

Advancing the Liberal Arts
Task Force Recommendations
Jun 1, 2023

Carleton is devoted to academic excellence, distinguished by the creative interplay of teaching, learning, and scholarship, and dedicated to our diverse residential community and extensive international engagements. This is the backbone of our mission and will continue to inform our programming for the future.

Our Task Force's specific charge is to identify strategies to create and deliver an exceptional liberal arts education that equips students to understand and improve the world we share. We believe this is best accomplished by fostering learners who are capable of engaging multiple domains of knowing and understanding the tensions that exist among conflicting perspectives, individuals who can identify and appreciate connections and question conventional ideas. We aim to develop adaptive experts, insightful critics, and creative problem solvers, with knowledge rooted in a humility that is engendered by pursuing different ways of knowing.

The holistic, integrative, and experiential character of a liberal arts education encourages the development of a full slate of intellectual and socio-emotional skills that will serve Carleton students well in further education and training, in careers, and as citizens. Leadership in the future will undoubtedly involve the ability to navigate ambiguity by looking through multiple lenses when confronting challenges while cultivating creativity and self-awareness.

As a group, we have come to think about the benefits of a liberal arts education under the general motto of "learning across the curriculum and beyond". We recognize the myriad roles that faculty and staff play in helping students experience and articulate the value of a broad, holistic education. In order to sustain this level of commitment, inherent in our recommendations is the guidance to take into account issues of workload and time pressures facing members of the community. We recommend the following steps toward advancing the goals of fostering personal and professional development.

I. A Liberal Arts Education

Primary Recommendations:

Charge the faculty in conjunction with the Education Curricular Committee to examine the balance of our graduation requirements – curricular exploration, QREs, WR2, global

citizenship, and the comprehensive exercise (comps). Revisit whether the requirements provide the desired foundation of a liberal arts education.

- Examine how the addition of minors may have affected the breadth and diversity of courses students take.
- Re-examine the core goals of the A&I first-year seminar
 - Consider re-balancing the content of courses to facilitate the transition to college-level work, create opportunities for mentorship, and build community. If there is a desire to include these topics, consider not having the A&I count as a distribution requirement in order to create space for these discussions
- Define the desired outcome of the language requirement, such as proficiency, cultural understanding, or another goal
 - Compare scope/course load of the language requirement to other curricular exploration requirements
 - Ask faculty to examine the policy for satisfying the requirement and whether they want to reaffirm this policy or reconsider it
- Consider alternate models for comps, such as a senior seminar

Goals:

- Potentially revise requirements depending on faculty-wide input and vote AND/OR
- Better articulate and communicate the rationale for specific requirements, the connection between those requirements and why certain courses count for each requirement
- Clarify the relationship between Institutional Learning Outcomes and graduation requirements

Secondary Recommendation:

Explore alternative advising models – with attention to faculty and staff workloads – that incorporate a more intentional discussion of overall student learning and how to make the curriculum more intelligible/meaningful to students.

- This exploration could focus both on formal “advising”, but also rethinking how faculty highlight and model integrative learning across the curriculum.
- Consider pilots of other advising models such as team-based, collaborations with career center, student success coaches, etc

Goals:

- Build and support a program for students that elevates advising beyond the transactional, helps students integrate their learning and fosters mentoring relationships

between students and (possibly multiple) advisors and that helps students understand how their education prepares them for life after Carleton

II. Grow Student Engagement with the Humanities

Primary Recommendation:

Build on the strengths of the existing Humanities Center – such as the faculty research seminar – and create enhanced programming to foster student engagement.

- Humanities Practica/Internships -- experiential learning opportunities that encompass:
 - Create or identify internships that prioritize experience in humanistic skills and make these skills more visible in all internships
 - Continue development of the Humanities Student Fellows Program (<https://www.carleton.edu/humanities/student-fellows-program/>) (new in 2022-2023)
 - Develop course add-ons to provide students in Humanities courses with experiential learning opportunities related to the course (e.g., students completing the language sequence traveling to a country where the language is spoken)
- Course development funding specifically for Humanities
- Develop as a recruitment tool a cohort model program for students interested in the Humanities
- Summer Humanities Institute (pilot summer 2023)
- Digital Humanities (on-going)

Secondary Recommendation:

Create and expand infrastructure to support these initiatives

- Identify or create a larger inviting space on campus for the Humanities Center that would make student social gatherings/intellectual exchanges and other Humanities Center programs more visible;
- Create Humanities Faculty Fellows à la the Broom Faculty Fellow to support more public-facing Humanities
- Expand the role of the faculty director of the Humanities Center in concert with the HC's expanded footprint;
 - Consider additional staffing related to the expanded programming (e.g., a faculty member as Executive Director, but a staff member as the Director).

Goals

- Increased student engagement with the Humanities as evidenced by course enrollments, pursuit of internships, participation in faculty-led research, and number of majors/minors

III. Cross-Disciplinary Teaching and Learning:

Primary Recommendation:

Develop and financially support a variety of collaborative teaching models (team teaching, linked courses, cluster topics, etc) and prioritize offering such courses for multiple years (e.g., not just one-offs). Provide LTC sessions on how to plan and resource such collaboration.

- Create institutional structures to clarify faculty contributions to their home departments and the interdisciplinary program/s they contribute to
- Ask the Faculty Affairs Committee (FAC) in consultation with the Faculty Personnel Committee (FPC) to propose handbook language delineating how multidisciplinary teaching and scholarship is evaluated for tenure and promotion

Secondary Recommendation:

Invest in and feature Carleton's strength as a national leader in sustainability to spotlight among others the work of ENTS, the Office of Sustainability, and the Arb as a model of integrated liberal arts learning as we gradually build out the infrastructure to create consistent synergies among our many efforts in this area.

- Invest in increased staffing for the Arboretum and ENTS
- Build a facility that would house all sustainability-related efforts at Carleton

Goals

- Grow the academic dimensions of our sustainability commitments
- Seed opportunities for faculty to model the power of collaboration and multidisciplinary thinking
- Increased opportunity for students to participate in multidisciplinary learning

IV. Increased opportunities for students to connect their academic and extracurricular experiences and articulate the skills they are developing

Primary Recommendations

Build on Carleton's strengths in our commitment to excellence in teaching, pedagogical innovation, and student mentorship by

- Expanding resources for student research, collaborations with staff, and ACE courses that intentionally emphasize the holistic nature of a student's educational experience at Carleton
- Developing courses or modules that create or build-on collaborations with the Career Center and/or Alumni Relations. Provide funding for faculty and staff to develop and sustain these components. Ask faculty to consider the creation of a new course tag that identifies these courses for students.

Expand opportunities for meaningful, high-impact extracurricular engagement either by scaling-up existing programs or developing new ones

- Make student employment opportunities more meaningful by moving toward converting more of them into on-campus internships with concomitant professional development for supervisors of student employees and attention to staff workload
- Secure funds to guarantee that students on financial aid will have access to at least one stipend for a summer or winter break internship
- Grow financial support for student research and experiential learning opportunities with faculty, including increased support for stipends (especially for non-grant-supported faculty), increased funding for supplies for faculty who need them, and increased support through LTC, STEM Board, Humanities Center to help faculty think creatively about how to design and execute projects in a sustainable way that engages students
- Provide students independent opportunities to learn new skills outside of the curriculum (e.g., Makerspace, Idea lab, sandbox environments)
- Inventory and foster existing programs such as the Carleton Start-up Competition and Innovation Scholars, and consider additional opportunities focused on applied project-based collaboration

Emphasize a culture of balance for students

- With help and guidance from Institutional Research, conduct a study of student workloads – i.e., whether student workloads and student employment hours are so substantial that they prevent them from being able to participate in opportunities that are available (or could be)

Secondary Recommendation:

Develop a process of reflection (e-portfolio) that guides students to think about their learning of all kinds (from student employment, ACE and OCS experiences, etc.). This might include connecting the writing portfolio to student employment and the career

center to prompt student reflection on all aspects of their Carleton education or attach it to the A&I and/or comps; **OR**

- Create a co-curricular “transcripting” option. This would involve creating an institutional record of the skills and knowledge that students gain outside of the classroom through such opportunities as: student employment, leadership roles, internships, study abroad, community engagement, and athletics.

Goals

- Reinforce a culture that validates learning beyond the classroom and offering of high-impact experiences so that students will naturally come across them without necessarily having to seek them out.

V. Learning Beyond Campus

Primary Recommendation:

Promote Carleton’s exceptional position as national leader in Off Campus Studies in terms of the breadth of programs, the proportion of students who participate, and the financial aid we offer. Some key investments and communications could make this even stronger. We can guarantee that students will have the opportunity to participate in OCS, should they choose to.

- Link OCS more intentionally to courses and experiences on campus, integrating it where appropriate into the comps process, and providing related internship and fellowship opportunities to expand upon it
- Carleton’s inclusive policy to make financial aid available for both Carleton and non-Carleton OCS programs is the gold standard. To guarantee even further access to participation, we recommend creating an endowed fund for grants to cover travel expenses (e.g., airfare) and the cost of missed working hours during the term away.
- Advise students about the benefits of OCS and the range of programs available, especially if they are concerned about language prerequisites. They may not know that historically, about 75% of students who participate in OCS opt for a program without a language prerequisite.
- Expand and adequately fund infrastructure to create more OCS-paired internships, such as those organized by the Center for Global and Regional Studies (CGRS), or similar programs.

Secondary Recommendations

Further globalize Carleton through research and teaching exchange agreements for both faculty and students

- This could be modeled on the Fulbright program, and/or explore the creation of a designated team or office to serve as a liaison with universities abroad

Better Utilize the Twin Cities

- Invest in transportation options to increase students' access to the Twin Cities and advocate for expanded public transportation
- Commission a feasibility study about the creation of a physical presence for Carleton in the Twin Cities.
- Education that is grounded in the places and spaces it inhabits provides a meaningful foundation for learning. This is at least partially the reason our CCCE efforts are so important and it lies at the heart of our efforts to expand our knowledge and collaboration with Native American populations in our area. The Twin Cities is a rich learning environment for our students, but it is currently underutilized because of transportation logistics and a lack of a coherent educational base there.
- The location could offer a physical resource for students doing research or internships in the Twin Cities and a space for courses to gather to process experiential learning opportunities such as field trips, as well as an outreach and collaboration office for underserved communities in the Twin Cities, for instance the vibrant Native American community in Minneapolis, or it could include a Twin Cities-based "OCS"-type program.

Goals

- Increased opportunities to create and/or expand partnerships to mutually benefit local organizations and students
- Enhance student, faculty, and staff connection to the spaces and communities we inhabit