

From Planning to Implementation in “Next Steps for Sophomores”:

A Year of Reflection on Vocation and the Liberal Arts

Attachment for May 2017 Faculty Meeting
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Summary and Overview:

Starting in the summer of 2016, a group of around 50 faculty and staff led by Ruth Kath, Brenda Ranum, and Mike Blair started meeting to explore possibilities for deep reflection on vocation and the liberal arts with a focus on sophomores. This group emerged both in response to the HLC Quality Initiative on advising at Luther, as well as due to the receipt of a grant from CIC-NetVUE on continuing the exploration of vocation at Luther.

Over the course of the academic year, five “learning communities” of faculty and staff met regularly with goals of developing tools and identifying opportunities to deepen vocational reflection in sophomores (*see pages 2-5 of this document for a snapshot of each group’s work during AY 2016-2017*). During the spring semester, the faculty and staff co-facilitators for those groups began to meet to discuss ways to carry this work forward. Our working purpose statement is:

To cultivate reflection that strengthens understanding of self in relation to the common good, enhances vocational exploration, and deepens the experience and value of the liberal arts for students at Luther College and sophomores in particular.

We seek to identify ways to *build in* and add value to existing experiences, reaching a broad audience of sophomores at common touch points. To this end, our proposed work moving forward on advising, building reflective opportunities into the curriculum and experiential learning opportunities, and cultivating a culture of reflection at Luther. Our goal during the May meeting is to update faculty on our work and broaden the conversation regarding vocational reflection.

Key Priorities and Initiatives for AY 2017-2018 include:

- Piloting an **ePortfolio tool** that acts as a repository for student reflection and signature work. In particular, we will test a set of **reflective questions for advisees and advisors** that seek to deepen and add value to advising meetings.
- Piloting a **Jterm 185 reflection “lab” experience** in 4-5 185 classes. In this model, a subset of classes would meet collectively once weekly during Jterm with the goal of reflecting and connecting on an issue related to vocation and the liberal arts.
- Exploring and planning for a fall of 2018 **Sophomore Orientation** that meets a broad audience of sophomores.
- Developing tools to guide **work study** students in reflection about how student work experiences connect to the academic program and to evolving plans for a future career.

- Developing ideas for enhancing the integration of **sophomore reflection in the major** and other areas of the curriculum.

Learning Community Snapshots from 2016-2017

The following summarizes some of key themes and recommendations of each of the five learning communities during academic year 2016-2017. The priorities for 2017-2018 highlighted above emerged from this work.

Learning Community #1: Looking backward and looking inward ***Generating reflection questions***

Members

- Brenda Ranum - Director of the Career Center (Co-Facilitator)
- Sarah Wilder - Assistant Professor of Communication Studies (Co-Facilitator)
- Mike Blair - College Pastor
- Jon Christy - Director of Assessment and Institutional Research
- Mike Garcia - Assistant Professor of English
- Lindsey Row-Heyveld - Assistant Professor of English
- Rebecca Sullivan - Associate Professor in Library and Information Studies

Discussion Themes

Guided reflections between students and educators will benefit students as they craft a coherent academic and co-curricular plan. In order for those reflections to occur, students need time, space, and tools to reflect on the knowledge, values, skills, and strengths that are being developed and applied in and out of the classroom. Those reflection opportunities can be facilitated by connecting reflection tools to academic coursework, advising sessions, and career planning.

Implementation Goal(s)

Create a *reflection guide* including reflection questions and a career planning checklist to engage first years and sophomores in reflective conversations with faculty advisors and mentors

- ★ The guide should be designed to help students examine current interests, values, strengths, skills, and applied learning experiences in relationship to past and present goals
- ★ Faculty advisors will view reflection guide responses prior to advising sessions (community #3)
- ★ The guide should be connected to the e-portfolio tool being researched (community #4)
- ★ The guide should be connected to the work study reflection tools being developed (community #5)

Learning Community #2: Looking forward and looking outward ***Finding a fit in the world***

Members

- Rachel Brummel - Assistant Professor of Env. Studies/Political Science (Co-Facilitator)
- Destiny Crider - Anthropology Lab and Collections Manager (Co-Facilitator)
- Sherry Alcock - Executive Director of Alumni Relations and Development Services
- Maren Beard - Assistant Director, Center for Sustainable Communities
- Ruth Kath - Professor of German
- Jeanie Lovell - Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations
- Justin Sprung - Assistant Professor of Psychology
- Rita Tejada - Associate Professor of Spanish

Discussion Themes

Experiential learning opportunities - such as internships, study away, and independent research - are a critical way for students to explore their interests and skills, as well as to engage with questions of the common good. In order to maximize the value of experiential learning at Luther, there need to be better pathways to connect students with experiential learning opportunities and chances for students to connect their experiences to the common good.

Implementation Goal(s)

- ★ Compile a database of experiential learning opportunities across the campus
- ★ Develop reflection tools to encourage the connection between individuals and the common good and build them into experiential learning opportunities
- ★ Create forums to facilitate reflection in community with others who have completed similar learning experiences
- ★ Support the growing partnership between the Career Center and Alumni Office to enhance connections between alumni and students engaging in career planning

Learning Community #3: Cultivating a culture of sophomore reflection *Finding the “sweet spots”*

Members

- Sean Burke - Associate Professor of Religion (Co-Facilitator)
- Emily Neal - Assistant Director, Center for Sustainable Communities (Co-Facilitator)
- Storm Bailey - Professor of Philosophy
- Anne Edison-Albright - College Pastor
- Dan Marlow - Assistant Director of the Career Center
- Jayme Nelson - Associate Professor of Nursing
- Britt Rhodes - Associate Professor of Social Work
- Jennaya Robison - Assistant Professor of Music
- Stu Johnston - Counselor, Counseling Services

Discussion Themes

Discussion centered around a plan to incorporate new ideas and reflection activities into current processes and structures in order to reach all sophomores. The recurring themes of

those discussions were impact and efficiency. Necessary groundwork included a survey of faculty and staff to identify the types and locations of reflection activities currently being done on campus.

Implementation Goals

- ★ Sophomore advising goals
 - Require a reflection assignment for each pre-registration advising meeting
 - Propose that APC lead faculty in developing advising learning outcomes
 - Develop lists of complementary liberal arts courses for particular majors
- ★ Incorporate a lab experience into the required first year J-term courses in which students reflect on ideas of self, service, and stewardship
- ★ Develop a short orientation event with a guest speaker, a faculty panel on vocational journeys, and breakout groups for discussion
- ★ Assess the feasibility of and interest in a formal process for students to apply to majors

Learning Community #4: ePortfolio ***Developing an online repository for student reflections***

Members

- Tammy Hove - Director of TRIO Achievement Program (Co-Facilitator)
- Alexandra White - Assistant Professor of Management (Co-Facilitator)
- Nancy Barry - Professor of English
- Nan Hibbs - Assistant Director of Assessment and Institutional Research
- Kristin Swanson - Registrar and Assistant to the Dean for Advising
- Molly Wilker - Assistant Professor of Chemistry
- Jeff Wilkerson - Associate Dean and Director of Faculty Development

Discussion Themes

An ePortfolio tool embedded in the academic and co-curricular processes of the college would enable students to carry out, compile, and share reflections on experiences, growth, and learning outcomes. Feedback from a small sample of students indicated student support for a tool and process to reflect more intentionally on development, as well as for a repository for samples of signature work.

Implementation Goals

Design and implement a pilot program for utilization of the Digication ePortfolio and Assessment Management tool

Learning Community #5: Work study ***Making work study experiences intentional components of vocation discernment***

Members

- Andrew Bailey - Assistant Controller (Co-Facilitator)

- Jeff Dintaman - Professor of Theatre (Co-Facilitator)
- Matt Bills - Associate Director of Human Resources and Title IX Coordinator
- Pedro Dos Santos - Assistant Professor of Political Science
- Nancy Gates-Madsen - Associate Professor of Spanish
- Corey Landstrom - Vice President and Dean for Student Life
- Kay Schmitt - Administrative Assistant, Registrar's Office
- Carolyn Schwendeman - Financial Aid Counselor
- Jeff Wilkerson - Associate Dean and Director of Faculty Development

Discussion Themes

Guided reflection on work performance, the value contributed to communities through work, and the core competencies developed by work experiences will help students connect work study experiences, academic coursework, and career planning efforts. Cultivating a culture in which work study positions are viewed as important roles supporting college operations, students are entrusted with and held accountable for carrying out key responsibilities, and opportunities for growth are intentionally created would amplify the value of the reflection experiences.

Implementation Goals

- ★ Create a work study application to be completed by rising sophomores in order to be eligible to work after first year
 - Application would contain reflection questions related to previous work experiences and developmental goals for ongoing work study opportunities
- ★ Develop a work study self assessment tool to be completed by work study students and shared with supervisors
 - Self assessment would ask students to reflect on job performance, the contributions made to the department and greater Luther community, and the competencies being developed within the position
- ★ Compile a database of all work study positions with key competencies defined for each position, enabling students to identify positions well suited to the competencies they have or wish to develop