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The common area requirements here at Holy Cross is a topic that I have thought about on many occasions, and have had many conversations with peers about what could be done to improve them. But I did not think that the faculty here on campus also believed they should be changed. My expectations were that the common area requirements would stay the same for years to come. So it was nice to see that actions are being taken to help us maximize our education here at Holy Cross. My first thoughts after reading the learning outcomes statement was that our education is so much more than what many students think of it. On a day to day basis we get caught up in the artificial parts of our school work. We think math class is just memorizing formulas when in reality we are developing necessary problem solving skills that can be utilized for the rest of our lives. We think history class is memorizing people, places, dates and battles when we are actually developing important historical contextualization skills that help us carry the lessons of the past into the future. There are examples of this in every class and most of us (including myself) don't understand that our education is shaping us as overall intellectuals not just robots who can spit out facts. Having all of the goals of the Holy Cross education listed out really made me reflect on this and appreciate my education a little more.

My other knee-jerk reaction to the statement was how many skills and the diversity of the skills they want students to experience. All of the fundamental competencies are useful to know and some should be necessary when getting an education, but there are so many that it makes me think that these expectations could be a little bit too lofty. I think some of these concepts could be morphed together to decrease the amount of fundamental competencies. For example, I think critical thinking and information literacy could be combined into one larger idea. Both talk

about developing critical thinking skills and being able to understand the information you're receiving while asking necessary questions to help determine the validity or correctness of information. Additionally I think that the entire responsible citizenship section seems a little bit too idealistic. It is hard to fully understand what the faculty expect out of the section because no class requirements have been proposed, but if these are all required skills I think this proposal might be too much to expect. On the other hand if this section is more of a, "we hope they develop these skills", situation then I think it is perfect.

While a lot of the expected learning outcomes are important, I believe some skills should receive more attention than others. In my opinion, all students should be required to demonstrate proficiency in critical thinking skills. This is a skill that is so important, yet so often forgotten, especially in this age of technology. Everyday we are flooded with huge amounts of information that is so easy to access on our phones or computers. But it is so easy to fall victim to a catchy headline or slanted news. Many times I have been frustrated by someone who takes a biased opinion as a fact and doesn't understand the context in which the statement was made. Therefore I think it's necessary to include ways to sharpen our critical thinking or information analysis skills into our common area requirements. I understand that this already happens here at Holy Cross, but as I said earlier, sometimes these lessons aren't being fully recognized by students.

This leads me to suggest that the requirements should include some lessons that make students actively analyze information to best understand it. For example, in one of my history classes in high school, we had to do a full analysis of every document we looked at before even talking about what the document was stating. We started off by determining when the evidence was created, by whom, where they were from, and what was the historical context at the time. This got the entire class actively thinking about the motives behind the document and made any

biases more obvious, allowing us to quickly judge the trustworthiness of what we were reading. Even today, I still think this was one of the most beneficial exercises I've done in my entire educational career so I think something similar should be required here at Holy Cross.

Additionally I think creative thinking should be a skill that is stressed in the common requirements. Holy Cross prides itself on having stand out students academically, athletically, and in the community. I also believe that all students here have that desire to stand out in whatever they pursue in life. The best way to do this is by helping develop creative thinking skills. Creativity is what will help create new innovations or develop new businesses. If Holy Cross helps its students sharpen their creative thinking I believe it will help achieve the mutual goal of creating students that stand out in the world.

While I have made some suggestions on how I would improve the learning outcomes statement, admittedly it is hard to come up with a better version myself. I value the role of the common requirements and I believe they are beneficial to my education. It has made me take some classes that I otherwise would not have taken and has taught me some skills I can carry over into other classes. I'm glad I go to a school that forces me to expand my selection of classes but my one complaint would be that there are too many different requirements you need to fulfill. My ideal common area requirements would be where you have to take of the all of the common classes besides a couple sections. This system would still make students expand their selection of classes and learn necessary educational skills while also not forcing students to take too many subjects that they don't have any interest in. It is hard to stay focused or work hard in a class in which you are not interested in the course material, so my system would limit the amount of classes like this. Overall I think the system should make one or two sections of your choice from the common area requirement not necessary, while also placing emphasis on important life skills such as critical analysis and creative thinking.

