and early 1970s when many colleges and universities abandoned mandated core curricula in favor of unrestricted student choice, the pendulum

² Zinser, Elizabeth, “Making the Case for Liberal Education” in Liberal Education, Vol. 90, No. 1, Winter 2004, p. 40.

³ Rothblatt, Sheldon, The Academy in Transition: The living Arts, Comparative and Historical Reflections on Liberal Education (Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2003), p. 45.

⁴ Nussbaum, Martha, “Liberal Education and Global Community” in Liberal Education, Vol. 90, No. 1, winter 2004, pp. 42-3.

swung back the other way. In 1977 the Carnegie Foundation referred to the state of general education as disastrous. In the following year Harvard College re-instituted its required general education program, prompting many other institutions to do the same.

In 2000 the AACU undertook a survey of 567 institutions regarding general education requirements. They found that in the last ten years general education had *increased* as an institutional priority. Of all the schools surveyed 57% were currently undergoing a review of their general education programs. Certain curricular changes were common across the board: freshman seminars were reported among 55% of schools; interdisciplinary courses were reported in 55% of schools; common learning experiences for students were reported in 49% of schools; paired or linked courses were reported by 26% of schools and service learning opportunities were reported by 21% of schools.⁵

Often referred to as “general education” at liberal arts institutions, and as “liberal arts,” “liberal arts and science” or “liberal studies” requirements at “specialty” schools, from the 1960s through to today liberal arts and science requirements are extensively studied and are constantly under revision. This is because they are seen as the foundation of our higher education system. As well, just as society is organic and protean, so, too, must be the education we give our students to live in it. We must examine, periodically, the “state of the institution” to reinforce good practices, change those that no longer work and create those that are needed but did not previously exist. In the last three years we have seen this undertaken at Columbia, resulting in some profound changes. Among these is our new document, often referred to as our “road map” to the future, Columbia 2010. This document says, in part:

Undergraduate education at Columbia College Chicago combines the better of two traditions: arts education, and liberal arts education... Undergraduate education at Columbia College Chicago incorporates all the elements of a classic liberal arts education including language arts, humanities, social sciences, physical sciences and communication skills...undergraduates benefit from fully synthesizing learning in the arts and media with learning in the liberal arts and sciences. Knowledge and skills from both realms are equally important to the education of arts and media professionals. The context and traditions of individual disciplines provide the foundation for specific student learning objectives with the added value of an educational experience that purposefully bridges the two realms of learning...Lastly, the synthesis of learning in the liberal arts and sciences with learning in the arts and media promotes life long learning.⁶

⁵ The Status of General Education in the Year 2000: Summary of a National Survey. Washington, D.C.: Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2001, pp. 7-9.

⁶ Columbia 2010, Columbia College Chicago Strategic Plan: Phase One, June 1, 2003, p. 8.

Recommendations for the Liberal Arts and Sciences Core Curriculum⁷

“The liberal arts are the arts of emancipation, the free and the freeing arts. They aim to free the mind from ignorance, the will from bondage and society from tyranny.” (Bernard Murchland, Philosopher)

During academic year 2002-03 a set of recommendations for changes in what was then known as the General Education Requirements, was widely circulated throughout the Columbia College Chicago community. It was posted on the college’s website and the college community that read it there was encouraged to comment to the office of the Dean of Liberal Arts & Sciences. A town hall meeting was held, jointly sponsored by the office of the Dean of Liberal Arts & Sciences and the All-college Curriculum Committee. This meeting was open to the entire college community and solicited comment on the recommendations. The Dean of Liberal Arts & Sciences met with the Academic Affairs Committee of College Council and with the Chairpersons’ Council. As well, the recommendations were submitted to the Budget and Priorities Committee of College Council. A great deal of feedback was garnered and it has helped to shape the set of recommendations brought forth below and presented as a revision in what are now known as the General Education Requirements.

The revised recommendations herein also have been widely vetted through each of the departments in the School of Liberal Arts & Sciences (which are overwhelmingly responsible for delivering the curriculum contained herein), the Dean’s Councils of each of the undergraduate schools, the Provost’s Cabinet and the President’s Council. The consensus was to proceed with them. An assessment plan will be in development in academic year 2004-05, and the requirements themselves (to be inaugurated in 2005) will be reviewed in five years, in fact, in 2010.

We are a center of educational excellence if our students are provided with at least the following three things:

- cutting-edge knowledge and practices in their major disciplines where they hone their talents and skills
- a rigorous and diverse liberal arts & science curriculum in which they are made aware of and helped to reflect on (in both written and oral form) the intellectual and material world they inhabit and in which they will remain life-long learners
- a significant co-curricular experience that promotes civic engagement and a sense of being part of an educational community of teachers and learners.

⁷ To this point the curriculum shared by all students in the college has been known as the General Education Core Curriculum, the name by which it is referred to in a 1996 document authored by the General Education Advisory Committee. I am using the name Liberal Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum (LAS Core) to designate these new recommendations, which are also for curriculum shared by all students in the college.

The liberal arts and sciences are widely recognized as both specialized (as represented in their different disciplines) and *foundational* knowledge. That is, taken together they address (among other things) the foundational intellectual ‘springboards’ of being able to:

- read for both comprehension and pleasure
- write as both a communicative and an expressive practice
- conduct research and as part of that process learn to measure, evaluate, and assess
- reflect on and appreciate human endeavor across cultures and eras
- consider and examine, historically and comparatively, human behavior, ethical issues and social institutions
- reason scientifically and understand scientific methods
- understand and use basic mathematical concepts and skills
- utilize various tools of analysis to enable critical thinking
- express themselves orally in a clear and effective manner

It is certainly not the sole province of the liberal arts and sciences to address students’ needs to write clearly and effectively, read for comprehension, think critically and be exposed to diverse opinions, philosophies and traditions. In fact, if these educational goals are not addressed in other subject areas taught in the college students will most surely graduate without having achieved them. However, though not the sole province of the liberal arts and sciences these educational goals are embedded in liberal arts and science tradition and pedagogy, and are addressed as centerpieces in all liberal arts and science courses.

The creation of this revision of the, as they are now called, General Education Requirements, also has considered the need to balance preserving the integrity of the LAS disciplines such that students are exposed to their different foci and methodologies and the reality of the interrelatedness of knowledge, and our desire to both support and sponsor interdisciplinary studies across the curriculum.

As well, these recommendations have been influenced by acknowledgement of the fact that our curriculum needs to be **transferable, recognizable, and credible** to meet our obligations to our students and because we are an accredited academic institution. That is, our students need to be able to easily transfer credit to other institutions and we need to be able to easily transfer in credit from other institutions, thus our curriculum has to “match” some generally understood curricular tenets. Courses on a student’s transcript, whether they are submitted for institutional transfer, a job or a grant, need to be easily recognizable for the kind of knowledge they purport to impart. And, the rigor of our curriculum needs to be credible both internally and externally.

Thus the framework of the rubrics below is meant to assign particular kinds of academic credit to each rubric to ensure breadth of exposure while, with the delineation of the learning outcomes, to foster innovation and provide accommodation for interdisciplinary collaboration. It is hopeful that as curricular review takes place, and as a

result of increasing faculty interaction around the curriculum in the first-year seminar and linked courses and learning communities, more ideas will surface for shared curriculum interdepartmentally within LAS, and between LAS and the other two undergraduate schools. There are many models for the assignment of credits for interdisciplinary and team-taught courses. We will be working to make this happen.

The School of Liberal Arts and Sciences intends to establish two Task Forces: one will be a Literacy Task Force and the other an Interdisciplinary Task Force. The former will examine writing in courses in LAS with, among other things, the intention of assessing it, promoting it in various forms and at differing levels, developing a research competency in upper division LAS courses, and forming linked classes and learning communities with substantial writing components both across the School (especially with, for instance, Intro to College Reading courses since these skills are closely allied) and across the College. This Task Force, also, will work across the college on writing intensive courses. I am especially concerned that we address research competencies for our students who will need such skills to write grant proposals, to represent their body of work in text as well as artistic products, to further situate their work (both in media and arts) in historical and comparative contexts, and to support their lifelong learning. The Interdisciplinary Task Force will work to develop innovative interdisciplinary (including team taught) courses across the School and across the College

The following are the recommendations for the future of liberal arts and science education at Columbia. These recommendations are meant to go into effect in September 2005, which will make them coterminous with the inauguration of our new academic calendar.

Recommendation # 1 -- That these requirements, previously known as the General Education Core Requirements, be known as the Liberal Arts & Sciences Core Curriculum, or, the LAS Core. In the past year many official documents have referred to them thus anyway. It seems clearer and the content more transparent to designate them as what they are by content, liberal arts & sciences. This makes them recognizable to both students and parents and situates them squarely within the disciplines they represent and the learning outcomes they seek to accomplish.

Recommendation # 2 -- There are 42 hours of LAS Core hours recommended for the bachelor's degree and 36 hours for the bachelor of fine arts degree. The detailed recommendations for the B.A. and B.F.A. degrees appear below.

Essentially this means that out of 120 hours for the B.A., 42 would total LAS Core and 78 hours would remain. Since most majors hover around 54 hours, that should leave 24 hours of elective credit for B.A. students. It is my great hope that this elective credit will be available for courses *outside* of the major, and especially for interdisciplinary credit, as well as free up space for students to undertake minors.

For the B.F.A., the Bachelor of Music degree, or other degrees comparable to the BFA, 36 hours of LAS Core out of 128, leaves 92 hours remaining. Since most BFA curricula hover around 74 hours, this would leave 18 hours of elective credit for B.F.A. students.

- The College Art Association recommends that for a B.A. degree 1/3 to 2/3 of a student's education (40 – 80 hours in the liberal arts for a standard 120 hour degree) should be in liberal arts courses offered by other departments (those outside of a student's major) in the institution.

For a B.F.A. degree it recommends a minimum of 70 credits in a student's area of specialization, and that these professional studies constitute no more than ¾ of a student's work toward graduation, which in a B.F.A. of 128 hours would mean 35-58 hours in the liberal arts for a 128 B.F.A. degree. (Some B.F.A. degrees range as high as 134 hours).

- The National Association of Schools of Theater recommends 50% - 70% liberal arts hours for the B.A. degree and 25-35% for the B.F.A. degree;
- The National Association of Schools of Dance recommends 50-70% liberal arts for the B.A. degree and 25-30% for the B.F.A. degree;
- The National Association of Schools of Music recommends 55-70% liberal arts hours for the B.A. degree and 25-35% for the B.F.A. degree.

Due to the special nature of the advertisement of both our B.A. and B.F.A. degrees as equally able to send students into the workforce, and our mission and Columbia 2010 vision statement, the requirements below have adopted a reasonable and flexible credit hours recommendation that does not contradict the recommendations of several of the professional associations related to some of our majors, quoted above.

Hours Summary:

42 hours (down from 48 hours) LAS Core for B.A. [78 hours remaining to 120 hour degree]

36 hours (down from 48 hours) LAS Core for B.F.A. [92 hours remaining to 128 hour degree]

Recommendation # 3 – LAS Core conceptualized under four rubrics:* (3 of these hours must satisfy a U.S. Pluralism requirement and 3 of them must satisfy a Global Awareness requirement, spelled out below. These 6 hours can be satisfied under any rubric below).⁸

⁸ These two requirements add **no** new hours to the LAS Core. Courses that focus on diversity in the US will be designated (by LAS School Curriculum Committee) to satisfy the U.S. Pluralism requirement, and those focusing on areas outside of the US will be designated to satisfy the Global Awareness requirement. As with all LAS credit, courses from outside of LAS may apply to the School's Curriculum Committee to

- I. Foundations of Communication: Knowledge and Practices – (Comp I, Comp II, Oral Communication, New Millennium Studies: First -Year Seminar). Students will engage in writing, reading, oral expression, critical thinking and collaborative work in a variety of subject areas, and learn the rudiments of conducting research. Some of these will be service- learning courses; some will be ‘themed’ in other ways. Possibilities exist for learning communities both across these courses and between these courses and freshman-level courses in other departments and other schools across the college. We will actively work with faculty to make this happen.

The First-Year Seminar is intended to be phased in as a mandatory requirement over the course of four years. Those students not registered in the first-year seminar will take an LAS elective until there is 100% enrollment in the First-Year Seminar. Any transfer student with more than 24 hours *will not* be required to take the First-Year Seminar. Otherwise, either in the fall or spring semester of the freshman year, the First-Year Seminar will be required of all entering freshmen or transfer students with less than 24 hours, by fall semester 2008.

First-Year Seminar is intended to be taught by faculty from across the college and just as important for its connectivity for students is its connectivity for faculty members. We will work closely with Student Affairs to design a module for the First-Year Seminar that will give students an extended orientation to college life as well. The first-year seminar will be initially taught under the rubric of “Identity and Culture.” This rubric not only applies to all citizens but also has specific and important resonance for arts and media professionals. It is a flexible focus because it is not confined to any one time period or place and can be easily discussed across disciplines. There is also a tremendous amount of literature, both classical and modern, and it can be viewed through many lenses such as written texts, film, photography, theater, music, dance and so on. Though discussion will be central to the format of the seminar, holistic exploration of these issues is not possible without the integration of reading and writing assignments that demand students to not only think but also clearly express and defend what they think.

A future rubric for the seminar could be “Ways of Seeing.” The artist and the scientist both depend heavily on their observances of the material world as well as the world of ideas. In what ways do the ways they “see” intersect, inform one another, and relate? The media professional and the historian, for instance, both depend on interpretations of the past, and both interpret the present in the context of the past and with respect to the future. How do they “see” differently and similarly? The writers of fiction, poetry and non-fiction, draw upon research to make their ‘products’ stronger – in what common

be designated for LAS credit. There also may be the possibility of interdisciplinary courses that qualify for LAS and departmental credit. No more than 3 hours, however, can be “double-dipped.”

ways do they “see” and how might they learn from how they “see” differently? The humanist, the social scientist and the scientist reflect on the world around them in order to make statements about and draw attention to the human condition – and so does the artist, whether that art be painting, photography, dance, music, theater or so on. A “ways of seeing” rubric can be a powerful tool for crossing the bridges that connect the liberal arts and sciences and the arts and media professions.

- II. Culture, Values and Ethics – Students will understand the diversity of human behavior, the relationship of behavior to social issues and the diversity of functions of social institutions. Students will be exposed to the basic ethical questions that have confronted humankind as well as various methods and approaches to these questions. In addition, for the literature component students will develop textual literacies and awareness of literary issues by reading, analyzing and writing poetry, drama, fiction or non-fiction. Students will examine how literary elements used by writers compare to techniques or methods used in other areas of the arts and communications and/or will consider how questions raised in literary studies resonate with larger cultural issues.
- III. Historical Narratives and Civic Consciousness -- Students will develop basic historical literacy concerning the historical periods they study, be exposed to the research methodologies commonly employed by historians, and appreciate the impact of past events on contemporary society and of contemporary society on the interpretation of past events. Students will critically consider diverse sources on the same subject matter and will learn to employ effective tools for arriving at conclusions and supporting various theses. Students will come to appreciate that involvement in the construction and maintenance of civil society is the obligation of every citizen. Students will develop a full appreciation for historiography and its profound effect on their understanding of and ability to think critically about current events and how it is, as one historian observed, from our sense of the past that our sense of the present is constructed.
- IV. The Physical and Material World – Students will understand and practice the scientific method of questioning, analysis, testing and “proving.” They will come to appreciate the cumulative nature of advances in knowledge. Students will develop basic scientific and computational literacy such that they can both support their chosen career(s) and function effectively in society.

*These add up to 42 hours for the B.A. degree. The B.F.A. student will take 3 less hours in Culture, Values and Ethics and will not be required to take the 3 hours in oral communication, thus resulting in a 36 hour requirement for the B.F.A.

Recommendation # 4 -- A requirement that at least 24 hours of LAS Core hours be completed by the attainment of 60 hours. This is common practice, including common practice at arts schools and conservatories. In addition, a recommendation that Comp I and Comp II are taken by the completion of 45 hours and that at least six hours of LAS core courses are taken at an advanced (200 level or above) rather than introductory level.

Recommendation # 5 – The elimination of the following current requirements:

1. That humanities credit be spread across HA/HL and HU designations, there will no longer be a need to designate humanities courses in this way, with the exception of those courses that satisfy the literature requirement;
2. That the six hours of social science credit be taken in two different disciplines, students should henceforth be able to take the six hours in one discipline if they so choose;
3. The FOCA requirement. Though a substantial number of our students come to us relatively computer savvy, I am painfully aware that a number do not. I plan that some word-processing and research applications using technology will be integrated into both the mandatory freshman seminar and the composition classes, especially, but also in other LAS Core courses as appropriate. The information literacy function of FOCA does resonate with the LAS Core, but other aspects of it do not necessarily do so. Both for that reason, and because different disciplines also offer technology courses for their students that are computer-based, I have elected not to include FOCA as an LAS Core course. The Academic Computing Department has revamped FOCA in its curriculum and will continue to offer the course. This revamping of FOCA proposes a very innovative solution to meeting the foundational computer needs of our students and has the full support of the Office of the LAS Dean as well as that of the Dean of the School of Media Arts. We will be working together to put this plan into place. (New technology requirement appended at end of this document)).
4. The Senior Seminar. Regular curricular review is good educational practice. One of the recommendations regarding Senior Seminar that has surfaced in the revisions of the current “General Education” requirements is that it occurs earlier in the careers of students. There are many wonderful things that have been goals of the current senior seminar program, and in the initial iteration of these recommendations there appeared a revamping of that program to a junior colloquium. A key component of the junior colloquium was the production of a written thesis in the subject area of a student’s major. I still strongly support what the junior colloquium would do for students but do not believe we have the resources (human, material or financial), at this time, to do an excellent job of proffering a newly designed, collaborative and mandatory first-year

seminar *and* a newly designed, collaborative and mandatory junior colloquium. Thus, though the senior seminar will not continue, the junior colloquium will be deferred. Based on future re-assessment, it may be brought forward again as a recommendation, to be separately considered, once the freshman seminar is on a firm footing.

These requirements will provide a solid foundation in the liberal arts and sciences for both the Bachelor of Arts and Bachelor of Fine Arts degrees. Both the first-year seminar and the themed composition courses may be linked to other freshman-level courses in the college, and will provide innovative ways to integrate the liberal arts and sciences with arts and media courses. The possibility of the linking of other courses in learning communities will be fully explored as well.

These recommendations have been accepted and recommended forward by the School of Liberal Arts & Sciences Curriculum Committee, the Academic Affairs Committee, the Budget and Priorities Committee, and the College Council. The Provost and the President have endorsed them.

Appendix I

Foundations of Computer Application Course recommendations

Currently all Columbia students must either complete the 3 hour credit FOCA course or pass a proficiency exam in order to satisfy the information literacy general education requirement for graduation. To date, very few of our students are taking the proficiency exam and of those that do, less than 30% pass. The FOCA course was designed for entering freshman with little to no previous computer experience. However, we are finding that students are often waiting till their junior or senior year before taking the course to fulfill their graduation requirements. This has resulted in having a wide range of skills in our FOCA classes making it extremely difficult to construct a curriculum that is challenging to beginners as well as experienced computer users. In addition, the skill levels vary greatly by application creating further complications in the classroom.

In the past, the primary objective of the FOCA course was to develop basic computer skills and the majority of the objectives focused on learning computer applications. With the dynamic growth of technology and information resources, the focus has shifted to providing information literacy as well as computer skills. Therefore, the requirement has become both information and computer literacy. For our students to succeed both professionally and personally they will need both. However our students need more flexible ways of fulfilling the requirement as well as tailoring the course to their needs.

Technology Requirements Beginning Fall 2005

The information technology requirement for graduation can be fulfilled by showing competency in any three of the following subject areas:

- Document Production
- Computer Architecture and Maintenance
- Data Analysis
- Information Publishing and Presentation
- Web Page Design

Subject matter competency can be demonstrated by passing a proficiency exam, previous coursework, or taking a one-credit hour course.

As technology and the demands of the market change, the competencies will be reviewed and appropriate changes made to keep them relevant to our students and technologically up-to-date.

December 2004