

Distinctively American: The Liberal Arts College

PATENTS ON THE TRADITIONAL MISSION of liberal arts education have expired. Generic versions of that mission are now regularly included in even the most specialized undergraduate curricula. In the marketplace, meanwhile, the undiluted liberal arts experience is battling the pressures of escalating costs, rising tuitions, and increasing demands for career training as a primary component of undergraduate study. These pressures alone weigh heavily on the future of independent residential liberal arts colleges. However, their impact is compounded by the contemporary environment of social change and societal demands. As a result, the educational estate of these colleges is being fundamentally challenged and their continuing viability seriously threatened.

This essay will address the following questions: In view of their acknowledged problems, have liberal arts colleges lost their relevance and do they, *in terms of their traditional mission as liberal arts colleges*, face extinction? If so, and the “natural selection” process is allowed to proceed, does it matter? If it matters, why? What are the options for survival? And would “responsible citizenship,” as an active ingredient, contribute significantly as a force for breathing new life and viability into the liberal arts mission?

There are some thirty-five hundred colleges and universities in the United States. Under sufficiently elastic criteria, about

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eight hundred of these might claim a liberal arts identity and at the same time qualify as “independent” and “residential.” However, the latest Carnegie classification lists only 125 colleges as baccalaureate (Liberal Arts I) institutions, that is, “primarily undergraduate colleges with a major emphasis on baccalaureate (*liberal arts*) degree programs.”¹ The list does not include doctoral universities that offer baccalaureate programs or colleges with baccalaureate programs where fewer than 40 percent of graduates receive liberal arts degrees. While this essay is focused on the baccalaureate (Liberal Arts I) group, in obvious respects its comments apply to higher education more broadly.

While sharing the Carnegie liberal arts classification, these 125 colleges differ greatly in their characteristics of smallness, independence, academic and nonacademic programs, resources, and facilities. It is also noteworthy that only one college in this group was founded after 1950—while, over the same period, the total college population of the United States almost quintupled. Further to the point, since 1950 many liberal arts colleges have closed their doors or sought survival by merging or abandoning their liberal arts identity, while the number of four-year colleges offering the bachelor’s or first professional degree as their highest degree declined by more than 12 percent.

THE HISTORIC LIBERAL ARTS MISSION

Liberal arts colleges—like many other colleges and universities—have their philosophical roots in a tradition that began in New England over three hundred years ago with the establishment of the first enclaves for educating privileged white males. Their select young students were groomed in a tightly disciplined Anglo-Saxon educational tradition that was presumed to instill qualifications for leadership of a theocratic community. While imparting knowledge, their academic regimen was also intended to develop personal character and intellect—to turn out what continues to be confusingly styled “the whole person,” prepared to function knowledgeably within a framework of civic responsibility. Woodrow Wilson, as president of Princeton, referred to this tradition when he spoke of “the generous union

then established in the college between the life of philosophy and the life of the state” in the early years of this country.²

Today, unlike their forebears, liberal arts colleges do not as a general rule feel impelled to exercise a proactive role in preparing students for service in their communities. Contemporary liberal arts curricula are seldom designed to implement that civic dimension of their missions by reaching beyond the campus environment. Rather, conscious of their established prestige and historic role in higher education, they are substantially consumed by internal academic agendas.

This change came about over the past 150 years as America’s steadily expanding population and evolving agricultural-industrial-service economy generated new educational demands. Institutions of higher education that were established to satisfy these demands included land-grant colleges, vocational schools with science and engineering disciplines, research universities, and graduate and professional schools. While higher education was thus becoming more integral to American life, liberal arts colleges continued to focus steadfastly on their traditional curricula and became more and more detached from the community. They came to be virtual academic islands that regarded applied learning as somewhat *déclassé*.

Reformers of liberal arts education have considered the need for adapting attitudes and curricula to encourage more significant relationships with community problems and social change. Indeed, college years now abound with serious discussions and random initiatives of voluntarism that evidence social concern. Issues of diversity, multiculturalism, poverty, freedom of speech, empowerment, environment, demographic and economic changes, affirmative action, gender, and equal opportunity permeate the curricula of the humanities and social sciences. Qualities of responsible citizenship as demonstrated by student engagements with social issues are applauded; but rarely do colleges engage these issues in ways that meaningfully prepare students for active roles as citizens in recognizing, understanding, and responding to them.

The social philosophy of Plato, with its mandate for responsible citizenship, is recognized as a building block of the liberal arts canon. The stated mission of virtually every liberal arts

college attests to this. However, while professing allegiance to the canon, liberal arts curricula are not explicitly designed to inculcate qualities of civic responsibility, that is, to impart the knowledge, understanding, and ability to make thoughtful and ethical judgments of social issues—to feel the motivation and moral responsibility that encourage constructive participation in a democratic society. Liberal arts colleges seem content to presume, with some justification, that the traditional liberal arts education in itself infuses special qualities of citizenship into student psyches that eventually emerge in various ways as postgraduate dividends to society.

The limited civic responsiveness of liberal arts colleges may in part reflect a muddled understanding among their constituencies—administration, faculty, students, trustees, alumni—of the social issues and the “buzzwords” by which they are identified. It may reflect ethical uncertainties and substantive disagreements in assessing the relevance of the issues to liberal arts education—or, in any case, the priority of their claims to attention. It may reflect fears of getting trapped in positions where responsive actions might open a Pandora’s box of more serious problems and controversial reactions. As Gregory S. Prince, Jr., wrote, “Educating for civic responsibility is educating for changes, and that task creates tension, resistance and even anger.”³ Finally, colleges may fall back on the minimalist concept that “learning for its own sake” needs no extracurricular rationale.

Whatever the explanation or excuse, the disengagement of colleges does not reflect the readiness of most of their students to initiate or become involved in social causes that touch their idealism, emotions, or sense of justice. Arthur Levine has pointed out that 64 percent of all college students are currently involved in some form of community-service activity.⁴ However, lacking an institutional imperative, these activities are mostly random off-campus extracurricular ventures that are peripheral to academic programs, undertaken with insufficient understanding of the problems they address and the qualifications needed for dealing with them. Their goals often lack definition, criteria for evaluation, mechanisms for continuity, and responsibility for accomplishment.

Issues of citizenship and social responsibility impact all colleges and universities—their governance, budgets, staffing, internal relationships, and academic life. They provoke the collision of diverse perspectives and perceived interests of faculty, administrators, students, trustees, and alumni. Most of these institutions are in some measure shielded from the impact by their institutional characteristics, their curricular orientations, and their positions in the marketplace. Academic programs that are heavy in the sciences, research, or professional and vocational training can dull the cutting edge of social concern and temper motivation for activist diversions.

Independent residential liberal arts colleges, by contrast, are by their nature uniquely vulnerable to these collisions. Smallness and limited resources compound the difficulties of maintaining a liberal arts character as they try to contain or accommodate the insistent demands of diversity, financial aid, alternative lifestyles, new technology, community relations, and requests for student services. For these live issues and others that touch directly upon questions of citizenship and social responsibility, procrustean responses accomplish little and may even exacerbate the problems.

Beyond issues associated with socially responsible citizenship, liberal arts colleges also have the problem of sustaining their traditional academic character in a competitive environment in which, on the one hand, they have lost the exclusivity of their liberal arts franchise and, on the other, more and more of their prospective students insist on undergraduate education that also offers attractive vocational substance. This is not to suggest that the value placed on the liberal arts has diminished. On the contrary, and perhaps for the very reasons that threaten its future, the educational preeminence of the liberal arts canon could be more important than ever as an attribute of democratic culture and a qualification for leadership. Indeed, as professional and service activities have become major growth sectors of the American economy, a liberal arts degree has come to be regarded as a valuable and often essential employment qualification for future managers.

CHANGE: A LIBERAL ARTS CONSTANT

Like most systems that relate to intellectual or spiritual life, liberal arts education must periodically refresh the substance of its mission—most immediately by adapting its content and structure to address the needs and objectives of a democratic society that has undergone and continues to undergo major transformation. There is nothing new about this. Pressures for change have been a historic constant in the lives of liberal arts colleges. Among many influences, the innovations of prominent educators—such as Charles Eliot, John Dewey, Frank Aydelotte, Alexander Meiklejohn, and Arthur Morgan—plus the perennial need to recruit the next class of qualified students have stimulated colleges to respond in various ways.

Claims to elitism have become more restrained. Discriminatory practices are much less apparent. Visible evidence on campus of racial diversity is a must. Rights and considerations of gender are generally respected and substantially accommodated. A cornucopia of curricular concepts have entered the liberal arts lexicon—“free electives,” “distribution requirements,” “cores,” “majors” and “double majors,” “minors,” “concentrations,” “internships,” “honors,” and “interdisciplinary” activities of all types. Curricula have been modified to dilute the European tradition of Platonic idealism with the American tradition of philosophical pragmatism. Thus, they now offer more languages (often without Latin and Greek), somewhat greater cultural diversity, updated and revisionist reading lists, and larger doses of both the sciences and professional studies. On the negative side, as rising operating costs have compounded the urgency of recruiting an adequate student body in an increasingly competitive market, many colleges—especially those with severely limited financial-aid budgets—must contend with the questions of economizing on instruction and lowering standards of admission and academic performance.

Like all colleges and universities, liberal arts colleges in recent decades have also been obliged to cope with burgeoning external forces—new and challenging frontiers of knowledge and communications, dramatic new learning tools, maintenance and obsolescence, global considerations, increasingly diverse

constituencies and their growing service demands. Thoughtful responses to these forces have rarely come easily or uncontested. Responses are tempered by the need to surmount barriers of academic process and prerogative, sensitivity to relationships with peer colleges, costs and financing, internal conflicts over the allocation of resources, strong individual biases, and the viscosities of tradition.

There are also strong internal forces, with none more powerful and insistent than the faculty. Adam Yarmolinsky rightly depicted faculty as the legislative body of any college.⁵ Without their consent, no program of instruction can be offered, no student can graduate, no faculty member can be hired. Their prerogatives and the advocacy of their disciplines, matters of tenure, maintenance of quality, and intramural competition for resources are influential ingredients of just about every curricular and institutional policy decision.

Liberal arts colleges boast faculties that are distinguished by sustained dedication to undergraduate teaching and the values of a traditional liberal arts environment. As Vartan Gregorian put it, “At the heart of liberal education is the act of teaching.”⁶ However, many good teachers have been gravitating toward the scholarly and monetary rewards of specialization—committing themselves to increasingly narrow segments of their disciplines, giving their research priority while offering only part-time instruction to students. Absorbed in their disciplines, more and more teachers confine their responsibilities to the classroom and laboratory, competing for student majors who can be trained according to research needs with slight regard for the content or direction of their nonacademic lives. Frank Wong observed that such specialization geared to “careerism and credentials” is a very serious concern when, narrow and dominating, it becomes disconnected from human values, social needs, and the personal development of students.⁷

No less than faculties, administrators and trustees of liberal arts colleges also find themselves turned inward. Except when associated with campus crises, concerns over issues of citizenship and social responsibility are understandably displaced by operating and budgetary priorities. Published mission statements and annual reports almost invariably include references

to these civic issues. However, such language usually represents a ritual of righteous rhetoric rather than functional liberal arts credentials. The rhetoric suggests de facto decisions that, beyond organizing the intellectual life of students, colleges do not accept a responsibility for cultivating responsible citizenship.

REVITALIZING THE FUTURE OF LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

Leon Botstein asserts that the organization of knowledge and the modes of transmission are inherently part of a fabric of social ideas and action.⁸ Drawing on management guru Peter Drucker's statement that the purpose of any organization can be found outside of the organization, James Mingle maintains that while the tradition of an institution gives it strength, external engagement governs its future.⁹ The operating agendas of liberal arts colleges are not consistent with these precepts. If liberal arts colleges *as such* are to retain a significant role in higher education, they will have to redefine their missions in contemporary terms. Beyond rhetorical therapy, redefinition will have to invoke a philosophy of enlightened self-interest that clearly makes "social ideas and action" and "external engagement" the subjects of aggressive attention. It must effectively associate both institutional and student objectives with those of the community and responsible citizenship. To achieve the development of students as the "whole persons" that liberal arts curricula are said to intend, classroom and campus boundaries must not limit institutional responsibility for intellectual growth and academic experience.

The philosophy of liberal arts is the philosophy of a democratic society in which citizenship, social responsibility, and community are inseparable. An educated citizenry is the essential instrument for promoting responsible social action and community well-being. It is characterized by an ongoing effort to develop informed, humane, and thoughtful judgments of social issues and to act appropriately on these judgments. Such issues may be identified by their impact on the rights and well-being of human beings, their relationships to the community, the environments in which they exist, the rules by which they are governed, and the equity with which they apply.

Some 150 years ago, Alexis de Tocqueville, commenting on the qualities of citizenship, observed that, unlike peoples of other countries, Americans as individuals took a particularly active responsibility for the well-being of their neighbors and their community. Since then, the massive demographic, cultural, and economic changes of this country's expanding and increasingly diverse population, together with the forces of new technology and globalization, have eroded this characteristic. Most people now tend to ignore or reject more than casual involvement with social issues that they do not perceive as affecting them very directly. Respect for the rules, processes, and institutions of our democratic society has been largely displaced by suspicion and cynicism. Popular sentiment has become increasingly disenchanted with politics, political decision making, and the quality of political leadership. So pervasive is political apathy that it is unusual when even half the citizens who enjoy the right to vote do so in an election. The bonding sense of pluralism associated with America's melting-pot tradition has been abraded by multicultural separatism that is often blind to shared values. The causes that inspire strong civic reaction today are often thoughtless and narrowly orchestrated "us versus them" expressions, most notable for their qualities of cultural bias, ignorance, or lack of understanding among community groups.

These conditions also point to major deficiencies in the responses of American education to the needs of a vastly changed society. By almost any statistical measure, the public education system—indispensable to the existence of a free democratic society—has deteriorated. Especially at primary and secondary levels, it fails to meet the educational needs of youth who must learn to live their lives in a society very different from that in which their parents came to maturity. Almost half the children who started school this year have no credible expectation of a college education—and this in an era when 80 percent of all new jobs require entry-level skills equivalent to at least two years of college. Among other negative consequences, these deficiencies have greatly restricted the number of students who qualify for higher education—a consequence of particular severity for liberal arts colleges.

Higher education, generally, and liberal arts colleges, specifically, have done little to help rebuild the condition of the nation's educational system. From their prestigious position at the top of the educational ladder, colleges and universities generally have shown little disposition to reach down with sustained commitment to help make the total process of education work effectively for everybody. There has been no long-range cooperative outreach geared to the assumption that "a rising tide raises all ships." Rather, the recruiting efforts of institutions strive to compete more intensively within the limited pool of qualified students who are able to climb the educational ladder with minimal supportive intervention.

The undergraduate years are the most fruitful—and, for most students, the last—period for nourishing their ideals and expanding their social perspectives and intellectual horizons in preparing for their eventual places in society. Whatever the nature of the institution or its curriculum, the processes of undergraduate education both in and out of the classroom should be designed to enrich the experience of students by inculcating democratic values, respect for the institutions of democracy, ethical perspectives, civic duty, and social responsibility. As a distinguishing element of their mission, liberal arts colleges can take the leadership in making this happen.

AN OPEN-ENDED CHALLENGE TO LIBERAL ARTS COLLEGES

The development of curricula and delivery systems for providing such enrichment is a general and open-ended challenge to higher education. Although higher education institutionally would surely applaud such objectives in principle, most colleges and universities are likely to find the challenge intimidating, impractical to implement, unaffordable, or beyond their educational charter. Few would willingly recast their educational programs to satisfy intangible and perhaps controversial social objectives that may seem remote from current academic agendas. Some might insist that their existing agendas already deal adequately with civic concerns.

Liberal arts colleges cannot so readily dismiss this challenge. For one thing, to do so could properly be regarded as disavow-

ing a moral responsibility and repudiating their traditional role in higher education. For another, there is the serendipitous fact that major social issues bound up in the challenge include some that liberal arts colleges must in any event confront—if they are not already trying to do so. But especially important, it would squander their special qualifications for meeting this challenge.

Liberal arts colleges are natural laboratories for undertaking long-term institutional commitments to serve social objectives. They are relatively homogeneous bodies and free from cross-currents of interests and territorial imperatives that characterize the operations and politics of large university complexes. As small communities in their own right, these colleges provide favorable environments in which to develop and test elements of curriculum and related programs for making responsible citizenship a meaningful part of undergraduate experience. When undiluted by vocational priorities, their academic domain and campus attributes provide opportunities to encourage thoughtful and creative initiatives. Their liberal arts disposition tends to be responsive to projects that associate intellectual commitment with human concern—an association that propels social action. They are practiced in consulting and cooperating with their internal and external constituencies when considering and carrying out major policy decisions and commitments. As Michael Sandel has noted in substance, liberal arts colleges are positioned to develop “the capacity of individuals to balance individual and community responsibilities, civic responsibility against individual freedom, and procedural aspects of institutions with the content of their mission and program.”¹⁰

Taking their problematic future into account, liberal arts colleges may well regard the challenge of enriching American education as a special opportunity to reconstitute the viability of their historic role in higher education and their distinction in the marketplace. Instead of seeking survival by compromising their mission and adapting their character to more merchantable denominators, liberal arts colleges can find new vitality and appeal by adding responsible citizenship as a discrete undergraduate dimension. Obviously, the dimension will not, like Athena from the head of Zeus, emerge on any campus as a fully fashioned creation. Rather, over time it will develop incremen-

tally in substance and effectiveness from the initial projects and programs and the related collaborations among college and community constituencies.

Moreover, packaged with the experience of organizing and administering them, programs and related projects could, as tested models, become available to all colleges and universities for adaptation and replication.¹¹ With the galvanic influence of success, these models of liberal arts experience could do much to encourage other institutions to bridge the critical gap between approval of program objectives in principle and positive engagement to achieve them. In effect, the challenge may be said to offer liberal arts colleges the ultimate opportunity for institutional revitalization by serving what has become this country's highest priority: to assure a genuine opportunity for a quality education to every child. It is important to realize that every major problem America faces—political, economic, social—is at least in part rooted in the disarray of American education. According to a U.S. Department of Education survey published in 1993, over one-third of this country's adult population is functionally illiterate—a condition that must surely be reflected in the nation's productivity, economic growth, racial disharmony, poverty, crime, competitive position in world markets, and, ultimately, its viability as a free democratic society.

AN AGENDA FOR ACTION

There are many paths to responsible citizenship, just as there are many ways—instructional and experiential—to cultivate its qualities. As a starting point for making responsible citizenship a substantive element of undergraduate experience, political scientist Benjamin Barber provides a broad blueprint of the qualities desired: “The willingness to engage in public issues (which grows out of self-esteem); empathy and respect for differences; commitment to nonviolence and conflict resolution; and the ability to analyze information, evidence, and argument.”¹²

I do not profess expertise or presume upon professional prerogative by prescribing details and process for teaching and

cultivating these qualities. However, John Dewey prescribed three essential elements: it should engage students in the surrounding community; it should be focused on problems to be solved rather than academic discipline; and it should collaboratively involve students and faculty.¹³ Within this prescription, programs can be planned to provide opportunities for constructively expressing the idealism and socially driven energies of students, joined with the experienced guidance of faculty. Such programs could foster socially oriented collaboration and volunteerism within the institution and community. As Alfred H. Bloom wrote, such programs should “educate students for the kind of ethical intelligence that is required for our time, to transform values to strategies for social change, [and] to provide exposure to [social] problems so vivid that it will develop in them a lifelong commitment to respond.”¹⁴ There is, however, one major caveat: without infringing upon “first amendment” rights, the form, direction, content, and conduct of programs must be consistent with approved institutional policies.

Thus envisioned, the undergraduate learning experience for responsible citizenship would function in three contexts:

In the classroom. Courses on citizenship can teach its meaning philosophically and practically. They can foster an understanding of the fundamental significance of pluralism in society—to appreciate the common values of diverse cultures and to respect their differences. Students can learn to take pride in their ability to contribute usefully to public affairs, to believe that they can make a difference, and to recognize the importance of experiential learning. Faculty can relate elements of existing courses in their disciplines to civic issues for student consideration. Students can be encouraged to ask penetrating questions and learn to communicate effectively with understanding and respect for the sensitivities of individuals and groups.

On the campus. Aspects of citizenship and social responsibility associated with living together on campus and the problems of institutional life can be subjects for communal discussion and resolution. They can be central considerations in establishing facilities, organizing and extending campus activities, and stimulating student initiatives. They can promote interactions among

interest groups. Campus publications, special research, and involvement in conflict resolution can promote thoughtful intramural dialogue on aspects of campus activities and policies relating to concerns such as diversity, multiculturalism, racism, harassment, social conduct, and academic performance.

In the community. Local communities provide colleges with a broad range of options for program-related projects and an opportunity for imaginative initiatives. Projects can be long- or short-term undertakings and associated with classroom studies. Areas of outreach, whether local or distant from campus, can include education, the environment, health care, economic development, cultural enterprise, and social services. Projects can be internships or established community actions that invite college participation. They may network with established public- and private-sector educational and social service programs, or join in establishing new ones. They must have reasonably defined parameters with specified objectives and competent oversight, as well as providers with performance responsibilities who are or can be qualified to fulfill them. Moreover, well-intentioned though they may be, projects must be more than extracurricular “feel good” exercises that confer little benefit, and that may be seen as superficial or patronizing.

AN AGENDA FOR COLLABORATION

For programs to be effective, colleges must from the beginning seek to establish collaborations that relate to each of the three contexts of program operation—classroom, campus, and community. These collaborations are needed to contribute useful experience and judgment in the planning, organization, and oversight of programs and for dealing with related problems and policies. Collaborators must fully understand the program, recognize the significance and credibility of its objectives, know what is expected of them, and demonstrate enthusiasm for being part of it. They can have an appropriate role in program governance.

Upfront collaboration that represents participation of the entire college community is fundamental. Each in their own

way, administrators, faculty, students, trustees, and alumni—as individuals or representing a constituency—can contribute constructively to some aspect of the program and its related projects. In so doing, not only is the campus spirit of community enhanced but, particularly important, institutional commitment to the program as a contemporary element of mission is affirmed.

Off-campus ingredients of the program require that collaborations involve members of the local community—corporations, public and private social-service agencies, church and civic groups, schools and community colleges, and individual volunteers. These collaborations may deal with projects that respond to specific community concerns in education, environment, health, economic development, and poverty. Collaborators as a group should reflect the diversity of the community, and take care that interactions among themselves and with the community are considerate of the rights, experience or inexperience, sensitivities, and interests of those affected. In addition to personal fulfillment, the services of collaborators can provide inspirational models of college leadership, responsible citizenship, and town-gown relationships.

Institutional collaborations among liberal arts colleges, perhaps under the auspices of existing associations, can be of greatest importance for program development and significant accomplishment. The structure and details of individual college programs must obviously be shaped by local circumstances—and programs may differ accordingly. However, their common thrust will generate experiences and information that can be usefully exchanged, and raise problems and policy questions that can usefully be discussed. Over time, a basic agenda for promoting responsible citizenship, adaptable but with conceptual integrity, would be collectively developed as a kinetic dimension of liberal arts curricula.

Liberal arts colleges share some critically important objectives that, by their nature, can be best served by collaborative attention—and without antitrust concerns. Thus, probably all of them and their student bodies are now engaged in various socially motivated projects on their campuses and in their communities. Without intruding on their individual integrity, many

of these projects could be advantageously associated with the program's broad agenda of preparing students for responsible citizenship.

Most urgent among the common concerns of liberal arts colleges is the tremendous need for enlarging the pool of students who want a college education and can meet admission requirements. This need—a bottom-line aspect of America's currently paramount concern with education—bears on other college problems such as recruiting, academic standards, diversity, and financial aid. As a primary building block of a program for responsible citizenship, liberal arts colleges—perhaps using projects of the nationwide “I Have a Dream” program as models—can most appropriately work together to address the urgency of assuring every child a genuine opportunity for a fulfilling education.

To that end, liberal arts colleges should reach out insistently into their communities, where, by their nature, they are important members—commanding respect and contributing intellectual and economic value. Understandably, except when interests unavoidably collide, colleges usually prefer to avoid initiatives or gratuitous involvements in community concerns that might invite controversy. However, it is reasonable to believe that, as an acknowledged means of promoting responsible citizenship, projects associated with community needs provide common and inviting grounds for college-community engagement.

Through the combined efforts of administrators, faculty, and students, colleges can mobilize local businesses, public and private agencies, churches, and civic groups to join in planning and carrying out projects that address specific community needs—in particular, helping their children climb the educational ladder. Where possible, these projects would cooperate as auxiliary support facilities to complement the regular public services of the community. Special attention might be directed to developing the important resource found in community colleges, as a reservoir of disadvantaged students who are at least preliminarily committed to pursue higher education.

This essay recognizes the fact that no educational program involving change is without cost—and that the cost of undertaking to establish a comprehensive program to make respon-

sible citizenship an active part of the liberal arts mission could, over time, be quite considerable. However, it seems premature to be put off by the question of cost and related funding until the liberal arts community or its leaders can assess the value of its benefits and establish a clear sense of direction by answering the questions with which this essay began—and deciding whether responsible citizenship is to be reestablished as an active ingredient of a liberal arts education. That decision speaks to the future of liberal arts colleges—to the revitalization of their tradition as a distinctively positive force in American education. It also speaks to the direction of higher education generally in fulfilling its responsibilities to the national community.

ENDNOTES

- ¹Carnegie classification as published in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 October 1998.
- ²Woodrow Wilson, “Princeton in the Nation’s Service,” *Forum* XXII (December 1896).
- ³Gregory S. Prince, Jr., “Are We Graduating Good Citizens?” *Educational Record* (Summer/Fall 1997).
- ⁴Arthur Levine and Jana Nidiffer, *Beating the Odds: How the Poor Get to College* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1996).
- ⁵Adam Yarmolinsky, “Constraints and Opportunities,” in *Rethinking Liberal Education*, ed. Nicholas H. Farnham and Adam Yarmolinsky (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).
- ⁶Vartan Gregorian, inaugural address at Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, 1989.
- ⁷Frank Wong, “The Search for American Liberal Education,” in Farnham and Yarmolinsky, eds., *Rethinking Liberal Education*.
- ⁸Leon Botstein, *Jefferson’s Children: Education and the Promise of American Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 1997).
- ⁹James R. Mingle, “Responding to the New Market for Higher Education,” *AGB Priorities* (11) (Summer 1998).
- ¹⁰Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy’s Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996).
- ¹¹Unless obviously used in another context, the word “program” in this essay refers to a comprehensive program for preparing college students for socially

responsible citizenship. The word “project” in this essay refers to any activity or undertaking that is part of a program and its implementation.

¹²Benjamin R. Barber and Richard Battistoni, *Education for Democracy: A Sourcebook* (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall-Hunt Publishers, 1998).

¹³John Dewey, *Democracy and Education* (New York: Macmillan, 1916).

¹⁴Alfred H. Bloom in *Swarthmore Papers*, ed. Barry Schwartz (n.p., January 1993).