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Analyzing Environmental Data

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Common Requirements Proposal

My initial reactions to the proposed learning outcomes is one of hope, but I strongly believe more work needs to be done to make it effective. Part A is simply too vague even for a “blueprint”, in my opinion. Nearly every existing liberal arts college has a similar statement on what they want students to achieve, and I can’t imagine our prior one was much different. In Part B, I agree with the concept of what is being proposed, but I don’t believe that common requirements meaningfully address these competencies. These competencies are very broad, and I don’t believe could all be realistically achieved. Problem solving for example, is a talent that takes years and years, and a little innate aptitude, to master. Any class, in any discipline, could help hone that skill, but it’s something that occurs naturally and not by “telling” someone how to problem solve, so having it integrated into the common requirements is pointless. Additionally, areas like “aesthetic literacy” are just saying that one should know art, but not why it’s necessary for someone who doesn’t have a strong interest in it, or why it should be required.

Part C is where I strongly agree with what is being proposed. Currently, at both Holy Cross and elsewhere, the education of real world issues and current events is left to the students. The students are left to educate themselves, which often leaves us at odds with the faculty and government officials and leads to anger and unproductive protests. If Holy Cross were to establish a common requirement in “responsible citizenship”, it would allow students to get

educated on issues of race, sexuality, environment preservation and more, from valid sources. Additionally, by having meaningful conversations, students can communicate with professors, who can make change more efficiently and effectively when working with the students. Many of the issues in part C are ones that are affecting us, our families, and our communities, both now and in the future. Of all the proposed changes to the common requirements, I believe the goals laid out in part C are by far the most crucial to implement.

My reaction to part D is once again that these proposed ideas about integrating our studies with the real world are all well and good, but I am still left unsure how they are going to be addressed by any common requirement. I have yet to see how common requirements for art, philosophy, or religious studies better prepares one for the real world, more than spending that time focussing on a major. Also, it seems to me as if whoever drafted this document needed to include something about “Jesuit values”, so they summarized part B in terms of *cura personalis*. Part E is pretty straightforward, seems to once again emphasize that majoring in a specific discipline is important, which I agree with. It’s why many, if not most of us come to college in the first place. Part F, *once again*, is proposing ideas that are optimistic, but not realistically going to be instilled in students through common requirements. These are character traits and habits, and I doubt a common requirement art class is going to give me “curiosity, creativity, risk-taking and a passion for learning”. I believe an overhaul of the current classes offered is necessary, and the habit-focused goals are simply not of concern to a plan for common requirements.

I think that these proposed learning outcomes are good qualities for people to have in life, but are simply not *learning* outcomes, because they can’t truly be taught. I would like to see the

college offer a wider range of classes, that pertain to real world issues, and from there the desired learning outcomes will follow. Many of the classes are too abstract from reality, and not applicable to solving many of the issues we face as a community. The goals proposed are too grand for the classes we have available now. Additionally, college is very expensive, and I don't want to be forced to take and pay for classes I am not interested in. I understand that this is part of a liberal arts education, but the way the school approaches fulfilling that mission could be better, even with the new proposal.

I think this new proposal a step in the right direction, because at least having conversations about the current academic structure will only yield positive results. Personally, I would like to see less focus on the common requirements because I don't feel as though they address the skills one needs in life. High school already prepared us in all the common areas. Especially at Holy Cross, there are high standards for acceptance, and no student would be here if we didn't already display competency in common areas. I came to college to hone my skills in a certain discipline, and would like to learn as much as possible about it. Sure, refreshers in English for example will not *lower* my understanding, but if I am paying upwards of three thousand dollars for a single class, even the classes in my major are only marginally worth it.

An ideal system for common requirements, if we had to have them, would be ones that de-emphasize grading outside of major, and instead emphasize very specific principles, i.e. the common core in grade school. Additionally, I think students would be far more open to taking classes outside their major if their weight in calculating GPA was lowered. Much of the stigma around common requirements are that they are too challenging, because they are by definition

outside of one's major. If there was less pressure to just perform well on exams and assignments, much of the values outlined in the new proposal could be taught more effectively.