

# ACADEMIC REVITALIZATION

CREATING A MODEL OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
THAT PREPARES STUDENTS FOR A LIFETIME OF  
LEARNING – AND THE WORKFORCE

WEBSTER DEFINES THE LIBERAL ARTS AS “COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY STUDIES INTENDED TO PROVIDE CHIEFLY GENERAL KNOWLEDGE AND TO DEVELOP GENERAL INTELLECTUAL CAPACITIES (AS REASON AND JUDGMENT) AS OPPOSED TO PROFESSIONAL OR VOCATIONAL SKILLS.”

IBM AND PROGRAMMERS (1970'S)

AS IT TURNS OUT, THE JOBS OF THE FUTURE REQUIRE DEEP UNDERSTANDING OF THE TECHNOLOGIES CHANGING OUR WORKPLACE AND OUR SOCIETY. THAT UNDERSTANDING REQUIRES EXPERIMENTAL AND EXPERIENTIAL TRAINING AND THE KIND OF GROUNDED ACADEMIC THINKING THAT LETS BIG IDEAS SOAR. THE PROGRAMS, THE FACULTY, THE UNIVERSITIES THAT UNDERSTAND THAT CHALLENGE WILL LEAD US ALL.

CATHY N. DAVIDSON (2017). THE NEW EDUCATION: HOW TO REVOLUTIONIZE THE UNIVERSITY TO PREPARE STUDENTS FOR A WORLD IN FLUX.

## On the nature of revolutions

- ▶ The history of higher education over the last century and a half has been towards increasing disciplinary specialization, and the coursework in the liberal arts have been traditionally focused on preparing the highest achieving students (the top 10-20%) for advanced study in graduate or professional schools.
- ▶ MTSU Experience
- ▶ We must rethink and revitalize our curriculum so that the 80% of our students who plan to earn their degree and enter the workforce are also exceptionally well-prepared to do so.

PAST, PRESENT, AND ..... FUTURE

I BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE AT LEAST THREE INTERRELATED ACADEMIC COMPONENTS THAT UIS CAN EMPLOY TO ACHIEVE NATIONAL DISTINCTION FOR THE WAY IN WHICH IT PREPARES STUDENTS IN THE LIBERAL ARTS WITH EXCEPTIONAL WORKFORCE READINESS.

Experiential Learning

Creating Clear Pathways to a T-Shaped Profile

Revitalization/Professionalization of the Liberal Arts

- ▶ Surveys of the knowledge, skills, and competencies in greatest demand from employers consistently reveal exactly what the liberal arts are designed to provide – a need for graduates who can engage in critical thinking, creative problem-solving, effective communication, strong interpersonal skills, and cultural sensitivity.
- ▶ However, employers consistently indicate that college graduates lack these skills. This disconnect is a product of traditional approaches to teaching and learning that has been both passive (students listen to lectures) and concentrated within the classroom (instead of embedded both in and out of the classroom).

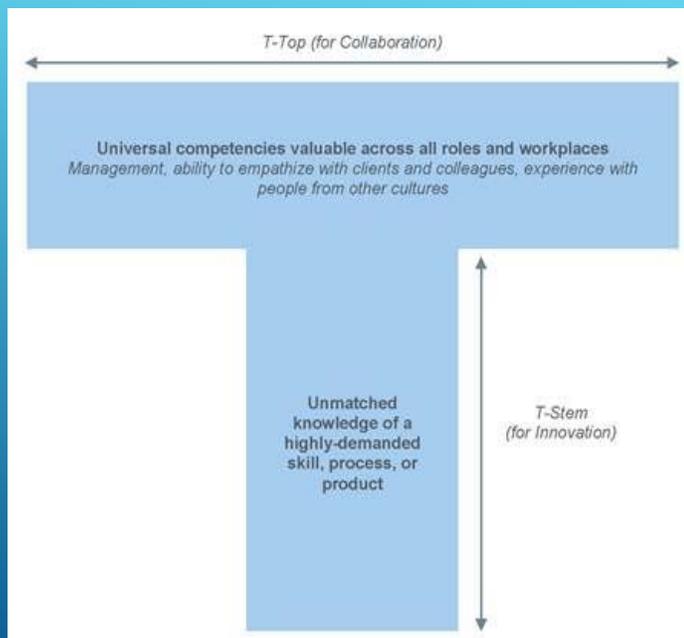
## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

- ▶ Experiential Learning includes service learning, internships (field experiences), travel study/study abroad, applied learning projects, independent research, and integrative learning. EXPL is high impact.
- ▶ EXPL engages students and faculty in active teaching and learning (actually doing the discipline), assesses the value added benefits of active and engaging learning experiences, and requires students to apply what they have learned in settings outside the classroom.
- ▶ EXPL often requires public dissemination of the student's work (accountability), and culminates in an electronic portfolio of achievement (evidence of skills for potential employers).
- ▶ EXPL effectively closes the loop between simply knowing something, and being able to apply (generalize) that knowledge when appropriate (outside the structured classroom environment).

## TRANSFORMATIONAL, HIGH IMPACT TEACHING AND LEARNING

- ▶ The T-Shaped Profile stems from corporate concerns with the “roundedness” of college graduates. For example, for over 30 years IBM has been concerned that while it can find highly knowledgeable and skilled programmers, their ability to effectively communicate and work collaboratively with others has been problematic.
- ▶ “Roundedness”

## CREATING CLEAR PATHWAYS TO A T-SHAPED PROFILE



The T-Shaped concept is important in that research demonstrates that students who possess both collaborative and innovative skills at graduation find meaningful work more quickly and advance up the organizational ladder more rapidly.

We can create clear pathways to the T-Shaped profile by identifying majors and minors that can be paired to provide students with the technical and specialized innovative skills that employers seek with the collaborative skills that are essential in the modern workplace.

This approach does not increase the time or cost of degree completion, but significantly enhances student readiness for the workplace.

A RELEVANT LIBERAL ARTS DEGREE:  
WORKFORCE READY AND PREPARED FOR  
A LIFETIME OF PROFESSIONAL  
ACHIEVEMENT AND SUCCESS

- ▶ University Of Illinois Springfield is dedicated to fully engaging students in the process of active teaching and learning, offering degrees that are relevant to student personal and professional success across a lifetime, and providing students with a distinctive academic experience by harnessing interdisciplinary synergies in teaching, research, and outreach activities created by academic realignment and revitalization.

REVITALIZATION OF THE LIBERAL ARTS

THE CHRONIC AND PERSISTENT PROBLEMS OF TODAY (GRAND CHALLENGES) REQUIRE APPROACHES AND SOLUTIONS THAT TRANSCEND TRADITIONAL DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES.

EFFECTIVE EMPLOYEES IN THE MODERN WORKPLACE ARE THOSE THAT ARE PREPARED TO INTEGRATE KNOWLEDGE FROM A VARIETY OF SOURCES AND USE THEM TO PROVIDE BETTER SOLUTIONS.

STANFORD'S D.SCHOOL      CIC – SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

THIS RECOGNITION SHOULD DRIVE HOW WE CONCEPTUALIZE AND DESIGN THE ACADEMIC FUNCTIONS AND STRUCTURES OF THE UNIVERSITY.

CONCEPTUALIZING DESIRED ACADEMIC FUNCTIONS AND DESIGNING ACADEMIC STRUCTURES THAT SERVE THOSE FUNCTIONS

- ▶ The academic function of UIS is to provide students with the best possible academic experience possible both in and out of the classroom by facilitating creative and innovative opportunities for faculty to pursue teaching, discovery, and outreach activities.
- ▶ The creation of new academic structures to serve these functions provides a distinct opportunity to professionalize the liberal arts. This is not vocational training, but a modern approach to providing students with a better liberal arts education that challenges and overcomes perceptions that liberal education is no longer relevant.
- ▶ UIS is positioned to produce graduates who will be uniquely prepared to compete for meaningful work in an increasingly competitive global economy.

“PROFESSIONALIZING” THE LIBERAL ARTS

- ▶ How do we begin the conversation?
- ▶ What are the usual obstacles?
- ▶ Is there a "best process" for working through challenges?

DO WE GO FROM HERE? WHERE?