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# The Pink Book, Volume 18

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Faculty Retreat  
Materials  
3 September 2015

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Gustavus Adolphus College

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## Previous Faculty Retreat Topics

- 2014** | The Value of a Gustavus Liberal Arts Education
- 2013** | Community and Global Engagement at Gustavus: What, So What, Now What?
- 2012** | Beyond the Classroom: Faculty Responsibilities for the College's Finances
- 2011** | Accreditation for Today and Tomorrow
- 2010** | Liberal Arts Education at Gustavus: The Real and the Ideal
- 2009** | After Gustavus: Faculty Roles in Preparing Students
- 2007** | Internationalization of the Gustavus Campus
- 2006** | Academic Planning
- 2005** | Faculty Governance
- 2004** | Intellectual Climate at Gustavus Adolphus College
- 2003** | NCA Report and "Community Conversation"
- 2002** | "Blue Ribbon" Report on the Curriculum
- 2001** | Institutional Mission
- 2000** | Vision for the Future
- 1999** | Faculty Development – Bush Grant Planning
- 1998** | General Education Proposal
- 1997** | General Education Curriculum

# **Eighteenth Annual Faculty Retreat: Curricular Innovation**

Over the past year or so, the Curriculum Committee has spearheaded an effort to reflect on our current curriculum and to envision a new curriculum that continues to advance the mission of Gustavus Adolphus College while better preparing students for twenty-first century challenges and opportunities. Much of the work last year was done in “brainstorming sessions” at Curriculum Committee meetings, in other faculty committees, and with the Board of Trustees.

Beginning last spring, the Academic Strategic Planning Team, began a similar exercise. This started with a brainstorming session on Reading Day and continued through the summer with research and meetings by members of that group and the Chair of the Curriculum Committee.

Our goal today is to build on all of this work by involving all of you in exercises that we hope will refine these ideas and begin the process of developing a curriculum that embodies them.

Thank you for participating in today’s retreat. We look forward to reviewing your work and incorporating it into a new curriculum for Gustavus Adolphus College.

## **Agenda**

**9 a.m.** Faculty Meeting

**10:30-10:40 a.m.** Rating the Liberal Arts Perspective (LAP) curriculum

**10:40-10:50 a.m.** Summary and Background (Tom LoFaro)

**10:50-11 a.m.** Summary of Academic Strategic Planning (Alisa Rosenthal)

**11:00-11:30 a.m.** Objectives of an Integrated Gustavus Education

**11:30-12 a.m.** An Integrated Gustavus Education in Practice

**12-12:30 a.m.** Essential Elements of an Integrated Gustavus Education

*Note: The retreat will begin immediately following the Faculty Meeting, which begins at 9 a.m. Actual times for individual activities may vary.*

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## **Gustavus Adolphus College Mission Statement**

Gustavus Adolphus College is a church-related, residential liberal arts college firmly rooted in its Swedish and Lutheran heritage.

The College offers students of high aspiration and promise a liberal arts education of recognized excellence provided by faculty who embody the highest standards of teaching and scholarship. The Gustavus curriculum is designed to bring students to mastery of a particular area of study within a general framework that is both interdisciplinary and international in perspective.

The College strives to balance educational tradition with innovation and to foster the development of values as an integral part of intellectual growth. It seeks to promote the open exchange of ideas and the independent pursuit of learning.

The College aspires to be a community of persons from diverse backgrounds who respect and affirm the dignity of all people. It is a community where a mature understanding of the Christian faith and lives of service are nurtured and students are encouraged to work toward a just and peaceful world.

The purpose of a Gustavus education is to help students attain their full potential as persons, to develop in them a capacity and passion for lifelong learning, and to prepare them for fulfilling lives of leadership and service in society.

## Summary of Curriculum Committee Brainstorming

Below are the relevant prompts from the 2014-15 brainstorming document developed by the Curriculum Committee and forwarded to academic committees.

- What parts of our current curriculum work well?
- What parts of our current curriculum don't work as well as intended?
- If you could make a major change/addition to our curriculum what would it be?

Here is a summary of the responses.

1. What is working right?
  - a. First Term Seminar (FTS)
  - b. J-Term especially as it relates to travel opportunities
  - c. Writing Across the Curriculum
  - d. Center for International and Cultural Education (CICE)
2. What doesn't work as well as intended?
  - a. J-Term on-campus program. Inconsistent student expectations, staffing, behavior problems
  - b. Need more support for undergraduate research
  - c. More support of interdisciplinary programs
  - d. Distribution of WRITL courses across the curriculum
  - e. Double majors and minors
  - f. Wholeness of liberal arts education not well articulated
  - g. FTS – too many goals
  - h. General Education check box mentality
  - i. Three Crowns Curriculum
3. Suggested Changes
  - a. J-Term for General Education “values questions”
  - b. Increased emphasis on global education, service learning
  - c. Up the ante on the senior year
  - d. Create alliance with other institutions to fill gaps in our curriculum
  - e. A social justice general education requirement
  - f. Change the cafeteria approach to General Education
  - g. Focus and evaluate to determine essential programs
  - h. Make students take a new language if they test out
  - i. Take advantage of our location
  - j. More capstones
  - k. Actual team teaching
  - l. More electives, no general education BUT FTS -> soph. seminar -> Senior capstone
  - m. Allow multiple J-Term courses in the same January
  - n. More research courses



## Summary of Academic Strategic Planning

Below is the prompt used in by the Academic Strategic Planning team when they commenced their work on Reading Day, May 21, 2015.

### Our overall guiding question:

How might Gustavus provide a liberal arts learning experience that—through its content and pedagogy—speaks to students’ talents, curiosity, and passions so that they graduate with academic distinction, global understanding, and commitment to social justice that makes them stand out in a crowd?

### More specifically, we’re going to begin the working group conversation with the following two questions/prompts/thought exercises:

1. What should the elements of the Gustavus “liberal arts learning experience” be? By this question, we are trying to generate thoughts about elements like study abroad, faculty-student research, internships, and co-curricular life and elements like mentoring, leadership, critical thinking, and intellectual engagement as well as elements that have more to do with the context of the experience such as technology, physical spaces, and curricula?
2. How can the Gustavus curriculum most effectively meet the needs of our students for guided exploration, intellectual development, and developing capacities of agility and flexibility? What are the elements of a curriculum that produces academic distinction, global understanding, and a commitment to social justice? How can we deliver cohesion, choice, and opportunities for serendipity?

Below is a summary of the work done by the planning team both in that retreat and throughout the summer of 2015. It should be noted that in our work during the summer we investigated innovative ideas in academic and non-academic settings. Below are the main points that the group converged to by its July 16, 2015, meeting. **The ordering of these items is not an indication of priority.**

- **Physical workplace.** Companies are seeking ways to encourage cross-functional working to bring people from different areas of the business together to solve business challenges. They are redesigning meeting spaces / offices / walking areas and so on to encourage more interaction across the organizations. Gustavus has the potential to create spaces where all constituents (students, faculty, staff, community) together to learn.
- **Work / Life Integration.** Work / life balance in many organizations has evolved into work/life integration. Gustavus has the opportunity to teach students how to embrace this framework and think holistically about all the different activities / learning that they are engaged in.
- **Skills / Competencies.** Organizations are clear about what skills/competencies they need in employees – communication skills, critical thinking, analysis, creative problem solving, dealing with ambiguity, etc. Gustavus has the opportunity to help students connect the dots on these skills / competencies with the content of the curriculum (and co-curricular) to prepare them for life after college.

- **Career Exploration.** In discussions with students, there is a sense that they are deeply concerned about the right major, the right company, the right role, the right internship, especially for their first position. Helping the students reframe this into seizing the opportunity of college as an exploration and a journey, not a destination, will benefit them tremendously. Gustavus has the potential to guide them in a more systems approach thinking and how all the pieces fit together.
- **Connected courses.** This was a common theme in the more innovative liberal arts curricula we reviewed. For example, the Wagner College FTS like experience had first year students take a common pair of courses (satisfying general education requirements and populated with other students) and then take a third, smaller FTS like course that used the other pair as a starting point for teaching critical thinking, writing, etc. Thus the content coverage was removed from the FTS, allowing that to focus on the skills. There were other curricula that had required seminar-like experiences throughout a student's 4-year residency.
- **Intentional Projection and Reflection.** Several institutions required students to make a "plan" for their general and major education (i.e., the *K-plan* at Kalamazoo College). Others also had some sort of reflective experience built into the process near the end. It was also in this work that a student might project and reflect on her/his co-curricular activities and how that does or does not fit in with the academic work.
- **Building Independence.** Wagner College, for example, had a sequence of requirements: The First Year Program, The Intermediate Learning Community, and the Senior Learning Community. That starts out teaching the skills needed to be a successful college student and ends with a more independent and personally motivated project-based experience.
- **Integration at all levels.** How might we reorganize the College structure to support and encourage integration at all levels?
- **Seamlessness re academic program.** Reframe or eliminate the division between general education, major, and other components of a student's academic career?
- **Seamlessness re curricular and co-curricular.** Eliminate competition between the different opportunities available to College students?
- **Teaching and Learning in more varied ways.** Allow for learning and development to occur in a variety of locations with many different types of "teachers."
- **Careers and Personal development are not zero-sum:** How might we help students recognize that these two aims are not mutually exclusive?

**The whole we offer more than the sum of its parts.** How do we make it all come together as more than just parts?



## Gustavus Adolphus College Wellbeing Initiative

“Make Your Life Count” is the guiding ethos of a Gustavus education. But it cannot be achieved with “education-as-usual” thinking. It requires a new approach: whole person learning.

The Wellbeing Initiative advances whole person learning by helping members of the Gustavus community develop the knowledge and skills to cultivate a meaningful, balanced life. We catalyze an interdisciplinary environment to address issues that transcend any single academic discipline or program. We work with next generation leaders to align personal values, external commitments, and the world’s deep needs. We are also an incubator for new ideas and projects, helping to create a remarkable return on education for “Gusties” of all ages.





## Selected Non-Curricular Resources

**What is experience-based learning? from Carleton College**

<http://serc.carleton.edu/introgeo/enviropjects/what.html>

**Making Transcripts More Than ‘a Record of Everything the Student Has Forgotten:’ A Chronicle of Higher Education article**

<http://chronicle.com/article/Making-Transcripts-More-Than/231595/>

**A 60 Minutes piece on Human-Centered Design**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GYkb6vfKMI4>

**The AAC&U Signature Work program**

<http://www.aacu.org/signaturework>

**A Boston Globe article “The Global Eduplex”**

<http://www.bostonglobe.com/ideas/2014/09/26/the-future-suffolk-downs-the-global-eduplex/ArzNkj6x3W24F5zACnIREO/story.html>

**5 skills employers want that you won’t see in a job ad from Fortune Magazine**

<http://fortune.com/2015/06/10/5-skills-employers-want-that-you-wont-see-in-a-job-ad/>



## Selected Liberal Arts Curricula (Table Handouts)

### College A

Each student at College K participates in a First Year Experience. During that year each student works with her/his advisor to construct an individualized plan augmented and enhanced by opportunities such as service learning, externships, Guilds, social justice leadership, and intercultural research projects. The main components of every students plan are

- Depth and breadth in the liberal arts;
- Learning through experience;
- International and intercultural engagement, especially through study abroad; and
- Independent scholarship, culminating in the Senior Individualized Project (SIP).

Students meet with their advisor on a regular basis to review and revise their plan.

### College B

College B has developed a curriculum that unites deep learning and practical application. This curriculum incorporates a commitment to the liberal arts, experiential learning and interdisciplinary education with our geographical location and enduring bond with (a city).


Beginning their very first semester at College B, students not only study issues and learn critical-thinking, writing and problem-solving skills, but they also see and practice what they are learning. This “practical” side of liberal education is clearly seen in our Learning Communities and Reflective Tutorials and in the investment faculty make in connecting students with the world outside the classroom.

In the College B curriculum, students complete a liberal arts core program and a major, totaling 36 units/courses. **As part of these requirements, students complete three Learning Communities (LC’s)-one in the first year, one during the intermediate years, and one in the senior year in the major.**

A first-year LC, taught by two professors in different disciplines, combines two General Education courses with a third course called the Reflective Tutorial (RFT). LC’s are clusters of courses that are linked together by a single theme and share a common set of students. The faculty plan their LC courses with overlapping assignments, common readings and joint problems so that courses share common ground. Writing instruction takes place in the RFT, which is designed to be small — usually 12-14 students per tutorial.

The Intermediate Learning Community (ILC) may be taken anytime between the first year and senior learning communities. The ILC may also be used to fulfill core requirements of the undergraduate curriculum. This learning community addresses interdisciplinary topics, allowing students to see the social and intellectual links between diverse perspectives.

By the end of the senior year, all students must successfully complete a learning community (LC) with a reflective tutorial in their major. The Senior LC is a summative experience that contains the following



elements: a summative major course and an RFT that includes a 100- hour experiential component, a substantial and sophisticated written project, and a presentation.

### **College C**

Students complete a first-year experience. There is a typical distribution requirement similar to ours. In addition, students must complete an “active learning” requirement.

You learn more when you do more. That’s the educational philosophy behind your “active learning requirement”, an exciting new component to our curriculum. With six categories and plenty of flexibility, the “active learning program” encourages all College C students to embark on educational adventures that are personalized to their own interests and abilities.

All students are required to complete three “active learning” experiences selected from the six categories. Each of these three required experiences must come from a different category.

The categories are

- Artistic Creativity
- Global Awareness
- Professional and Leadership Development
- Service to the World
- Undergraduate Research
- Special Projects

While there are courses that satisfy some of these categories, the student can propose his/her own project to satisfy at least one of these requirements.

### **College D**

College D does not have any majors. All students graduate with an *Arts and Science Degree*. College D operates on the block plan.

For the first two years, College D students immerse themselves in our Foundation Program, a unique set of 16 courses that span the liberal arts and sciences. By fostering a multi-disciplinary approach to significant questions (both timeless and contemporary), the Foundation Program provides students with the appropriate intellectual exposure and tools necessary to be an engaged citizen in today’s complex world.

A learning experience is most meaningful when it aligns naturally with one’s sense of wonder and passion. Therefore, at College D we do not limit your options of study to pre-chosen “majors”; instead, after completing the Foundation Program you create a Question for yourself that directs your Concentration Program — your final two years of study.



Based on this Question you choose:

- a faculty mentor
- a course plan of at least six courses
- a list of pertinent readings, called “Touchstone works”
- a focused Keystone project

Additionally, your Concentration Program includes one to four blocks of Experiential Learning — immersive learning experiences that get you off campus and into the “real world” — and at least three blocks of Elective courses that round out your educational experiences. Your Question and Concentration Program is your personalized access to the deep, inquiry-based learning at the heart of the Quest experience.

### **College E**

College E operates on a block plan. College E offers three different Connections Curricula—Natural Connections, Growing Connections, and Superior Connections. These curricula integrate different approaches to common issues, and through them, students explore the relationships among the liberal arts, the environment, and the future of our planet and society. This approach is deeply practical because 21st Century work, particularly in the environment, demands people who can successfully incorporate multiple perspectives to achieve imaginative outcomes.


Natural Connections is a curriculum that allows students to explore a variety of themes or questions. Examples of themes for the fall include:

- Arts and Cultural Encounters,
- Energy, Design, and Aesthetics,
- Revenge of the Ecosystem,
- Exploring Meaning in the World,
- Making Sense of Misfortune

The academic coursework in Natural Connections consists of a set of four, two-course blocks and two discrete classes. Students have the flexibility to select each block individually, choosing the blocks that comprise the ten-course requirement.

Natural Connections students must complete four Connections block. Because these blocks include special instruction in College-level writing, students are strongly encouraged to complete at least two Connections blocks during their first year at the College.

Growing Connections is a curriculum that focuses on the history, theories, and practices of sustainable agriculture. Participants in Growing Connections work closely with faculty mentors and regional farmers in classrooms, labs, and fields to develop an interdisciplinary understanding of food systems and of the role that agriculture plays in human culture and ecological health. The academic coursework consists of a pre-defined set of five to seven courses that students complete by the end of their first year of study.



Superior Connections is a curriculum integrated thematically by a focus on the Lake Superior watershed. Students who enroll in Superior Connections develop expertise in the natural and human histories of the watershed, and then use this expertise to study and engage a variety of complexly interconnected environmental and cultural issues. Students must apply to participate in Superior Connections, and they complete the program as a cohort of approximately twenty students. The academic coursework consists of a pre-defined set of 7 courses that students complete by the end of the first year of study.

### **College F**

At College F, you create your own course of study from offerings in more than 60 subjects. Over your time here, you'll develop a pathway that meets your goals and interests. You can connect your studies together into an area of emphasis.

You don't have to take any specific prerequisites to complete your bachelor's degree. Advisors and faculty help you figure out what to take to meet your graduate school or professional goals.

You will also reflect on your development annually through an evolving Academic Statement. The Academic Statement is a narrative introduction to your overall transcript. You'll begin by writing an Orientation Essay that talks about your academic goals and interests. Each year, you'll revisit your Academic Statement. Faculty help students in their programs in the fall, and at Mentoring Days in the winter and spring.

Most College F classes, called programs, cover more than just one subject. Full-time programs combine subjects taught by several faculty from different fields. A program connects these fields with an overarching theme, reflecting the interconnectedness of the real world. As an upper-level student, you can create your own program with an individual learning contract. You'll set your own goals and develop your syllabus with the help of a faculty sponsor.

### **College G**

Our students pursue a major and choose two clusters that interest them rather than follow a complex group of general education or foundation requirements. Clusters are three-course sequences within a division (Humanities, Natural Sciences, and Social Sciences) or department. Each student studies a major in one division and a cluster in each of the other two divisions. Our students have the opportunity to choose among hundreds of faculty-designed three-course clusters or modify and even custom design their own. Students take ownership of their academic program, within the framework we provide, and can study what they love.

Typically, students do this one of two ways:

- Study a common problem or subject from a variety of viewpoints—While the major is within one academic division and each cluster is within one of the other two, each set of courses provides a different perspective on the same topic. OR
- Find clusters unrelated to their major—Each cluster, with its linked courses, facilitates the acquisition of competence in an area outside the major.



## College H

The faculty of the College H has designed the core curriculum to give undergraduates an integrated and demanding introduction to the life of the mind and to established methods of intellectual inquiry. The undergraduate's core experience begins with two first-year seminars that guide the student through an in-depth exploration of a focused area of interest and that sharpen the student's skills in constructing persuasive arguments. In the first three years of their college career, students also study five "Approaches to Knowing" - Fine Arts, Humanities, Mathematics, Natural Science, and Social Science. These core areas develop the student's understanding of different disciplinary perspectives on society, culture, and the physical world, and explore both the strengths of those disciplinary approaches and their limitations. *Connections*, an upper-level integrative course, challenges the traditional boundaries of disciplines and examines the benefits and limits of interdisciplinary approaches to knowledge.

## College I

The curriculum at college I consists of 4 ordered components: *Ask*, *Explore*, *Integrate*, and *Apply*. The core curriculum guides students through liberal arts courses in a way that teaches them to ask deep questions, shows them how to explore possible answers, and helps them apply what you've learned to real-world problems. In addition to teaching writing, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills, College I will nurture and develop a spirit of inquiry, to help the student make the world better.

**Framed around real-world questions:** Introductory courses are engaging and centered on deep questions such as "What is justice?" or "How can we know mathematical truths?" or "Is obesity a social or individual problem?" The student chooses courses across eight subjects to learn distinctive content as well as how scholars in that discipline think and know things.

**Takes you deeper:** Those introductory studies equip the student, with the help of advisors, to come up with, and explore, enduring question through three higher-level courses that you choose. To examine "Who am I?," a student might take an anthropology course on Gender and Society, a religious studies course called Spiritual Autobiography, and a psychology course on motivation, for example. To explore why China matters so much to the United States, a student might enroll in Road to Revolution, China in the 20th Century, and Women and Family in East Asia. **Hands on:** Experiential learning gets the student out of the classroom for internships, study-abroad, co-curricular service, course-based service learning, student leadership, fieldwork/clinical hours, or undergraduate student research. At College I, experiential learning isn't separate from the rest of your learning. It's tied to the core and/or to your major.

**Connects the dots:** The parts of the core build toward a milestone seminar class where the student integrates the work and learning they've done. The student develops an electronic portfolio as they transition to work.

## Selected Liberal Arts Curricula (Post Retreat)

*Peer Review, 2014-15, Faculty Leadership for Integrative Liberal Learning. A collection of articles on integrative learning curricula at liberal arts colleges.*

<http://www.aacu.org/peerreview/2014-2015/fall-winter>

**College A: The Kalamazoo College K-Plan**

<http://www.kzoo.edu/catalog/?id=999>

**College B: The Wagner Plan at Wagner College**

<http://wagner.edu/academics/undergraduate/>

**College C: The Hendrix College Odyssey**

<https://www.hendrix.edu/odyssey/odyssey.aspx?id=557>

**College D: Quest University in British Columbia**

<http://www.questu.ca/arts-and-sciences-degree.html>

**College E: Northland College Connections Curricula**

<http://www.northland.edu/academics-curriculum.htm>

**College F: The Evergreen State College Programs Curriculum**

<http://evergreen.edu/academics/programs.htm>

**College G: The University of Rochester “Build Your Own” Curriculum**

<https://www.rochester.edu/academics/>

**College H: The University of Puget Sound Core Curriculum**

<http://www.pugetsound.edu/academics/curriculum-courses/core-curriculum/>

**College I: The Nazareth College Naz Core**

<https://www2.naz.edu/uncommon-core>