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DOC 2006-03 Sense of the Senate Document -- Marianist Education Working Group

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PROPOSAL TO THE ACADEMIC SENATE

TITLE: *Sense of the Senate Document—Marianist Education Working Group*

SUBMITTED BY: Executive Committee of the Academic Senate

DATE: March 10, 2006

ACTION: Sense of the Senate Discussion

Presentation to the Academic Senate Marianist Education Working Group March 10, 2006

The Marianist Education Working Group presents the draft recommendations below for discussion throughout the university community. These recommendations reflect three components of the Working Group's final report:

- a mission statement for the common academic program for undergraduates;
- a set of educational aims that should orient that program; and
- a set of core learning outcomes that students should achieve through the common academic program.

The Working Group will release later this term draft recommendations regarding the implications of these proposals for features of current university programs, for pedagogies, for faculty worklife, and for processes through which the Working Group's recommendations, if affirmed, might be developed in the coming academic year.

I. Mission statement for the undergraduate academic program

Students educated in the Catholic and Marianist traditions at the University of Dayton pursue rigorous academic inquiry, in a sacramental spirit, and engage in vigorous dialogue, learning in, through, and for community. Guided by the purpose of transforming society for the ends of justice, peace, and the common good, the University's academic program challenges students to excel in their majors, cultivates practical wisdom in light of the particular needs of the twenty-first century, and fosters reflection upon their individual vocations.

II. Orienting educational aims of the University of Dayton

The ideals of higher education inherent in Catholic and Marianist traditions, and expressed in the University of Dayton's guiding documents, suggest that the educational aims stated below should orient the undergraduate academic program at the University of Dayton, articulating its horizons and providing direction for curricular and co-curricular offerings. The entire university community should embrace and advance these aims as central to its academic purposes.

Education in the Catholic and Marianist traditions at the University of Dayton . . .

1. Seeks knowledge in a **sacramental spirit**;
2. Pursues learning in, through, and for **community**;
3. Cultivates **practical wisdom**;
4. Forges critical **ability to read the signs of these times**; and
5. Supports discernment of personal and communal **vocation**.

Sacramentality: Catholic universities arise out of a distinctive commitment to the sacramental nature of the world, to the presence of God in creation and the ordinary things of life. This means that all study of the world, every inquiry into truth in any subject, through any method, must be dignified in a Catholic university as knowledge of God. The sacramental spirit of inquiry does not entail that members of a Catholic university community must assent to the sacramental principle. It means, rather, that every form and mode of genuine inquiry should be celebrated and affirmed as inherently valuable. It implies that the wonder and joy of beholding the world – the animating spirit of liberal education – should be cultivated in all learning in the university and that scholarship should be pursued rigorously and openly.

A sacramental approach to knowledge also means that the whole person – mind, spirit, and body – should be engaged in learning and should be the subject of study, as every dimension of human life bears value. Moreover, the university must care for the development of the whole person.

The sacramental spirit of knowledge-seeking affirmed in a Catholic university also means that deep value is to be found in the plurality of the world's people and cultures. A Catholic university commits itself to respect and embrace the dignity of all persons, and to welcome the exploration of a multiplicity of perspectives, beliefs, and traditions regarding what is true, beautiful, and good. A Catholic university thrives on dialogue and collaboration among persons with diverse backgrounds, values, cultures, and abilities. The sacramental principle anchors the distinctive Marianist affirmation of the values of inclusivity and equality for genuine community.

Community: A Catholic and Marianist university is specially committed to the ideals and responsibilities of community in the design and delivery of its common academic program. These ideals and responsibilities are powerfully conveyed through the concept of "family spirit." The common academic program should reveal a community of learning dedicated to challenging itself to realize the highest academic and ethical standards and to supporting its members fully in this challenge.

The academic program should reflect clearly the primary ways in which the communal values and relationships that shape student learning also infuse students' residential life on campus. Because contemporary American society does not normally inculcate or nurture the habits, attitudes, skills, and practices that are necessary for building inclusive community of the sort that Marianists envision, the university's academic program should approach the fundamental aim of communal learning explicitly and deliberately. This means that students, faculty, and staff alike must grow in their capacities to welcome collaboration among equals in the face of differences, to sustain dialogue even when disagreements seem insurmountable, and to turn beyond the university community in the recognition that all learning should ultimately seek to serve and, in serving, to lead. All members of the university should come to realize that learning in, through, and for community generates high expectations for responsibility from each person in the community.

The pursuit of learning in community also means that the undergraduate academic program should prepare students for intelligent and fruitful participation in various forms of community that mediate human life and activity in the local, regional, national, and global spheres.

Practical wisdom: The innovative and transformative purposes of higher education in a Catholic and Marianist context mean that the search for wisdom and truth that defines any serious university must ultimately be rendered practical. A Catholic, Marianist university strives to cultivate wisdom in the adoption of practical ends, in practical judgment, and in reflective decision-making. It aims to educate persons for good and whole lives, to influence sensibilities, motives, and conduct in academically appropriate ways, as well as to build theoretical understanding.

Cultivation of practical wisdom requires that deep immersion in the world through experience, activity, and imaginative exploration be central to a university education. In particular, university education must address real human problems and needs. This is why descriptions of Catholic, Marianist education properly emphasize integration of liberal and professional education and the uniting of creative imagination with analytical forms of inquiry.

Reading the signs of these times: The Society of Mary was formed in response to crises in modernity that the Marianist founding generation experienced in the wake of the French Revolution. Central to Marianist education is the forging of abilities for the critical interpretation and examination of one's times. While higher education with a Marianist character draws upon profound and longstanding intellectual traditions, it also interrogates the particular challenges of its own time and place in an open, critical, and hopeful spirit that seeks justice, peace, and the common good.

The common academic program of a Catholic, Marianist university addresses the university's specific historical, geographical, and social circumstances and prepares students to acquire habits of inquiry and reflection that enable them to identify, evaluate critically, and respond creatively to the pressing issues of their own day. The university's academic program in the early decades of the twenty-first century must investigate the ethical, social, political, technological, economic, and ecological upheavals and crises of its time.

Vocation: Education in the Catholic and Marianist traditions strives to support academically each students' efforts to find and explore the deep purposes that lend meaning, mystery, and fulfillment to their lives. Such a commitment follows from the fundamental objective to educate whole persons, in mind, spirit, and body, for whole lives.

Students' reflection upon their unique vocations belongs in the common academic program because the habits of mind and character which that program inculcates support thoughtful investigation and articulation of life purposes. The academic program also prepares students for excellence in the majors or professional studies that will influence much of their working lives, as well as their communal roles and responsibilities. Through the common academic program students come to grips with the multiple dimensions of human flourishing with which they must engage as they pursue the meaning-giving purposes of their lives.

Academic support for reflection upon vocation naturally accompanies the other orienting educational aims of a Catholic, Marianist university. Pursuit of rigorous inquiry in a sacramental spirit, through a community of learning dedicated to cultivating practical

wisdom in the face of the critical issues of the times, naturally encompasses extended reflection upon the unique contours and directions of our individual and collective lives. Excellence in university education also fosters dedication to the particular vocation of learning throughout our lives.

III. Core student learning outcomes for the common academic program

For the past year, the Marianist Education Working Group has facilitated campus-wide conversations about the purposes and substance of education in the Catholic and Marianist traditions at the University of Dayton. These conversations have also considered where the University best displays its central academic ideals and where the common academic program stands in greatest need of further development or significant reform. Considered in light of these conversations and the substantial study conducted by the Working Group, the five educational aims presented above point toward certain student learning outcomes as being particularly important for guiding future developments in the common academic program for undergraduates.

The learning outcomes presented below are intended to function at the level of the common academic program. They could be promoted in different ways, through different structures and activities, in students' major program of study, in General Education and the Competencies programs, in co-curricular programming, and in learning experiences that transpire outside the formal curriculum. They are not to be regarded as the exclusive responsibility of a limited segment of the university community. Rather, they should shape all intentional planning for students' educational experience in every division of the university.

The proposed outcomes do not map onto unique elements of the common academic program, nor do they exhaust the goals of the academic program for students.

1. **Scholarship:** *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate advanced habits of academic inquiry and creativity through the production of a body artistic, scholarly or community-based work intended for public presentation and defense.*
2. **Faith traditions:** *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate ability to engage in intellectually informed, appreciative, and critical inquiry regarding major faith traditions. Students will also be familiar with some of the basic theological understandings and central texts that shape Catholic beliefs and teachings, practices, and spiritualities. Students' ability should be developed sufficiently to allow them to examine deeply their own faith commitments and also to participate intelligently and respectfully in dialogue with other traditions.*
3. **Diversity:** *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate intellectually informed, appreciative, and critical understanding of the cultures, histories, times, and places of multiple Others, as marked by race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion, nationality, and so on. Students' understanding will reflect scholarly inquiry, experiential immersion, and disciplined reflection.*
4. **Community:** *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate understanding of and practice in the values and skills necessary for learning, living, and working in communities of support and challenge. These values and skills encompass productive, discerning, creative, and respectful collaboration with persons from diverse backgrounds and perspectives for the common purpose of learning, service,*

and leadership that aim at just social transformation. Students will demonstrate these values and skills on campus and in the Dayton region as part of their preparation for global citizenship.

5. **Practical wisdom:** *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate practical wisdom in addressing real human problems and deep human needs, drawing upon advanced knowledge, values, and skills in their chosen profession or major course of study. Starting with a conception of human flourishing, students will be able to define and diagnose symptoms, relationships, and problems clearly and intelligently, construct and evaluate possible solutions, thoughtfully select and implement solutions, and critically reflect on the process in light of actual consequences.*
6. **Critical evaluation of our times:** *Through multidisciplinary study, all undergraduates will develop and demonstrate habits of inquiry and reflection, informed by familiarity with Catholic Social Teaching, that equip them to evaluate critically and imaginatively the ethical, historical, social, political, technological, economic, and ecological challenges of their times.*
7. **Vocation:** *All undergraduates will develop and demonstrate ability to articulate reflectively, using appropriate scholarly and communal resources, the purposes of their life and proposed work through the language of vocation. In collaboration with the university community, students' developing vocational plan will exhibit appreciation of the fullness of human life, including its intellectual, ethical, spiritual, aesthetic, social, emotional, and bodily dimensions, and will examine both the interdependence of self and community and the responsibility to live in service of others.*

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