

TRENDS IN THE  
LIBERAL ARTS CORE:  
A VISION FOR THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

A NATIONWIDE COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE GENERAL  
EDUCATION IN UNDERGRADUATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



THE AMERICAN ACADEMY  
FOR LIBERAL EDUCATION  
WASHINGTON, D.C.

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POST SECONDARY EDUCATION (FIPSE)  
&  
THE ANDREW W. MELLON FOUNDATION

## **Overview**

The American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE), in cooperation with approximately seventy public and private colleges and universities across the nation, is in the midst of a three-year project to examine the impact that factors, such as an increase in professional degree programs and the growth of specialized accreditation, have had on undergraduate general education requirements and the liberal arts core during the past two decades. Results of this assessment will be used by the cooperating institutions (and made available to other colleges and universities) for the purposes of conducting institutional self-studies for accreditation. The results will also be used to develop appropriate strategic planning to cope with these changes in degree programs (and thus strengthen their liberal arts and general education core requirements). Finally, this study will lead to new strategies for initiating assessment of student learning (including each institution's "value-added" contribution to its graduates) in the liberal arts.

In December, 1999, AALE completed a detailed examination of changes that have occurred to the general education requirements during the past two decades at the representative, national cross-section of institutions that have consented to participate in this project. Site visits conducted by AALE project staff with designated faculty and administrators of a smaller focus group of cooperating institutions are now taking place. These permit us to identify some of the more prominent forces and pressures on

undergraduate education revealed by our examination of institutional data, and allow each institution to better understand its own position and experience in the context of relevant national norms. Causal factors ranging from rising costs and diminishing resources to “consumer concerns” of students and parents that such investment yield a concrete practical dividend (such as certainty of employment), along with proliferation of departments and majors and competition for resources, all contribute to the shaping of general education and to the spectacular increase in professional degree programs within the undergraduate curriculum.

Most significantly, enhanced understanding of the complex forces affecting the role and function of liberal education emerging from this FIPSE project is being used by AALE in assisting individual participating institutions to evaluate their core curriculum, develop assessment procedures for student learning appropriate to the liberal arts, and improve the training and preparation of accreditation site visitor teams for the evaluation of liberal arts programs and general education core requirements.

## FIPSE

### LIST OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS

#### Research Universities

Boston University  
Georgetown University  
Howard University  
Oregon State University\*  
Rice University  
Temple University  
Tulane University  
University of Iowa\*  
University of Maryland  
— College Park\*  
University of Miami  
University of North Carolina  
— Chapel Hill\*  
University of South Carolina  
— Columbia\*

#### Doctoral Universities

Ball State University\*  
Baylor University  
College of William & Mary\*  
Fordham University  
Indiana University  
— Purdue University (Indianapolis)\*  
Miami University of Ohio\*  
Middle Tennessee State  
University\*  
Northern Arizona University\*  
Portland State University\*  
University of San Francisco

#### Masters Colleges/Universities

Assumption College  
Brooklyn College — CUNY\*  
Carthage College  
Florida A&M University\*  
Grambling State University\*  
Hampton University  
Hood College  
St. Michael's College  
Samford University  
Seattle University  
Tusculum College  
University of Central Arkansas\*  
University of Nebraska  
— Kearney\*  
University of North Alabama\*

#### Baccalaureate Colleges

Augustana College  
Bard College  
Birmingham-Southern College  
Bryn Mawr College  
Carleton College  
Centre College  
Colorado College  
Connecticut College  
Dakota State University\*  
Dickinson College  
Eckerd College  
Freed-Hardeman University

Furman University  
Goucher College  
Grinnell College  
Hampden-Sydney College  
Lewis and Clark College  
Ramapo College of New Jersey\*  
Reed College  
Rhodes College  
Skidmore College  
Thomas Aquinas College  
University of Dallas  
University of North Carolina  
— Asheville\*  
University of the South  
Wabash College  
Washington & Jefferson College  
Washington and Lee University  
Williams College  
Wofford College