

INTEGRATION COMMITTEE:
A FORUM DISCUSSION—29 JANUARY 2001

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Before starting the tape recorder, we agreed to keep the discussion theoretical. The Committee has submitted practical recommendations to Academic Council, which are not yet appropriate for publication. Members of the committee, not available for this discussion were Murray Hunt, Scott Samuelson, and John Walker.

WHAT IS THE VISION OF INTEGRATION?

Vaun: The Integration Committee was formed in October of 2000. What instructions did you receive? What was your task?

David: Our mission was to generate ideas about integration for the Administration and Academic Council. The point is to provide increased quality of education at BYU-Idaho, using at most our present resources. Our constraints were the 120-credit cap, with 70 hours per major and 14 religion credits, and clearly defined mathematics and writing components.

Scott: We were striving for integration between courses, programs, even degrees, and trying to be innovative in ways to achieve any of the three. So the ideas we came up with might put two classes together, for example. We worked on how to get more into the 120 hours through integration.

Vic: We began by looking at the integration of the freshman/sophomore undergraduate core, feeling that it was the engine that would drive other integration efforts across campus.

Vaun: Do I understand correctly that there are two purposes, one to maximize the use of resources including faculty, the other to help create a new paradigm for BYU-Idaho?

FACULTY

David: Scott Samuelson had the notion of getting teachers to take a class or attend a class outside their particular discipline with a view toward eventually teaching that class, as a way of getting faculty to work with other disciplines. So in addition to student levels of integration, we looked at integration issues that concern faculty. Certainly behind all of it was the idea

that somehow we might come up with a dynamic way of educating our students within the 120-credit limit. One of the challenges of the transition centers around faculty, ways of getting our faculty to look at integration as taking advantage of opportunities offered by other faculty members.

Brian: I think there is a consensus that integration won't happen unless faculty members have a vision of how disciplines interconnect. Faculty taking courses from other faculty members, learning and bringing it back into the classroom and teaching from that perspective, is one form of integration.

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Scott: We realized that one of the biggest obstacles to integration is that it would require freeing up faculty and providing remuneration because of the possibility of burnout. Those who have tried integrating a course realize it takes a lot of energy. Putting faculty together requires a lot of up-front time, energy, and cooperation.

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Vaun: If two faculty are working together, does that mean they work with twice the size group so that we keep the student/faculty ratio similar to what it is now?

Scott: That issue has to be addressed. We know that those who have participated in integration efforts in the past have been able to do it for a year or maybe even two, but after that it becomes too big of a commitment.

Vaun: So why do we want to do it?

EFFICIENCY

Brian: One of the reasons might be efficiency. Suppose for example that David and I—he teaches History 110, World Civilizations, and I teach Humanities 201—we have many students who take both courses, and we overlap in content; suppose that we make two sections of the same students, so that they could get history and humanities, but they aren't reading *The Odyssey* or *The Inferno* twice. Then we could bring more content into the Humanities class or more into the History class.

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Vic: What Brian is talking about is the economy of effort. We are probably talking about the same number of FLU's (Faculty Load Units) and student credit hours. But there is an economy of effort because two teachers are not overlapping, and you have an economy of learning for students because

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they are seeing commonalities rather than disparities between the disciplines.

David: There are other challenges, like reducing seat time. Teachers together may learn how to deliver content outside of a pure seat time situation. For example, if I teach a book that is also taught by others in Humanities, they may develop a modular delivery without seat time. I can gain efficiency by making use of colleagues who already teach something that I teach and do it better than I do it.

Scott: In the Religion Department, we teach two-credit classes. As a result we haven't met our classes on Fridays, leaving the building virtually empty. This semester we have gone to an eight-week module that meets Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. But because that falls short by about seven hours of what's needed for the two-credit requirement, we deliver the remaining hours by Internet or Blackboard. This will increase the effectiveness of the Taylor building by 20 percent.

Vaun: Did you talk about vehicles other than the Internet to reduce seat time?

Scott: One way might be through travel-study. A particular tour drives certain classes. With flexible scheduling we can set up a room, build a group, teach modules, do the trip, come back, and do more modules, all with a whole lot more creativity and freedom and integration among classes. For example, if a group was going to the Middle East, you may offer a photography class and have them integrate their photos with a class in history or current events.

Vaun: Considering expense, is it practical for large numbers of students to travel?

Scott: There may be opportunities to have groups spend half a semester away, to get housing that is not filled at a reduced rate. In the past we have taken 50 students to the Middle East. We need ways to make it more feasible.

Vaun: Have you talked about students earning, say, a semester's credit by Internet without showing up on campus?

Rhonda: Not the way you have just described it, but student-teaching for the education majors will be like that. They will be off campus for the full semester.

Vaun: Out of town, as well as off campus?

Rhonda: They could be. We will have students housed at Vashon Island and student-teaching in Seattle.

Vaun: Does that break with the tradition of student teaching?

Rhonda: There have always been students who arranged to teach in some distant state or school district. They just have a supervisor appointed in that region.

Vaun: The supervisors, what connection do they need to have with our campus?

Rhonda: The National Accrediting Board allows for them to be hired as clinical faculty, which would not be at FTE salary levels. It would be much cheaper for us to hire clinical faculty.

Vic: In parallel fashion, in a four-year engineering curriculum we plan on requiring internships. The internships would not necessarily occupy the FLU's of an on-campus faculty member. An Industrial Board Advisor could oversee the work. That is a very common thing that has gone on in engineering education for 20 or 25 years. They could even...

Rhonda: ...be full-time employees of other institutions, who from their institution would supervise the interns and provide them the off campus education experience that would be part of integration.

Vaun: I'm wondering about our geographical location. Are internships available, or would our interns travel some distance away?

Vic: Anecdotally, I ran into a young woman the other day who was admitted to Ricks on the summer/fall track, and right then she was just sitting in an apartment waiting. She probably needs to be in Milwaukee or Houston or Orlando on an internship.

Vaun: Are you in favor of all the engineering majors having an internship experience?

Vic: That is built into the proposed Engineering curriculum, both Mechanical Engineering and Computer Engineering, plus, in the senior year, a two-semester capstone experience which integrates not only engineering, but communications, economics, and so forth.

Vaun: Would the internship entail credits?

Vic: The Internship would be variable credit depending upon compensation to interns. If they were compensated they would probably not also receive credit.

GENERAL EDUCATION

Vaun: May we talk about general education issues that you've dealt with?

Vic: We have talked about the presupposition of core competencies from which we can build integration, but the recurrent frustration when we get students in sophomore, junior, senior level classes who lack skills in communication, writing, computer literacy. We need a truly integrated general education core.

Vaun: I teach writing in my literature classes, which always distresses me because I spend more time and accomplish less than I desire. But since it's a general education course, I feel that the students need some writing skills, not to mention the fact that much of their grade depends on their papers. I've not been at all comfortable taking off and having a wonderful time on literature when I have such varied levels of writers in the class. Is that the kind of problem you've tried to address?

David: Integration implies that we begin to look at general education from different perspectives. We can look at general education in terms of what we are doing for the student, what the student should expect to have when done with the general education. We can look at it as satisfying a variety of criteria, either internal or external, as to the skills students should possess or the knowledge they should be exposed to. And I think that when we look at courses like English or other skills courses, the question arises, "Why can't these skills be developed in other contexts that are already in general education?" I tend to view general education from an integrated point of view. We have to ask how we can make these integrations possible. Too often students wonder why they take G.E. courses. Faculty wonder why they are teaching G.E. courses. If I have a G.E. course that also has majors in it, I sometimes wonder whom I am teaching. Dichotomies get set up between institutional interests and student interests or between majors and non-majors. We have to ask questions about our goals in G.E.

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Vaun: With a more integrated general education, might students be more motivated and internalize more? Might they see less

distinction between departments, that is, would they tend less to compartmentalize their education?

- Brian: It is probably our biggest hope that students would break down those barriers themselves. Obviously, departmental barriers are here to stay. The current problem is that students move from course to course and department to department with very little connection. They don't know, for example, how mathematics and the axiomatic method of geometry are related to the early development of science and how that affects how we do science today. Or that early Greek art reflects views that are integrated, within the Greeks' minds, with their science, their religion, their philosophy. If the students could only say, "Well, yes, I can see that Einstein is building on ideas that were developed historically. And I know those ideas." That is the excitement of education, to draw connections, to make things fit together. That is something the German model of education, upon which we've built our American education system, has neglected in favor of specialization and progress.
- David: The old metaphor is that general education provides breadth and then in your specialty you get depth. A way to rephrase the breadth question is, Why don't we make sure that our students can teach themselves and organize their ideas and communicate them? A student in my World Civilization class may say, "I wanted to learn about Japan." But I will say, "There is a unit in the textbook you can read. My job is to enable you to learn about things you want to learn about." An educated person is someone who can find those things out and not be dependent on other people. My job as a teacher ceases to be the incessant deliverer of content.
- Vic: Dave is talking about enabling skills, but I think there is another issue, and that is to pique the motivation of the student. How many times have we run across the statement by teachers, "I need to help students work the general education somewhere into the majors class," or, by students, "I need to get my general education out of the way so I can get into the real thing." If general education could produce motivation toward integration among other courses, we would have achieved something.
- Vaun: What is the connection between integration and what has been called in recent years critical thinking?

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- Brian: Of course, an integrated setting would be ideal for teaching critical thinking. Integration isn't identical with critical thinking, nor do I think integration is identical with general education. One important part of critical thinking is synthesis, the ability to draw things together and draw inferences. In that respect, integration is an important part of critical thinking.
- Jack: If you think of overlapping circles representing two different disciplines, if you begin to understand the overlap, that is integration. And that is where very exciting things happen, where you have that overlap of the two disciplines.
- Scott: Where these circles overlap is where motivation to learn is created. If we create a jump-through-the-hoop mentality, where the goal is, "I have finished that requirement, now it's time to do the next one," can we ever expect our students to really be motivated to learn? From my own personal experience, I feel I spent most of my time looking at what I had to take next rather than trying to understand the world I lived in.
- Vaun: Are we so idealistic as to hope that through integration we can inspire students to learn to rejoice in their own ability to discover and think, or that they would become self-motivated learners as well as well trained?
- Scott: Unless we do, we will produce graduates who know more than they did in high school, but are not any more educated. Perhaps they know more, but they don't act any differently. I think integration is a good start.
- Vic: As an example of what Scott is talking about, here are twenty-five pages with about forty courses each that are proposed for BYU-Idaho. We are talking nearly a thousand courses. Not all of them are new, but I would say that 70 percent of them are. I see very little evidence that anything has been integrated.

A NEW BAPTISM

- Scott: We need a redefinition of things. We have used the metaphor of new wine. If you look at the Joseph Smith translation of these verses, you'll see they are talking about baptism. Christ brought in a new kingdom which required new ordinances—the old way of doing things will no longer work. This new baptism is one of authority and power, a baptism of the restoration.

Vic: A four-year university is not a two-year school doubled. It is a very different institution, a different paradigm. There is going to have to be a huge spiritual rebirth, a...

Scott: ...a new baptism.

Vic: Definitely a new baptism. The restoration is not yet over. As far as we are concerned here, we are right in the initial stages of it.

Vaun: Would each of you like to say what you have accomplished or what you would like to see happen next?

Scott: I envisioned us coming up with a list of practical suggestions, things like making money available for teachers to work together, or perhaps to prepare to teach outside our discipline, or to be part of an integrated team of several faculty members. As I look at what we are talking about, integration, I've thought many times, "That would have been fun for me as a student." Whether we can pull it off or not, I don't know. But I've gotten excited about being an undergraduate again. For us to do it right will require a new baptism. We'll have to be willing to make adjustments.

Vic: So many of us expressed that sometime in our life we had an epiphany where integration occurred. I am not sure for any of us that it occurred as an undergraduate. It didn't for me. It occurred for me after I completed my doctoral degree. What we would like to do is cause it to happen earlier in a person's educational experience. A change of heart and a new attitude can help make that happen.

David: It occurred for me in law school, in a course on torts. The professor asked a question about a contract, and a student said, "But that is contract law and we are in a torts class." For the next hour the professor showed that the separation between these categories tends to be more artificial than real. We learned that everything we were studying had to be integrated if we were to be successful in our profession, that keeping those boundaries firm would actually inhibit us from functioning. A lot of ideas have been generated and there will be more. I am hoping that this doesn't end with this committee. I hope we can get some wise experimentation to invent some new bottles, that faculty who are interested may be encouraged and empowered to do it.

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FINDING THE RIGHT IDEA

- Jack: I have learned from this book, *Leadership and the New Science* by Margaret Wheatley, that if you make a small change in one part of a system it permeates the entire system. If we can make changes just on a small level, they can permeate through the campus. I hope that individual faculty members or faculty members working together can change little things that work well, which can be used throughout the campus.
- Vaun: Is there any chance of catching those as they happen, and sharing them rather than have them happen only in individual minds or classrooms?
- Jack: When you find the right idea it just goes. Wheatley says it is very difficult for top-down changes, because everybody is grudging the layer above that is forcing the change. But to the extent that we communicate with each other, talk to each other from different disciplines, and even team teach together, that will generate the kinds of changes that can permeate the campus.
- Vic: Jack is drawing from Edward Lorenz' chaos theory, for example, "Can the flapping of a butterfly's wings in eastern China produce hurricanes off the eastern coast of the United States?" The answer is "Yes, under certain conditions." And so what we are trying to do is produce the condition by which that would happen. To use another metaphor from science, How would you connect quantum theory with general relativity? Well a new idea had to occur, Super String Theory, to cause that to happen. We are in the midst of doing the super string theory of education, that small effects can take two diverse things—focus on the curriculum and focus on the student—or focus on specific majors and focus on the general education—and connect them through a bridging paradigm.
- Rhonda: I have been really impressed as we have met and compiled all the good things that are going on on campus. Part of the function of this committee has been to bring these ideas together and to show how they connect, for us to realize, 'Oh, that is happening,' "Oh, this isn't a brand new idea; someone already thought of it and is implementing it." What we need to do is spread the word. In Meg Wheatley's book she talks about preaching to the choir. She says, "Preaching to the choir is exactly the right thing to do....If I can help those who already share certain beliefs and dreams...sing their song a little clearer, a little more confidently, I know that they will

take that song back to their networks.” That is a lot of the mission of this group, to clarify concepts and strategies that others can run with in their own directions.

Vic: We ought to rename it the Integration Evangelical Committee.

Brian: My wish would be to have faculty members who are really interested in integrating curriculum start coming together and talking with one another. I don't think integration is going to happen by coming down from the administration, nor do I think it is going to happen in programs so much as it will happen if faculty members are interested in it and drive it. That is why integration of faculty, our own learning, and the desire for integration should filter into the classrooms, perhaps cause us to join classes, do all kinds of experimenting. My wish is that the administration allow us that liberty.

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David: A certain energy is required to complete any project. Well, we have to begin as a faculty to generate that potential. I think a lot of what you would call the “Spirit of Ricks” arises from faculty and others who are committed to the future of the project that was called Ricks College and now will be called Brigham Young University-Idaho. That energy infiltrates the classroom and our discussions with each other. We are constantly recommitting in a variety of ways. ∞