

REVITALIZING A FELLOWSHIP IN LEARNING: K-PLAN FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
A PROPOSAL FROM THE DISTINCTIVENESS INITIATIVE TASK FORCE TO
ENHANCE WHAT KALAMAZOO COLLEGE ALREADY DOES WELL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 17-member Distinctiveness Initiative Task Force (DITF; please see Appendix 1 for DITF membership) met frequently, as a whole and in several subcommittees, from April through September 2007, to discern ways of enhancing the many strengths of Kalamazoo College's curriculum and addressing its weaknesses. While consciously maintaining the centrality of strong majors, academic rigor, high-quality SIPs, and breadth of educational experiences on and off campus as key components of Kalamazoo College's curriculum, the DITF explored many ways of integrating these components into a well articulated and distinctive whole. As new pieces of the curriculum began to emerge and fit into place with current curricular components, feasibility issues were raised, discussed, but not completely resolved. After developing a proposal that seemed sufficient to share with a broader subset of the Kalamazoo College community, the DITF made a concerted effort to increase the inclusiveness of the discussion about the curriculum. As a result of meeting with faculty individually and in several small groups (including department chairs), at least half of the faculty have learned directly of the DITF proposal and have availed themselves of opportunities to react to it. The proposal arising from these thorough, well-informed, and enlightening deliberations, listed here and developed further in the pages that follow, should serve as a point of departure for further conversations that lead in the near future to a more effective means of educating our students.

The main components of the DITF proposal are:

- Academically rigorous major in a discipline
- Coursework in a second language through the intermediate level
- Three Signature Experiences [First-Year Experience, similar to what we currently have but including a "Bridge" experience at the beginning of the first year, Study Away (mostly our traditional Study Abroad, but also including domestic off-campus programs), and SIP]
- Four Core Seminars (First-year, Sophomore, Junior, and Senior seminars), connecting with the Signature Experiences and providing a thread of continuity through the four years at K
- Integrated Interdisciplinary minor (similar to our current concentrations), fostering breadth of engagement with academic disciplines
- A new "4-12/4-12" calendar for the academic year, in which each "4-12" is a "semester" composed of a 4-week "block" and a 12-week "term"
- A more flexible way of crediting student activities (lab-courses, service-learning courses, PE, music, independent study, externship/internship, other experiential learning opportunities)

The DITF intends for this proposal to serve as a catalyst for introspection and innovation, by everyone in our academic community – individually and by all of us collaboratively – that will yield improvements in our community and in the ways we affect our students. And, the DITF anticipates that members of the Kalamazoo College academic community will develop, through our collaborative effort, a renewed sense of a "fellowship in learning" as we rediscover what makes our college distinctive.

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A PROPOSAL FROM THE DISTINCTIVENESS INITIATIVE TASK FORCE TO ENHANCE WHAT KALAMAZOO COLLEGE ALREADY DOES WELL

Like any vibrant communal endeavor, Kalamazoo College's approach to an undergraduate education, a Fellowship in Learning (Hoben, 1922-1935), benefits from periodic reconsideration and, if necessary, revision. Irrespective of reasons for scrutinizing a college's means of helping students become better educated, a successful review of the curriculum ultimately arrives at a carefully considered result through a process that strengthens the resolve of those entrusted with educating students (Bok, 2006). The 17-member Distinctiveness Initiative Task Force (DITF) met many times, as a whole and in sub-committees, over the past five months to initiate a curriculum review and pave the way toward a broadly inclusive conversation about enhancing "what ultimately and most fundamentally has made, continues to make, and can in the future make K particularly distinctive" (Stauffer, 2004).

One of the DITF's first tasks was to clarify reasons for answering the call to review our curriculum, which came from K's Board of Trustees as well as from a culmination of concerns expressed by faculty, staff and students, in the context of an emerging strategic plan. Among many expressed reasons for conducting a curricular review, the following (in no particular order) helped guide the DITF's deliberations:

- define the College's identity and strengthen its reputation;
- articulate more effectively our distinct, curricular components, both on and off campus, so as to become an institution that is greater than the sum of its parts;
- respond to frequent signs of K-Plan elements becoming common practice at other institutions and, thereby, blunting our distinctiveness;
- foster a stronger sense of community at the College – within and among groups of faculty, staff, and students;
- discern causes of student achievement so that outcomes and curriculum can be explicitly linked;
- address anticipated changes in demography of prospective students and the resulting changes in enrollment patterns;
- simplify the "surfeit of conceptual scaffolding" (Stauffer, 2004), constructed to explicate graduation requirements; and
- take action on perennial appeals for ameliorating stress-inducing features of the K environment while maintaining the College's noteworthy strengths.

With these tasks in mind, along with notions gleaned from many internal and external documents pertaining to strategic planning, external forces affecting the College (Wilson-Oyelaran, 2006), our curriculum, and desired outcomes of a college education (please see Literature Consulted), the DITF began to explore potential solutions to the issues we all face. At the outset of deliberations, the DITF determined the following set of principles that would guide the curricular review:

- + an international/intercultural perspective should be evident in our curriculum
- + structured reflection should be learned and used by students when appropriate
- + simplify our curriculum, without sacrificing academic rigor and while retaining depth and breadth of learning, to make it easier for everyone to understand and implement
- + opportunities for transformative relationships between students and faculty/staff should continue to be present and enhanced where possible
- + make a concerted effort to find and include the strategic and pedagogical advantages of integrating curricular and co-curricular components of a K education
- + find ways to incorporate better alumni engagement in the curricular and co-curricular activities of the College
- + encourage student intentionality and agency in the pursuit of their education

Before turning to that summary, however, what of "distinctiveness"? And, how is the idea of distinctiveness relevant to the curriculum proposed by the DITF? Developing a full understanding of and appreciation for this idea can be daunting, frustrating, ultimately enlightening, and well worth the effort.

When first encountered, “distinctive” evokes images of an entity standing apart from its surroundings or its peers when viewed from the outside – as with a very tall building, an unusual person, or an eye-catching work of art. A potentially more important conception of “distinctive,” especially when applied to a college, derives from seemingly ineffable characteristics of the institution that serve to connect the component parts into an emergent whole. In his book, *The Distinctive College*, Clark notes the following: “Participants within many colleges easily overlook the importance of a unifying and motivating theme when they think of improving the position of their colleges in society...What is so difficult, so hard as to occur infrequently, is to put it all together: to realize the necessity of a unifying theme; to formulate one feasible in a given social context; to build the organizational conditions and structures that allow and help a mission to get underway; and to develop and continue structures that elaborate a mission into a rich and encompassing definition of the institutional self” (ibid., 236). This theme, what Clark calls a “saga,” can help build and sustain a college community. It “...offers an educationally relevant definition of the difference of the group from all others. And salient elements in the distinctiveness become foci of personal awareness and of a sense of things held in common with others currently on the scene, those who have been there before, and those yet to arrive” (ibid., 256). Thus, while the connotation of “distinctive” as “standing out” is clearly important for us to keep in mind during strategic planning, especially if the sought-after distinctiveness is meant to persist (Porter, 1996), perceiving Kalamazoo College’s distinctiveness instead through the lens of our own “collective understanding of unique accomplishment” (Clark, 1970), can help us complete many of the tasks listed above while contributing to enhanced public recognition of our College. When viewed in this light, a college’s curriculum can be distinctive without being particularly flashy if the emergent whole has an overwhelmingly positive effect on students and other members of the learning community.

Many indicators reveal that a Kalamazoo College education has notably positive effects on students, so why change an already effective education? Results of surveys (NSSE Benchmark Reports; Dueweke, A., 2005) have shown that students and alumni perceive their K education to be life-changing. And, direct measures of K’s impact on students – like the Collegiate Learning Assessment (Sotheland et al., 2007) and K’s rank among peer institutions in the proportion of graduates who go on to earn a Ph.D. (HEDS Report 2004) corroborate these perceptions. Why mess with success? Distinctiveness is a moving target; complacency with the status quo is not a viable option because the Kalamazoo College community that contributes to our distinctiveness and the external environment to which our community must respond are in a perpetual state of flux. Maintaining, and enhancing, distinctiveness arises from a state of positive restlessness that calls for periodic reviews and revisions of that which produces the distinction. Thus, reflecting on and then revitalizing our approach to educating students is a healthy imperative.

Kalamazoo College’s saga - A Fellowship in Learning - first enunciated by President Allan Hoben to portray an environment in which “students evolve their best selves,” has deep historical roots from which grew the K-Plan, our innovative combination of on-campus curriculum and progressively independent off-campus experiences that, ideally, helps “young adults mature, not steadily, but by quantum leaps...when there is a change in environment and responsibilities” (Barrett, 1989). Hoben’s vision of this Fellowship in Learning involved an “interplay of minds” and “friendly contact with faculty,” and yet, features of the K-Plan seem to create a more disjointed “interplay” than the community Hoben might have imagined. Our task, therefore, is to “put it all together,” articulating our rich past with our successful present to help us envision an enduringly distinctive future. The DITF’s work has attempted to weave our tradition of effectiveness and innovation into the many complexities of educating students in the 21st century, and to enhance what we already do well. As we pick up that work and discuss the recommendations made, if we remember Derek Bok’s assertion that no one “best” curriculum exists (Bok, 2006; pg 272) and that most important are the conversations leading to a “carefully considered result,” we will arrive at a means of educating our students that resonates best with us and that will be distinctive

The following document summarizes results of the DITF deliberations about a K-Plan for the 21st century and serves as an invitation to all members of the Kalamazoo College community to use what the DITF accomplished as a starting point for discussions regarding the merits of the proposal and conversations regarding ways to strengthen both its content and the educational experience of our students.

Essential Features of the DITF Proposal

The DITF proposal for a K-Plan of the 21st century emerges from “A Fellowship in Learning,” the College’s mission, and the “Vision” statement developed by the Committee for Kalamazoo College’s Future (CKCF).

Mission

The mission of Kalamazoo College is to prepare its graduates to understand better, live successfully within, and provide enlightened leadership to a richly diverse and increasingly complex world.

Vision

By 2017 Kalamazoo College will be recognized nationally and internationally as a leader in innovative education that provides students with:

- A learning-focused environment that integrates academic excellence, experiential education and outstanding co-curricular experiences
- A learning community that is residential, diverse, inclusive, student-focused, and comprehensively internationalized
- Multiple experiences for global learning and leadership that include an in-depth education abroad experience
- Outstanding preparation for life and leadership.

The Kalamazoo College experience will help graduates become:

- Outstanding leaders
- Responsible global citizens sensitive to intercultural and international diversity
- Innovative problem solvers prepared to address the challenges of the future
- Effective agents of transformational change
- Engaged, ethical citizens
- Alumni who maintain life-long connections with the College.

This integrated student experience will be supported by:

- Excellent faculty who are models of intellectual vitality and who integrate strong discipline-based expertise, interdisciplinary learning, innovative educational approaches, and a commitment to student learning
- Outstanding staff and administration who exhibit professional competence, a strong service orientation, and a commitment to the development of students
- The physical and technological infrastructure and the financial resources necessary to meet the College’s current and future needs.

The DITF proposal for a K-Plan of the 21st century provides means of effecting “Outcomes of a Kalamazoo College Education” in ways that help students develop five key dimensions of personal and intellectual growth: lifelong learning, career readiness, intercultural understanding, social responsibility, and leadership. After review of literature, best practices at liberal arts institutions, our own curriculum and the above mission and vision, the DITF first set forth a set of desired outcomes (using the “know-be-do” list of outcomes from the Internationalization Action Plan (2005) as a starting point), which would guide our revision and problem-solving.

Outcomes of a Kalamazoo College Education

A. To understand our richly diverse and increasingly complex world, a Kalamazoo graduate will . . .

1. know at least one field of inquiry in depth
2. comprehend the interplay among a variety of fields of inquiry
3. understand, through study and experience, the cultures of several parts of the world

4. know that we are shaped by social/historical forces, and that our beliefs, values, and language reflect these influences
5. be cognizant of how local and global historical trajectories shape economic, technological/scientific, environmental, and social dynamics at local and global levels

B. To live successfully within that world, a Kalamazoo graduate will . . .

1. learn effectively in a variety of settings
2. display openness to learning new ideas and ways of thinking
3. accept ambiguity and make well informed decisions
4. be sensitive to and respectful of personal and cultural differences
5. engage with global issues and cultural diversity
6. find ways to enjoy creativity and imagination
7. cultivate wellness in themselves and others

C. To provide enlightened leadership to that world, a Kalamazoo graduate will . . .

1. communicate effectively in both written and oral form
2. be proficient in at least one second language and display cultural competence in a variety of contexts
3. effectively locate, evaluate and use information in a variety of modes while employing diverse frames of reference
4. take multiple perspectives, think critically, and skillfully solve problems
5. act effectively and responsibly as a citizen, both locally and globally, and thereby enhance intercultural understanding

The DITF proposal for a K-Plan of the 21st century incorporates opportunities for students to engage in all four components of the original K-Plan – coursework in liberal arts and science, career/service exploration, study abroad, and a Senior Individualized Project – and integrates them into a more coherent curriculum. The depth, breadth, and vibrancy of the education attained will depend on the engaged “interplay of minds” of students and their mentors that is mindful of our desired “outcomes” and taps into the enthusiasm we all bring to a challenging and supportive learning environment. The following annotated outline describes, in brief, the proposed curriculum.

Proposed Curriculum of Kalamazoo College

- **Major in a discipline** (required)
- **Coursework in a second language through the intermediate level** (required)
- **Signature Experiences – First-Year Experience** (required; Bridges - expected), **Study Away** (expected), and **Senior Individualized Project** (required)
- **Four Core Seminars** (required)
- **Integrated Interdisciplinary Minor** (required)
- **Elective coursework** (required)

Major in a discipline

A traditional component of many college curricula, majoring in a discipline affords an opportunity for students to develop in-depth knowledge, skills, and attitudes in a field of inquiry that can serve as a point of departure for a life of learning and help them gain footing while exploring other disciplines. Although majors at Kalamazoo College could persist in their current form, re-envisioning them in the context of the proposed curriculum may provide new opportunities for devising more effective means of mentoring students in a field of their choice.

Coursework in a second language

Learning a second language at Kalamazoo College has been key to our students' success with engaging other cultures, particularly while on Study Abroad, and will continue in that capacity in the future. And, as a result of administering the Collegiate Learning Assessment, we have learned that this successful engagement with people and situations in other cultures seems to promote positive changes in cognitive abilities of students (Sotherland et al., 2007). Thus, for many of the outcomes listed in *Outcomes of a Kalamazoo College Education* and included within the Vision of our graduates becoming "Responsible global citizens sensitized to intercultural and international diversity," requiring our students to develop proficiency in a second language through the intermediate level is essential. Therefore, the DITF recommends retaining the College's current graduation requirement for learning a second language.

Signature Experiences

Signature Experiences are those features of an institution that define "what it means to work (and learn) here" (Erickson and Gratton, 2007). Kalamazoo College's long-standing tradition of encouraging students to learn in a variety of settings, where the "classroom" is identified by the presence of people engaged in learning, is upheld by incorporating three increasingly independent Signature Experiences that take place outside of the traditional classroom. Frequently, these experiences will provide opportunities for students to encounter situations of "high intensity dissonance" (Kiely, 2006) that can foster "quantum leaps" of learning and growth. Much of that learning, however, depends on the learner's ability to reflect on the experience. Thus, developing the ability to conduct structured reflection, and then using it effectively and frequently, will be key to the success of these Signature Experiences.

First-Year Experience [Bridges + First-Year Seminar + First-Year Forum]

The following principles will inform further development of the First-Year Experience:

- Use experiential education, encountered during Bridges and coupled with coursework and events on campus, to set the tone and provide a theme for the entire educational experience at K.
- Develop a variety of Bridges on the success and best principles of Land/Sea (please see Appendix 2 for ideas about Bridges)
- Where appropriate, connect Bridges with First-Year Seminars and with the First-Year Forum, which will persist, for the most part, in their current form.
- Continue to present events in the First-Year Forum that are connected with, and highlight, activities in First-Year Seminars and that engage first-year students in the life of the College.
- Incorporate *Outcomes of a Kalamazoo College Education* into Bridges.
- Include in Bridges ways to help students live and work together, problem-solve, develop leadership skills, and reflect meaningfully on their experiences.
- Situate Bridges within the Fall "block" of the first year. (Please see description of the proposed calendar for the K academic year at the end of this document.)
- Link Bridges with at least one reflective assignment in First-Year Seminars.
- Connect Bridges with Guilds where appropriate.
- Ensure that some Bridges are compatible/integrated with Fall athletics.

Study Away

The following principles will guide the development of Study Away:

- Options for Study Away should be expanded to include domestic opportunities in addition to our traditional Study Abroad opportunities (hence, the name change from "Study Abroad" to "Study Away").
- Study Away should be intense, substantive, and long enough to foster significant growth in students.
- Study Away should be strongly linked with pre-experience preparation and post-experience reflection.
- Additional discipline-based Study-Away opportunities should be developed.

- Integrative opportunities, in addition to the ICRP, should be included in Study Away.
- Student choice of the Study Away experience should continue.
- Study Away will continue to be an essential component of a Kalamazoo College Education

SIP

The following principles will guide enhancement of the SIP:

- The SIP will continue to be an academically rigorous capstone experience, grounded in an academic department/program and guided by faculty mentoring.
- The College will raise the profile of the SIP and celebrate it. For example, the College will explore the possibility of conducting campus-wide conferences focused on the SIP.
- The College will explore how to include the SIP in faculty load.
- The SIP will continue to be a graduation requirement.

Four Core Seminars

In addition to providing opportunities for students to engage in structured reflection about their Kalamazoo College education, particularly the Signature Experiences, the Core Seminars – First-Year, Pre-Study Away (Sophomore), Post-Study Away (Junior), and Senior - will contribute to the depth and breadth of that education while creating a programmatic thread for students that runs through their four years at the College.

Taken as a whole, the four seminars should:

- Have agreed-upon course outcomes derived from *Outcomes of a Kalamazoo College Education* (please see below for specific linkage of outcomes to core seminars).
- Be integrated into a four-year developmental approach, with students taking increased responsibility in learning
- Be linked where appropriate to Summer Common Reading, Bridges, Study Away, LAC, SIP, and “Guilds”
- Include structured reflection and writing
- Consider inclusion of media literacy
- Be used as opportunities to expand faculty synergy
- Model lifelong learning
- Be supported by significant faculty development

First-Year Seminar

This very successful feature of our noteworthy First-Year Experience will, in all likelihood, persist as is and will include structured reflection on Bridge experiences.

Pre/Post Study Away Seminars

These two seminars will bracket Study Away and serve to encourage students and faculty to integrate learning experiences from Study Away into the on-campus curriculum. Specific learning outcomes, from the *Outcomes of a Kalamazoo College Education*, that apply to the second year “Pre-Study Away Seminar” and the third year “Post-Study Away Seminar” are as follows:

Pre-Study Away Seminar

- A. 4. know that we are shaped by social/historical forces, and that our beliefs, values, and language reflect these influences
5. be cognizant of how local and global historical trajectories shape economic, technological/scientific, environmental, and social dynamics at local and global levels

- B. 4. be sensitive to and respectful of personal and cultural differences
5. engage with global issues and cultural diversity
- C. 1. communicate effectively in both written and oral form
2. be proficient in at least one second language and display cultural competence in a variety of contexts
3. effectively locate, evaluate and use information in a variety of modes while employing diverse frames of reference
4. take multiple perspectives, think critically, and skillfully solve problems
5. act effectively and responsibly as a citizen, both locally and globally, and thereby enhance intercultural understanding

Post-Study Away Seminar

- A. 2. comprehend the interplay among a variety of fields of inquiry
3. understand, through study and experience, the cultures of several parts of the world
4 know that we are shaped by social/historical forces, and that our beliefs, values, and language reflect these influences
5. be cognizant of how local and global historical trajectories shape economic, technological/scientific, environmental, and social dynamics at local and global levels
- B. 4. be sensitive to and respectful of personal and cultural differences
5. engage with global issues and cultural diversity
- C. 1. communicate effectively in both written and oral form
4. take multiple perspectives, think critically, and skillfully solve problems (ongoing)
5. act effectively and responsibly as a citizen, both locally and globally, and thereby enhance intercultural understanding

Topics proposed for the Pre-Study Away Seminar include the following: historical trajectories, the environment, cultural encounters, global connections.

Topics proposed for the Post-Study Away Seminar include the following: global literature and media, cultural theory to explore issues of identity in a global context, global citizenship, acting responsibly locally and globally.

The subcommittee looking at Pre- and Post-Study Away Seminars felt that to meet desired outcomes, Post-Study Away Seminars would best be structured as stand alone, new courses, designed specifically to engage students in structured reflection on their Study Away experiences while engaging with theory that provides them with a framework in which to understand and think critically about their experiences. The Pre-Study Away Seminar would also ideally be structured as stand alone, new courses. These courses, structured around concepts like “the city,” “illness and health,” or “maps,” would allow students to engage in substantive research on their study away destination, even while they emphasize that any place, concept, or category has not always been the way it is today. Ideas have histories, and different cultures have had differing ways of explaining, interpreting, or responding to the same concept, problem, or idea over time. Recognizing the feasibility challenges of staffing four college-wide seminars, the subcommittee also looked at other models for staffing the Pre-Study Away Seminars.

- 1. Stand alone, new seminars as described above (comparative; not site specific)
- 2. Converting existing courses into Pre-Study Away Seminars
 - a. Courses that provide a cross-cultural or comparative context and would allow for student research projects on their specific study away site (e.g. “Cool Cities: Ancient and Modern” or “The World Economy”)

- b. Site specific courses that would be required for particular study away sites/programs (Urban Sociology for the Philadelphia Program; German 203: Bonn and Erlangen” for study in Germany; or “Culture and Psychology of Arab-Muslim Countries” for study in the Middle East)
- c. A hybrid model combines new or existing general/comparative courses with a site-specific online component. This online component would allow for site-specific information even for study away sites with a small number of K students, and would also give our students some experience with online courses, since many educators believe that many of today’s students will engage in life-long learning in the form of online courses throughout their adult lives.

When the subcommittee looked through the current course catalogue to make a list of existing courses that *could potentially* be converted into (or credited as) Pre-Study Away Seminars, we realized that *so many* of our current courses could be converted in this way that the list would be extremely long. Rather than provide such an exhaustive list, we invite faculty in all disciplines to consider the potential of their courses to meet this need.

Beyond the designated outcomes, the DITF did not want to place too many restrictions on design of seminars by individual faculty. However, the DITF advocates that Peer Leaders be used in both seminars: for example, SIP students could help with the Post-Seminar, and Post-Seminar students could help with the Pre-Seminar. Both Pre-Seminars and Post-Seminars would be linked to a program of LAC events.

Presently, there are several questions that remain about the content and the feasibility of the Pre- and Post-Study Away Seminars (some of the issues are raised in the subsequent feasibility section). The DITF did not take on the task of supplying all of the details of these seminars; instead, the DITF composed a broad framework to engage faculty imagination and discussion.

Senior Seminar

The following principles could be used to develop the Senior Year Seminar (SYS):

- The SYS would be a problem-based course, culminating in addressing a “real world” problem, i.e. an issue of international import or a community issue within Kalamazoo. The first five weeks would follow a traditional seminar model. In the final five weeks the professor would act as a resource and guide; students would be responsible for tackling the problem.
- The SYS would be built around ethical and moral reasoning, currently addressed through the philosophy/religion requirement, and what might be thought of as a moral/normative reasoning competency. By using this lens, the SYS could focus on issues of ethics, intercultural understanding and problem solving, or the like.
- Each academic year the SYS would tackle the same problem in some fashion. In the spring of the junior year, a subset of juniors and the SYS faculty would meet to choose possible topics. The committee could be charged with making a final decision, or they could bring all topics to the junior class for a vote.
- Alternatively, there could be a set of different problems that are addressed in a given year so that the students have a range of choices. An obvious avenue for this approach would be to link the problems to specific Guilds (and to invite faculty associated with those specific Guilds to teach a SYS).
- Faculty teaching in the SYS would have autonomy over their courses (much like the FYS faculty), with two exceptions. First, courses would (obviously) need to address the specific problem(s) the juniors selected for their senior year. And, all seminars would begin the term with a common reading that bears on the topic for the year and provides grounding for all the SYS courses.

- Again, much like the FYS, the substructure to the SYS would help guide everyone involved in the course (especially with its focus on normative reasoning and ethics). A committee (ideally populated in large part by colleagues in philosophy and religion, as well as a specialist(s) in that year's topic) would choose the common reading for the course and then help all SYS faculty learn how to incorporate the book into their section of the course. Ideally, all SYS faculty would meet in a weekly colloquium to refine their understanding of the material and enhance teaching practices.
- SYS faculty would be remunerated for summer work required to develop the course each year.
- All sections of the course would be offered in the same time slot, thereby fostering collaboration among classes, swapping of instructors for the day, guest lecturers, and the like.
- Culmination of the SYS is an issue the DITF has yet to resolve. What will happen to the product of all the intensive work on a real-world problem after the SYS is over? One idea is to bring in an expert on that year's topic to give a presentation, interact with the seniors, and have the seniors present the product of their work to the expert.

Integrated Interdisciplinary Minor

In conjunction with the Core Seminars, the Integrated Interdisciplinary Minor will help students develop breadth in their liberal arts education as well as "comprehend the interplay among a variety of fields of inquiry" around a particular theme. Thus, a goal of this requirement is to help students examine an issue in depth from multiple perspectives. Guiding principles for creating these minors are as follows:

- A minor would have 6 courses
- A minor would include courses from at least three, and as many as four, academic divisions.
- Students would be able to double-count a course from the major or a core seminar, or include a course from study away, as long as they were able to justify doing so
- Students may choose their interdisciplinary minors from a set of "templates" prepared by faculty in advance as suggested courses of study. Examples of templates are as follows:
 - Copernican Revolution: a great nexus for courses in Physics, Philosophy, Religion, History, and English
 - (Im)migrations: an interesting theme to connect History, Sociology, Anthropology, literature, Religion, and Foreign Languages
 - Genetics & Ethics: topics shared by Biology, Philosophy, Religion, History, Anthropology, and other disciplines
 - Neuroscience: territory shared by Biology, Psychology, Philosophy, Computer Science, and Physics.

OR

- Students may have the freedom to design their own interdisciplinary minors by writing a brief rationale and gaining the approval in writing. Presently, the exact nature of this approval has yet to be delineated, and is a topic for faculty conversation.
- It is worth noting that the majority of our current concentrations (e.g., Environmental Studies, Women's Studies) meet the above requirements and would appear to satisfy the interdisciplinary minor requirement with few to no changes.

Elective Coursework

Through elective coursework, and with sage advice from academic advisors and other mentors, students will be expected to develop a breadth of interests further. Even though elimination of our current general education "distributional" requirements would be a consequence of implementing the curriculum proposed in this document (which has been a topic of considerable debate within the DITF) results of

studies at institutions that have an “open curriculum” (Teagle White Paper, 2006) suggest that students at those institutions get a reasonably well-rounded education. Accomplishing this entails balancing freedom of choice with responsible attention to intended educational outcomes, which requires a thoughtful collaboration between well-informed students and advisors. However, one possible exception to “well rounded,” noted in the white paper, is that students with majors outside of natural sciences and mathematics tend not to take science and math courses; the converse does not obtain. Addressing this tendency should be kept in mind. If the faculty endorses a curriculum with limited distributional requirements, creating a document for students and advisors that includes recommendations for attaining a liberal education should be developed.

Calendar

Finally, the DITF proposal for a K-Plan of the 21st century includes a new 4-week; 12-week/4-week; 12-week (4-12/4-12) calendar that should serve to stimulate innovation in learning while creating a lively yet measured atmosphere on campus. Based on insights gained from the “K-Mesters” idea (Lipson and Manwell, 2005; Recommendation 9), combining 4-week “blocks” with 12-week “terms” into an academic year composed of two semesters (details of this calendar are given below) will help the academic year at Kalamazoo College start and stop with those of other institutions. More important, however, as a result of situating all components of our curriculum within the academic year, and having components that establish a regular “beat” over four years, implementing this calendar and curriculum could, in all likelihood, help reestablish a palpably lived sense of the K-Plan and a Fellowship in Learning at Kalamazoo College.

Explanatory Notes about the 4-12/4-12 Calendar

The following notes, in no particular order, help provide detail and comments about the “4-12/4-12”. The diagram of this calendar (in Appendix 3 on page 20) shows months of the year across the top and four academic years vertically.

- Each academic year is partitioned into two “semesters,” composed of one 4-week “block” (yellow) and one 12-week “term” (orange). These components are shown proportionate to their actual lengths and situated during the year approximately where they would occur. The academic year begins when most other institutions begin in late August, and ends by early May, again similar to many other institutions. Doing this allows fall athletes to begin their fall season when, or closer to when, fall classes begin; spring classes would finish earlier, allowing students to begin internships, externships, SIPs, or employment earlier, and closer to when opportunities become available. Thus, this change would address a long-standing complaint of many of our students.
- Faculty would teach one course during a block and two courses during a term.
- Students would enroll in one block course and three term courses per semester (as shown by colored bars).
- Each “block” would be similar in length to a Colorado College block, which lasts three and one-half weeks, including time for a final exam, followed by a break from Thursday through Sunday.
- Each “term” would be very similar to one of our “quarters.” Within each 12-week term would be 10 FULL weeks of class, a week for final exams, a week’s worth of break (probably split up in the fall to accommodate a term break and a Thanksgiving break, and probably a week-long break in the spring). As shown in the calendar diagram (Appendix Two), the Fall semester would begin in late August and end around 21 December. Spring Semester would begin in the middle of January and end near the beginning of May.

- The academic year would have two (instead of our current three) advising/registration periods, one in each semester, during which students would make course selections for the following block-and-term. (Having two, instead of our current three, “starts” and “stops” could have a positive effect on retention.)
- A variety of courses, including “core seminars,” could occur during blocks (or terms). And, blocks, particularly those in the sophomore year, would provide useful space within the academic year for externships and the requisite structured reflection on the educational experience. In recent years, the Center for Career Development has produced a nationally-recognized externship program, and this calendar change could further support career exploration by students (especially if we consider changes in course crediting).
- From a pedagogical standpoint, the inclusion of “blocks” affords faculty opportunities to explore innovative forms of teaching. For example, one advantage of “blocks” is having students enrolled in only one class at a time, which would permit faculty to schedule out-of-class experiences without interfering with students’ other coursework. And, the intensive nature of these classes may be well-suited to courses that emphasize student skill development.
- Students would typically go on Study Abroad (or Study Away) during either the sophomore spring semester or the junior fall semester, and return to campus the following fall or spring, respectively. (Doing this would give equal “weight” to spring and fall Study Abroad, which, presumably, would help balance enrollment in those two programs and, presumably, reduce the spring “crunch” for course enrollment on campus.) Winter athletes, as well as other students, would continue to have the option of going on a ten-week Study Abroad in the spring, after their winter athletic season. (Joe Brockington emphasized, again, that “Study Abroad WILL work.”)
- The first-year “Bridge” would occur during the fall block in the first year. (Land/Sea is a very successful example of a “bridge;” various others will be developed.) First-Year Seminars, during the fall term of the first year, would follow these “bridges” and would provide time for students to reflect on their experiences.
- For SIPs completed in the junior summer, much of the thesis writing could be undertaken (and completed?) during the senior fall block. For SIPs started in the senior fall, much of the more intense start-up work, especially that requiring faculty mentoring, would also occur during the senior fall block.
- Most SIP presentations, particularly those done in departmental symposia, would occur during the senior spring block, typically in the afternoons when most courses would not be meeting. Thus, most seniors would be finished with SIP-related activities before spring term of the senior year. (Probable exceptions to this would be art, music, and theatre majors who require gallery or stage space, which is in limited supply.)

Issues of Feasibility

SIP

What is the feasibility of compensating faculty for supervision of SIPs? The DITF agreed that such credit ought to be given, whether or not other curricular or calendar changes are made. The DITF also agreed that differences among departments, in both the type of SIPs being produced by their students and how SIP supervision is arranged, obviates recommending a universally applicable compensation for a particular number of SIPs supervised (e.g. 10 SIPs = 1 course release). Instead, departments should determine the workload equivalence between a certain number of SIPs and a regular course and how to distribute course releases, or other forms of compensation, across their faculty members.

Several questions remain unresolved. What impact will compensating faculty for SIP supervision have on departmental programs (in terms of courses taught, major, faculty workload, student satisfaction, and enrollments)?

Pre-/Post-Seminars

Presently, information gathered from department chairs suggests that our departments will be able to contribute 60 faculty members annually to teach our approximately 80 seminars. Even though this is a promising number, it does not take into account the impact of giving credit for SIP supervision, it is only an uncertain estimation, and it falls short of what is needed. Having some of the existing departmental courses serve as Pre- and Post-Seminars would facilitate implementation and would allow departments to double-count the seminar for major requirements. By introducing much needed flexibility, this approach may reduce the number of required new seminar courses by between 25 and 50 percent (if half or all Pre-/Post-Seminars were existing courses). That is, if our estimation is correct, the number of available faculty and required seminars will be aligned at approximately 50-60. The DITF suggests that faculty consider modifying existing courses to meet the goals of the Pre/Post Seminars by making sure that significant writing is included, that the relevance of culture be included, and that for the Post-Seminar at least some assignments incorporate structured reflection on some aspect of the students' Study Away experience. That noted, realizing the gap between number of faculty needed for the seminars and the number of available faculty points toward a greater emphasis on faculty development (and, possibly, increasing the number of faculty at the College).

Calendar

Any change in calendar has associated benefits and costs. While noting benefits of implementing the "4/12" calendar (such as balancing participation in Study Away between spring and fall, and having fall athletics begin closer to the onset of the academic year), and how making such a calendar change could facilitate implementing suggested changes in the curriculum (such as, including Bridges in the academic year), the DITF also noted potential drawbacks to the new calendar (such as reduced flexibility in students' schedules during the first year (especially for science students) and the potential disappearance of some courses) created by having eight, instead of nine, slots for courses each year. Resolving these issues, and others, would benefit from insights gained from many perspectives.

Shifting from Units to Credits

How could academic programs use a more flexible system to credit student activities? For example, would departments/programs give lab-type credit for service learning, language labs, other "extra" activities? Would departments/programs offer other types of courses? Would departments/programs plan to "credit" faculty workloads in a way that is different from our current practice? If so, how?

Conclusion

Recommendations presented above arose from the DITF's aforementioned principles to develop an academic program that is consistent with the educational mission of the College and recognized as distinctive both inside and outside of the College. The DITF views the following as the key points of distinction from these recommendations.

Integration. Many parts of this proposal are designed to integrate the various components of the K-Plan. A long-standing criticism of the K-Plan, which has recurred in reaccreditation reviews and is commonly mentioned by graduates of the college, is that K-Plan components seem disjointed and disconnected. Adopting the Integrated Interdisciplinary Minor and the four Core Seminars should help address this problem and, especially in the case of Study Away, further distinguish K from other institutions that have a large number of students in off-campus programs (but, like us, do a poor job of integrating those experiences with what occurs on campus).

Innovative Flexibility. Incorporating two "blocks" in the 4-12 calendar should afford new flexibility and innovation in courses for faculty and students. Moreover, when resources to support class travel are raised, extending further our claim that "the world is our campus" will be possible.

Intentionality. Intentionality, in linking the curriculum to intended outcomes and in encouraging students to become more aware of reasons for availing themselves of particular educational opportunities, was one of the principles guiding the DITF's endeavors. All available evidence points to advantages of students being actively engaged in learning. Adopting the Bridges component should provide the context in which the importance of student intentionality, the role of experiential learning at K College, and the value of structured reflection can be used to lay the groundwork for four years of active learning. And, adopting the Integrated Interdisciplinary Minor will encourage students and faculty to be mindful of the "interplay among a variety of fields of inquiry."

Simplicity. Although implementing the DITF's recommendations will require substantial conversation and work in the initial years, ultimately, the proposed curriculum should result in a simpler set of graduation requirements for incoming students, streamlined registration choices for students, and a more balanced pace of work for students, faculty, and staff.

In some respects, each of the components recommended by the DITF is not radically different from components of programs at other institutions of higher education in the United States. However, the distinctive feature of our recommendations resides in how the different components reinforce and enhance each other to produce a K-Plan for the 21st century and a Fellowship in Learning that is greater than the sum of its parts.

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Appendix 1. DITF Membership

Espelencia Baptiste, Assistant Professor of Anthropology
Robert Batsell, Associate Professor of Psychology; Planning Facilitator
Joseph Brockington, Associate Provost for International Programs
Thomas Evans, Associate Professor of Music
Angela Gross, Assistant Director, Center for International Programs
Patrik Hultberg, Associate Professor of Economics
Amelia Katanski, Assistant Professor of English
Richard Koenig, Associate Professor of Art
James Langeland, Associate Professor of Biology
Elizabeth Manwell, Assistant Professor of Classical Studies
Kathleen W. Smith, Professor of Romance Languages
Michael Sosulski, Associate Professor of German
Paul Sotherland, Professor of Biology
Jan Tobochnik, Professor of Physics and Interim Provost
Sarah Westfall, Vice President for Student Development
Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran, President and Chair of the Distinctiveness Initiative Task Force

DITF Subcommittees

First Year Experience, including Bridges

Espy Baptiste, Tom Evans, Amelia Katanski, and Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran

Pre-/Post-Study Away Seminars

Espy Baptiste, Joe Brockington, Amelia Katanski, and Kathy Smith

Outcomes of a K education

Joe Brockington, Richard Koenig, Mike Sosulski, Paul Sotherland, and Kathy Smith

Senior Year Seminar and SIP strengthening

Bob Batsell, Jim Langeland, Elizabeth Manwell, Mike Sosulski

General Education

Bob Batsell, Jim Langeland, Kathy Smith, Mike Sosulski

Feasibility and Calendar

Angela Gross, Patrik Hultberg, Amelia Katanski, Richard Koenig, Paul Sotherland, Jan Toboshnik, and Sarah Westfall, Eileen Wilson-Oyelaran

Appendix 2. Bridge Rationale, Ideas, and Models

Reasons for offering Bridges

- Serves as a transition (i.e., bridge) to the College environment
- Creates a bonding experience with their "Bridge Partners"
- Helps reduce attrition rates
- Adds to K's distinctiveness
- Reduces the Us/Them conflict created by those who go on Land/Sea with those who do not
- Fosters student understanding that learning happens in different settings
- Offers leadership opportunities for Peer Leaders

Ideas about Bridges

- Land/Sea would be moved to the "block" of Fall Semester and would no longer be offered as a pre-K experience; Land/Sea dates would remain the same as now
- As Bridges would be offered during the regular academic year, qualified students would receive financial aid
- Not all Bridges need to be off campus. Some Bridges could use the K College campus as a "base camp." This would be beneficial particularly to student athletes who cannot participate in the Land/Sea experience.

Examples of Bridges

Possible Bridges for those students interested in the sciences might include:

- Exploring Lake Michigan
- Exploring the Lillian Anderson Arboretum
- Exploring the Kalamazoo River/Watershed
- Exploring Beaver Island
- Working collaboratively with the Nature Center
- Working collaboratively with WMU's Business Technology and Research Park
- Working collaboratively with Pfizer Pharmaceutical
- Working collaboratively with Bronson Medical Center and Borges Medical Center
- + Each of the above examples could include a lab component
- + Some of the above examples would enable students to begin their professional networking beyond K's borders
- + All of the above examples would take students beyond K's borders (thus breaking the K bubble)

Possible non-science Bridge offerings might include:

- Local farming

Students would work on one or several local farms (Blue Dog Greens and Eaters' Guild in Bangor, perhaps), helping to bring in the harvest and preparing the food for sale (farmers' market, distributor, etc.) Talking with groups like Fair Food Matters, students would learn about pressures facing local farmers (economic; land tenure issues, etc.), food security in Kalamazoo, complexities in the organic certification process, and goals and aspirations of the local food movement.

Tillers International. Students would work at Tillers' in the fields or in the blacksmith shop, etc. Students would learn about the history of animal-based farming in the US and the important role animal-based agriculture plays globally. Tillers' trains international aid workers as well as maintaining knowledge of American rural cultures and heritages.

- Tillers is the perfect place to link the local and the global, given its international outlook and its mission.
 - Possibility of staying on site at Tillers?
-
- Community outreach programs such as Big Brother/Big Sister or Habitat for Humanity
 - Community Partners with service learning serving as the key feature

- Index Bootcamp

Learn what's needed to work on a college newspaper

Ethics and importance of press freedom

Reporting and writing skills

Get ready to put out a first week newspaper (or early fall newspaper)

Maybe a guide to the area, survival guide at K

Don't need to commit to working on Index, but preference given to those who would.

- Kalamazoo Bridges

These Bridges would build on the Community Partners Internship program started this summer. This summer, the Underwood-Stryker Institute for Service-Learning funded 15 internships with local organizations that build community capacity in some way (e.g. Bronco Biodiesel, Fair Food Matters, Girls in the Wild, Smartshop). Though we only had the funding for 15 internships, 60 organizations applied for interns this year alone.

In the future, our summer interns (rising sophomores to recently graduated seniors) would work with their organization for a 6-week paid internship. Their last task, after getting to know these organizations and their needs, would be to design and help carry out a Bridge project for a group of incoming first-year students. The program would be developed with the input of the organization to address its particular needs and priorities. The interns would serve as peer leaders for the incoming first-year students, and would feed the knowledge and skills they gained during their internships back into the community. Ideally, Bridge participants might receive an internship later in their time at K and continue the cycle.

Bridge programs and internships could be chosen based on our institutional priorities and/or in connection with Guilds, etc. It may be possible to bring emeriti faculty into this project as well, to lead structured reflection and/or to train peer leaders.

- Visual and Performing Arts Bridges

Visual art students would design, plan, create, and implement a large-scale art installment. The installment may or may not be off campus. The course would provide students with the opportunity to work closely and collaboratively with the Art faculty. Field trips to the Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Detroit Institute of Art, the Frederick Meijer Gardens and Art Sculpture, etc. would be provided.

The purpose of bridges for performing arts (i.e., theater, dance, and music) students is to provide students with the opportunity to rehearse and present a performance. These bridges would culminate with the presentation of a musical, operetta, or other venue of the directors' choosing (e.g., 'The Bernstein,' 'The Gershwin,' 'Take the K Train,' or the '2001 K Odyssey' of yesteryear). These bridges would foster a deeper awareness and appreciation for collaborative art forms. Both K faculty and local professionals would be engaged in the process. To enhance the experience further, workshops would be given and appropriate off campus field trips will be provided.

Objectives for the Visual and Performing Arts bridges include:

- Create and present a finished artwork
- Develop strategies for creative problem-solving within a set of constraints
- Explore a variety of techniques and approaches to creating a finished art work
- Employ the arts as a means of personal expression
- Explore how a discipline can reflect identities of creative artists
- Explore how creative artists influence their discipline
- Engage in critical analysis, form aesthetic judgments, and develop an appreciation of the arts and humanities as fundamental to human development
- Nurture cross disciplinary engagement
- Nurture, develop, and sustain a life long appreciation for the arts

Appendix 3. Diagram of 4-12/4-12 Calendar

