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Strategies for Re-Imagining Undergraduate Education: Preserving a Civic Engagement Agenda While Addressing the Forces Affecting Higher Education

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In Chicago, we talked about “initiative fatigue,” so one strategy is to link ADP with other initiatives, such as Red Balloon, and not try to create new, overlapping initiatives.

Ref. to article, Gourley, Brenda. “Dancing with History: A Cautionary Tale,” Brenda Gourley, *EDUCAUSE Review* 45.1 (Jan-Feb 2010): 30-41.

Larry Gould

Question about RBP in general: Why are we interested in re-imagining HE (not just undergraduate)?

- We have to. Technology is moving us forward, and HE is being unbundled in so many ways (as Kamenetz makes clear). Growth is another important factor. The idea of the American dream of an education as a step to success is at the center. Developing countries are seeing education as a way out of poverty—almost a global religion generated by the U.S.
- The ways people learn (collaboration, hybrid, enhanced learning environments) are driving us forward in ways we can’t stop. Collective wisdom is a larger phenomenon at work, Wikinomics hitting HE.
- Value proposition of HE is in question, internally and externally. Efficiencies, taxpayer return, competition with privates and for-profit sectors: all of these are factors we can’t ignore.
- Derek Bok’s book on purposes of HE clarifies multiple purposes of HE: 8 areas that we hope education will cultivate. If we are using RBP, that vision needs to incorporate these areas.

What would be successful for the RBP?

- Not just increased development of citizenship but all of Bok’s purposes.
- We should be arguing about the purpose of HE, what it’s about, not just what courses should be taken and so on. We’ve been careless about this. Here’s a chance to think about HE in a purposeful, concerted manner.

Civic Engagement and RBP

- Technology has provided new opportunities for civic learning, so we should be looking at ADP 2.0 and new ways of “seeking.”
- Not necessarily faculty-focused stewardship

- ADP 2.0 must reflect the leveraging of the pedagogy in its current form, based on *Wikinomics* model of connection, mobility, co-creation of content.

Vince Magnuson

- General concept of RBP language causes anxiety for all if it implies a starting over, instead of reflection on how we go about our business.
- New chancellor, Len Black (formerly of Kennesaw State), did not want to launch RBP on his first day, so they are working with new chancellor on strategic planning. They hope to move it forward in this process. Len is an advocate for civic engagement and urged that this be recognized at same level of other aspects of faculty work. He's including a day of service connected to inauguration day for new chancellor.
- Office of Civic Engagement built, with director, staff support, VISTA and Americorps volunteers, board, students, faculty, community members.
- Variety of events offered through office. Theatre students dress up in historical costumes and distribute constitutions on Constitution Day. Involved in election issues. Sustainability issues link campus and community in practices.
- Civic engagement is defined as part of the third leg of work for faculty. The reward system needs to reflect this, as structures are set up to reward primarily research; this needs to be changed. Such work needs to be valued at every level, including the institution.
- RBP is a kind of stealth approach at UMD

Cecelia Orphan

- The public purpose is democratic action, preparing the future workforce, and others.
- Joni Finny does policy work and asks how we can hold on to public purpose while weathering the storm and coming out ahead.

Mel Netzhammer

- Fundamentally both RBP and ADP are about engaging students differently, whether in credit or non-credit contexts. The goals are student learning and student success.
- When we say "student success," we mean different things and need to align our understandings for it to happen.
- Mel didn't go in and say, "We now have RBP." I distributed the paper to a group of faculty, and it resonated most with faculty who are involved in ADP. They are equally stoked by the ideas in each project. RBP is about "gloom and doom," but ADP is not, faculty say.
- Many of the processes related to curriculum bridge ADP and RBP.
- Battle because political engagement group proposal for curriculum changes is being challenged and stopped. There's resistance to a revolutionary idea that could make a difference. Essentially, the question becomes, "What needs to be in a course, and what doesn't?"
- Group wanted to have a common project, so they have connected with the public goal of having Keene as the healthiest community by 2020. This means having a community that votes, understands homelessness, understands public policies. They are survey students about stress, smoking, healthy choices, other areas. What they're learning is staggering, but it has little to do with their courses. They want to change the world. It's a great RBP—independent and integrative.

Cecelia Orphan

- ADP emerged because of an unmet need, and this may well be the case with RBP. Students will help figure this out.
- Collaborating and networked knowledge are an important component.
- Mel comments that the issue of RBP succeeding or failing depends on our ability to collaborate across campuses. At Keene, there is a richness in access to the primary season, as in Iowa, so they should collaborate to build on these opportunities. On campus, they are trying to do something with this: engaging a faculty member in health policy, for example, and a rich media specialist. Five students have put together an interesting team of people.
- Nervousness about collaboration in states when people are competing with one another.

Barbara Burch

- RBP is not a project but a vision of collaboration in the face of many real forces to which we must respond. It's an initiative that says given these forces, how can we collaborate to find some answers?
- It also pushes us to come back to rethink our purpose. This is a central question that we need to embrace. We have an opportunity to reaffirm our public purpose for whatever support we get. We have been heavily driven by disciplines, departments, marketplace philosophies, student interest. But none is appropriate in itself to define our purpose.
- Barbara's graduate study in curriculum focused on relationship between content and purpose. What has to come out of RBP is coming back and defining curriculum in light of public purpose. Majors and programs rarely define their curricula this way, with a sprawl of electives even within majors.
- AAC publication in 1985 captured this idea: the baccalaureate degree had to have some meaning, and if you don't have a fix on your purpose, individuals are free to set up whatever their individual interests dictate. The concern for coverage and factual knowledge is not the beginning point: if we really believe in our purpose, these core ideas are the minimum in terms of what students should experience. The road to coherent baccalaureate relies on modes of inquiry, not a menu of courses. This should be visible and intentional in all majors.
- We're in search of an education that will enable Americans to live purposefully and joyfully. It seems to be completely aligned with ADP.
- It's a process initiative that says there are answers out there for the challenges we all face. If we work together in productive ways, we can find the answers. And we have to ask what is driving our public purpose. Almost everything we do is part of contributing to your role as a citizen.
- Just as there's no one right way with ADP, there is no one right way to reimagine the curriculum. But we do need to put them in the context of core experiences that characterize our public purpose. We might find better interest in supporting public HE once we learn to articulate it.

Cecelia Orphan

- So RBP could be a pull, not a push, strategy to move us forward.

Vince Magnuson

- Four central questions could be the focus of general education, and all gen ed courses can answer this in the first class.

David Carr

- Read *The Road to Abilene*, as an example of people who end up on a road to where they don't want to go.

- Trying to bridge ADP and RBP: literature on political socialization tells us that this process begins long before they arrive on our campuses. So we need a larger frame.
- Are the transition points, traceable to the 19th century, still the ones we need? Should we be trying to capture the senior year of high school? Those students are done by November. We have to see where the rubber meets the sky.
- Another interesting question is whether we are willing to trade content to get at learning? Much of what drives day-to-day experiences of students is faculty view that certain content has to be covered. It will be labor-intensive to set up choices about content and learning. It's counterintuitive, but a fundamental question.
- Reinventing HE is a civic act, one that relies on collaboration.
- Part of the push piece is that we have to understand the significance of the past three days in Egypt. It says that all boundaries are permeable, like it or not. A *Frontline* piece, "Digital Nation," gives an overview of the impact of digital media.
- To a certain extent, we are all worried about the University of Phoenix and who is going to take our students. But it may be someone from another country. Foreign competitors have not entered our market yet. The question of the U.S. dollar as the world's reserve currency has implications for American HE as education currency. If we don't begin to address some of these questions, other nations will. They already are.
- As provost, I told new faculty that teaching, research, and service are separate from one another, you're dead. They've got to be brought into alignment to purposes. Whatever happens in RBP, it still has to maintain this possibility for individual faculty to find this alignment in their lives that allows them to succeed. If these vectors split them, it will kill them and us.

Cecelia Orphan

- Eric Peterson, at the end of *Seven Revolutions*, asks whether this is a time of promise or peril? Let's hope it's promising, and education threads these challenges together.
- We are the ones who will make this a promising thing.
- Suggestion from David Carr: talk with people in health care, which is going through the same things. Only 20% of medical decisions every day are made on the basis of evidence.