

Our Social Responsibility:

how a process of engaging campus staff leads to engaging students

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?



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DRAFT Framework for The Engaged Life

- A Liberal Arts Education is a form of career development.
 - Implicit in the mission of our liberal arts institutions is the notion that the education one receives is meant to last a lifetime.
 - Can the process of considering life after college be modeled in an inquisitive, deliberate nature that reflects the liberal arts and the “freeing of one’s mind?” What does this look like?
 - In some cases, this may be a radical change from a notion of job placement, but in others, it is a slight realignment to emphasizing something different with students.
 - What if the freedom to think, to question, and to imagine comes first? Then students create/foster the jobs that they want. They search for answers and solve problems.
 - Important questions are: What do I value? What broader “work” do I want to contribute to? What do I want to learn?
- Community work is based in relationships.
 - Living responsibility means realizing human interdependence.
 - This has a direct impact on work and life considerations. How can students connect this relationship building that they do with their exploration of work opportunities?
 - How can relationships be conduits of sharing knowledge, information, and experience?
- There are inherent tensions in applying a liberal arts education to “the real world.”
 - Embracing the unknown, the alien is difficult.
 - The act of questioning, seeking answers, and acting accordingly is radical and counter-cultural (it suggests that our current way may not be alright).
 - This brings up a series of difficult issues for students to process including: materialism/consumerism, measures of success/prestige/fame, privilege, etc.
- Social responsibility
 - The mission of our liberal arts institutions directly addresses the need to be responsible (it is not neutral in terms of social responsibility).
 - How do we define this? What does this mean?
 - How is responsibility shared?

