

Tess Conroy

Professor Little

Analyzing Environmental Data

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Learning Outcomes for a Holy Cross Education

I am a strong believer in the idea of a liberal arts education. As Holy Cross currently sums it up on its website, “personal and academic exploration is the best way to find a calling and a path” (holycross.edu). I know of many people who are set on a career path from the first day they enter college, and I think that this is great. However, I feel that no one can truly know their passion until they experience it and take a variety of classes. Sometimes, the most enjoyable subject is one that is the least expected. By requiring a variety of courses across different disciplines, students can learn more about themselves and find their true callings in life. The Holy Cross website also supports the idea of a liberal arts education because it allows students to be well rounded individuals. By being well versed in a variety of subjects, people will have more opportunities in life and this broad type of education allows students to be flexible once they enter the ever changing job market. It is rare to enter a career that only makes use of one subject, and a well rounded education would prepare people for this.

One of the biggest problems I see with the current models of the liberal arts education through common requirements is that these sometimes are not the most useful classes and do not provide all of the tools that they set out to give. People may take a class just because it is a requirement, and not get anything out of it since they view it as a useless class they are forced to take. From my experience, students try to get requirements done as quickly as possible and do

not consider how these courses are actually helpful to their education, which I think this document is trying to fix. When I look at the “Learning Outcomes for a Holy Cross Education”, there are a lot of foundational competencies which I see as valid and important markers for graduates of the college to have. I have never thought about the exact details of what skills I want after college, but I believe that this document accurately lays out a variety of talents across numerous disciplines that are important to have as a college graduate.

Many of these skills seem to be addressed by common area requirements. For example, the current requirement for mathematical science classes would most likely cover the quantitative reasoning competency that is in this new document. However, I am not sure that all of the common requirements we have now would satisfy every single one of these competencies. When scrolling down to look at the responsible citizenship section, I think that these responsibilities are even harder to instill in students. While students are forced to take a language skill and would have knowledge in language, it is hard for one of the current classes here to enforce that a student would have environmental stewardship, especially since this is a personal choice that depends on one’s values.

The topics in this document may be a little too much to expect because some of the things I see listed in this statement have to do with how students act and perceive the world. It seems hard to make someone have the qualities listed under responsible citizenship, because ultimately, everything in that section is up to them. As I stated earlier, one example that sticks out to me in this section is environmental stewardship. The college can surely implement new requirements for courses that talk about nature and the responsibility humans have for taking care of it. However, even after taking a class on the environment, students still may view the environment

as something they can abuse and something that they have no tie to. This is similar to the attitudes outlined in Section F, which lists habits for lifelong learning. I believe that all of these qualities, like curiosity and openness, are qualities that cannot be learned by taking a class; they are innate qualities that people possess. I think that with the ideas listed in this document, new requirements may be made that would encourage students to think about topics like justice and stewardship. However, I think it is very difficult to claim that students will think and act in certain ways after leaving Holy Cross, and this seems like an unreasonable goal. Instead, I think that the college should encourage people to think for themselves rather than taking on a strict set of values.

After reading the whole list, it is clear that these new ideas transcend the current system of common requirements. For example, the document calls for interdisciplinary integration. While Holy Cross does have some interdisciplinary courses, they are not required and it does not seem like many professors put a high emphasis on drawing in various disciplines to their classes. Therefore, I wonder what solution the authors of this are trying to put in place. I think that trying to meet all of the requirements listed in this document may be a bit ambitious, since there seems to be a lot more qualities they want students to have, like technological literacy and applied learning, which do not relate to current common requirements. Adding classes that would satisfy these would create too many requirements and personally, I think students should be granted plenty of time to take classes that they are actually interested in.

One possible solution that would go along with the ideas of this document could be reworking the way that people complete common area requirements. Instead of requiring various courses in different subjects, like history, math, religion, et cetera, the college could require

courses that satisfy the foundational competencies. Courses can be classified as belonging to a general subject area, but satisfying the competencies, like critical thinking, information literacy, communication, et cetera. In a way, this would be good for students who would prefer to take classes in a general subject area. However, it would somewhat strip away the nature of a liberal arts education, as students might pick classes that are only in their interests and this would prevent them from finding new interests. Therefore, I think that the requirements the college already has work well and maybe smaller changes can be made to the classes already deemed requirements. This document may encourage professors to include information from various disciplines and make it so that their class addresses more than just one competency, which would go along with the topics outlined in this statement.

This document mostly correlates with the ideas that this college already has about education, and I believe that the system Holy Cross uses now for requirements is a good system that does not necessarily need to be changed. Many of the requirements that would be created from this document seem somewhat unattainable and unreasonable to implement, as people still need time to explore their interests. If something was to change, I think that this statement may be able to alter the ways professors teach their classes, and would cause them to integrate various disciplines into their courses to meet more competencies. However, I do not think that any large changes need to be made because people are currently happy with the way that current system works. Overall, I think that Holy Cross's system of common requirements provides many good learning outcomes and the way it looks now is good to me.

Works Cited

“Liberal Arts and Jesuit Education.” *Liberal Arts and Jesuit Education* | *College of the Holy Cross*, www.holycross.edu/holy-cross-approach/liberal-arts-and-jesuit-education.