

**Our Social Responsibility?
Questioning Power and Privilege
through Liberal Education Programs**

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The Venture Consortium:

Bates College

Brown University

College of the Holy Cross

Franklin & Marshall College

Sarah Lawrence College

Swarthmore College

Syracuse University

Vassar College

Wesleyan University

Presentation Goals

Share the story of our public reflection process and how it led us to re-define our priorities and work:

- ❖ Renewed our commitment to collaborate to encourage members to highlight the public purpose of a liberal education.

- ❖ Collectively-state our desired learning outcomes.

 - ✓ Innovative programming for students

 - ✓ Professional development for faculty/staff

 - ✓ Seek out and engage in partnerships

Mission Statement

The Venture Consortium, a group of selective, private liberal arts colleges and universities, is dedicated to the development of innovative programs to complement the liberal arts curriculum.

Our key objectives include fostering social awareness and a sense of social responsibility among students through experiential learning, and building mutually useful connections between institutions of higher learning and the larger community.

Vision Statement

As educators, we know that experiential learning connected with formal instruction provides students with the best educational synthesis.

Together we hope to inspire bright young people to dedicate their talents and enthusiasm to endeavors that benefit society, to find new ways for students to apply classroom learning to life, to give college students new models for future educational experiences, and to integrate hands-on working experiences with undergraduate and graduate instruction.

History

Founded in 1973

Housed at Brown since 1978

Programs for students:

Taking time off

Experiences with non-profit sector organizations

Urban public education

Founded before:

Career development offices & on-campus recruiting

Internet

Service-learning movement

Self Study

2001-2002

Board of Directors, Executive Director, Consultant

Visits to all nine member campuses

Posed Question: “Given that our institutions seek to help students make connections among their undergraduate studies, co-curricular activities and their questions about how best to make a difference in society, what should Venture do as a consortium to support students in synthesizing these connections? What should Venture schools do individually to support this?”

Self Study (continued)

125 meetings with groups and individuals

Student Leaders

Faculty

Academic and Student Life Deans

Community Service / Service-Learning Centers

Career Centers

Study Abroad Offices

Multicultural Centers

Academic Advising Offices

Senior Administrators & College Presidents

Community Partners

Conclusions

Issues of common concern across 9 campuses
regarding the liberal arts, experiential learning, and
education for social responsibility:

Students

Colleagues and offices on campuses

Institution as a whole

Long-Term Priorities

(1.) Continue to offer and develop **innovative opportunities for students** for experiential, integrated, and community-based learning about social responsibility within the liberal arts context that we cannot offer on our own.

(2.) Facilitate **internal communication and relationships** among member campuses, and provide opportunities for **public reflection and dialogue** about the practice of educating students for living socially responsible lives.

(3.) More explicitly support **mutually useful partnerships** between our institutions and the larger community, for the purpose of influencing **positive systemic change and social justice.**

Why Now?

Venture mission's reinvention, history of innovation

Value-added of consortium membership?

Higher education and today's issues

Common student, faculty, staff, & broader community
needs and concerns

Particular pedagogical questions were raised about power
and privilege for Venture institutions:

Are conversations and lessons learned about social justice
in conflict with our constructed,
elite campus communities?

Venture's private liberal arts members seek to stand both
for selectivity and for notions of freedom and equality.

How can we best teach for this position?

Often the ways in which privilege and exclusion are
discussed on campuses are limited to individual
experience. "How do we pose the question to get beyond
the victim story?"

Are we finding ways to challenge ourselves and our
campuses to acknowledge and wrestle with our own
privilege?

Core Values, Guiding Principles

Advance the mission of our member institutions

Collaboration

New ideas / feedback that come from people at all levels

Consensus

Public dialogue and reflection

Quality and excellence,
collectively defined, evaluated, and accomplished

Taking risks and learning from failed attempts

Access to our programs, dialogues and learning
opportunities

Positive systemic change as a desired outcome

Follow-Up Conversations after Study:

Career Colleagues

> The Engaged Life Program <

Community-Based Learning Colleagues

> “Liberal Arts, Service, and Learning” conference <

> Joint AACU & idealist/COOL presentation <

> The Venture Collegium <

> Venture Summer Institute <

Faculty interested in urban public education

**Study abroad and community-based learning
colleagues about global citizenship**

Central Questions

- How do our liberal arts institutions – through our curriculum, our co-curricular activities, and the creation of our campus culture/climate – address the concepts of power, privilege, leadership and social responsibility with our students?
- As we articulate the value of a liberal education for social responsibility, and given the important distinction between experience and knowledge, how do we actually learn from experience?
 - Can we teach compassion?
- How can we engage more of our colleagues on our campuses to commit to a shared vision? How do we create a learning community that is an authentic process for articulating an institutionally shared vision?
- Is it possible for institutions to sit with the discomfort that comes with self-critique, reflection and the work of educating students for social justice and social change?
- How do we translate our individual programmatic or institutional successes [and failures] into a collective body of knowledge that can then be synthesized into something greater?

Five Thematic Areas

Public Interest Work:

How do we best advise students who are interested in exploring careers for the common good, concerned about living socially responsible lives and making lifetime commitments to social justice?

Urban Public Education:

How do we address issues of urban public education with our students from a pedagogical and career development standpoint? Within our own institutions of higher education as a social justice issue?

Taking Time Off from College:

How do we engage disaffected students to reflect on the broader context and purpose of their college experience?

Local & Global Citizenship:

What are the innovative approaches in teaching and learning about socially responsible citizenship on a local, national, and global scale?

Dialogues / Reflective Practice:

How can we facilitate internal information sharing and public dialogue about a liberal education and educating students for social responsibility so that we advance ourselves as educators?
So that our institutions are more socially responsible?

Collectively-Articulated Desired Learning Outcomes

Definition of global citizenship

Goals of Venture Summer Institute
Wealth & Poverty: Imagining the American City

The Engaged Life program goals

Programming & Effectiveness

Urban Education Semester

Venture Summer Institute

Professional Development & Reflective Practice

Quote from Sam Speers,
Director of the Office of Religious and Spiritual Life,
Vassar College

Wesleyan University Career Center & Community
Partnerships office collaboration
with Engaged Life career program

Sarah Lawrence College Democratic Arts Program
presentation

Venture Collegium proposed projects

Partnerships

Urban Education Semester classroom projects

The Engaged Life program

Study abroad / global citizenship working group

Urban public education working group

Conclusion

Programming & Pedagogy: Power and Privilege

Reflective Practice

Risk

Collaboration

Social Justice

Institutional and Grassroots Commitment

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Thank You!

Feedback?

Discussion