

Providing a "Transforming Education": Some Tensions and Continuing Challenges

August 14, 2003

Mark Engebretson

Background

"And they lived happily ever after." It's the expected ending of a fairy tale. Just as in most movies and TV shows, the drama in a fairy tale -- and perhaps some conflict -- are only temporary. The story ends, and all is well.

The efforts leading up to the drafting of the Augsburg 2004 documents created some very high expectations for the College, and among its faculty and staff. All of those involved, I believe, hoped that our work would neither be ignored, as planning documents often are, nor be considered merely a pleasant and only temporarily dramatic diversion. We certainly knew better than to expect a fairy tale ending.

Five years later, as we review the results of those collective efforts, it's clear that the work was not ignored. Much of what was outlined in the final document has been acted on; many of you have helped to take the vision and the ideas that were formulated by the Commissions and turn them into reality. In fact, the description of the future Augsburg on pages 5-6 of that document still appears to be an attractive vision of what Augsburg should be like, and what it should move toward. As one of our colleagues has stated, the Augsburg 2004 document captured the essence of this place -- Augsburg takes more risks, with more success, than most institutions of our size, and the overall level of commitment to truly serving the needs of students is remarkable.

However, not everything that was set in motion five years ago has gone on happily ever after. The documents highlighted several complex ideas -- ideas that hold in "dialectical tension" two apparent opposites, each of which provides a partial but strongly supported view that is well represented both inside and outside this College. In some cases our entire community appears to have come together, embracing and surmounting differences on these issues, but in other cases the apparent consensus has turned out to be short-lived -- perhaps most noticeably in the area of relations between faculty, staff, and administrators. Some disappointment was also perhaps inevitable as each group and subgroup retreated "to the trenches" to carry out their continuing work and at the same time attempt to understand and implement these new ideas and visions.

My "assignment" is to give a progress report on "Transforming Education" as it has developed, including our addressing of the several tensions identified in that process. I won't go into great detail on what was written about these complex ideas in 1998, but will focus on the development of these issues, and of Augsburg's response to them, in the intervening years.

Our vision of a distinctive college community was based on four principles:

- 1) Augsburg will continue to affirm its identity as a college of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America whose ethos and educational mission reflect its unique historical and theological roots.
- 2) Augsburg will remain true to the vision of its founders in providing a "transforming" education that unites the liberal and practical. It will prepare students to participate as

good citizens and stewards of this world through its curricular leadership in experiential pedagogies; through its incorporation of the advantages of its location in the city into its curriculum; and through its continued commitment to creating a heterogeneous college community.

- 3) Augsburg will fulfill its historical vocation as a college by helping students with a wide range of academic experience realize their own excellence as they meet the challenges of college-level academic work.
- 4) Augsburg will maintain a work community that enables faculty and staff to contribute effectively to the College's mission and that exemplifies the sort of world that the College's educational mission is intended to create.¹

The Foreword to that document outlined four strategies, the first of which was "Transformative Education: Sharpen vocational clarity among our students by broadening their study-related employment experiences, by deepening the integration of liberal and professional learning, and by encouraging the dialogue of faith with reason in all of our programs, both curricular and extra-curricular."²

Now why, given this collective and very cooperative effort, is the word "dialectic," or "tension," so prominent in my assignment? I believe it's because in the complex world of higher education, tensions can be a sign of vitality as well as of ongoing problems. I'll start out with an analogy that I hope will shed some helpful light on our collective mission: *The best education, like a multivitamin pill, contains within it many valuable components that are in tension with each other.*

Over 20 years ago the Upjohn Company (now, as far as I can tell, a part of Pfizer Pharmaceuticals) published an advertisement about vitamins, featuring a picture of a vitamin pill that vibrated about like a Mexican jumping bean. The accompanying text described the complexity of a multivitamin pill: if the various ingredients were simply mixed together, they would react with each other rather violently. The point of the advertisement was that not just anyone could make an effective vitamin pill -- a simple mixing of the ingredients would make the pill *ineffective*. It took skill to package the various nutrients in such a way that they would be able to work as they were intended, to meet one's nutritional needs.

One of my Chemistry colleagues confirmed for me last month that the vitamins we need for proper nutrition include a mix of acids, bases, and salts – and – well, you can guess what would happen if you were to mix them without being careful! The wonder remains for me, however, that despite this variety of chemical behavior, proper packaging and chemical buffering can deliver each vitamin to its intended destination inside us, so that each one can be properly used.

Things are much simpler with sugar pills, or even Vitamin C tablets. Much less care needs to be taken when there's only one ingredient.

¹ *Augsburg 2004: Extending the Vision*, edited by Mark Engebretson and Joan Griffin, Augsburg College, 1998, p. 3.

² Augsburg 2004, Foreword by President William V. Frame, p. i.

My use of this analogy is not to encourage violent reactions, but to recognize that we are called to a complex task that could, if not performed carefully and well, devolve into unhelpful interactions with ultimately unhelpful results. Our educational task requires care, hard work, and, most importantly, investment of significant effort in understanding and recognizing points of view other than our own, in deference to a recognized greater good.

My thoughts will be organized in three areas: A: Tensions within Academia, and between Academia and Society; B: Progress and Unfinished Business in implementing Transforming Education at Augsburg; and C: Continuing Challenges in the Academic Workplace.

A. Tensions within Academia, and between Academia and Society

A dialectic may be defined as a set of opposites that, when taken together, create wholeness. As the Danish physicist Niels Bohr put it, "The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth."³ Unfortunately, the difficulty of distinguishing profundity from error means that a discussion of tensions and dialectics will necessarily be complex.

The tensions between Liberal and Professional learning and between Theoretical/Classroom learning and Experiential Education both reflect long-standing cultural, ideological, and class-based differences. These may persist as deep divisions in perspective between various academic disciplines and professional groups, even though in the United States they have been somewhat leavened by egalitarian and democratic traditions. Similarly, scholars have found evidence of the tensions between Faith and Reason throughout most of the long history of academic institutions, and even within the centuries-long tradition of the Christian Church. Many of these tensions are also present in the larger society, and are part of the conscious or unconscious worldviews that new students, faculty, staff, Regents, and others bring when they join the Augsburg community.

1. Liberal / Professional and Theoretical / Experiential

Robert Proctor, in his book *Defining the Humanities*, claims that every institution of higher education in America is influenced by three different and often competing educational traditions: that of the liberal arts college, the state college and/or university, and the research university. He describes the traditions as follows: "The highest goals of the liberal arts tradition are moral and political... the civic virtue that comes from using this learning for the common good." In contrast, the state college / university tradition stresses the utilitarian and professional outcomes of education, and the research university stresses the creation of "experts" and the advancement of knowledge.⁴

These traditions are well mixed at Augsburg. Nearly all (all?) of our faculty, and many of our staff, earned their highest degrees at research universities, and hence have been strongly

³ It appears that Bohr modified something his father had said, according to the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations.

⁴ Robert Proctor, *Defining the Humanities*, second edition, Indiana University Press, 1998, pp. 203-205.

influenced the traditions of disciplinary research. Further, Augsburg itself was not founded as a purely liberal arts college, but rather one that mixed the liberal and utilitarian/professional. Nevertheless, the Augsburg 2004 document argued that the Augsburg vision of education, based on the classical liberal arts at their best, can also include the utilitarian and research traditions, recognizing what is valuable in them but also giving them a higher purpose.

As the Augsburg 2004 document noted, the liberal arts tradition has the longest history, but it too has been marked by significant changes and tensions; it has not always been "at its best." The original classical liberal arts of Greece, Rome, and early Christianity combined study of texts and numbers, ideals and ethics, the realm of ideas and the realm of nature. By the late Middle Ages, however, much of the liberal arts tradition had been reduced to the acquisition of research techniques and skills in arguing. The Renaissance humanists (1350-1550) revolted against this stress on the sterile learning of techniques and methods; they attempted to reshape the liberal arts tradition by downgrading such concerns for methodology in favor of a search for the meaning of human life, and the shaping and molding of moral character. Although at first the new humanism was rejected because it did not seem sufficiently scholarly, within a century it had taken over as the dominant view, largely because of the clear perception of its greater value to students and to society.⁵

The rise of modern natural science also required the overcoming of an additional and long-standing polarity – that between knowing and doing, between the study of *ideas* and the study (or even more, the design and construction) of *things*. Paolo Rossi notes that

In Plato's *Gorgias*, Callicles declared that machine builders are despicable, and to be called *banausos* (a mechanical artist or manual laborer) was an insult. Furthermore, no man would let one marry his own daughter. Aristotle excluded the "manual workers" from his citizenship roster and differentiated them from slaves only because they served the needs of many while slaves served the needs of only one. ... Disdain for slaves, who were considered inferior by nature, extended itself to the work they did. The seven liberal arts of the trivium (grammar, rhetoric, logic) and the quadrivium (arithmetic, geometry, music, astronomy) were called liberal because they were the very arts practiced by free (*liberi*) men as opposed to servants or slaves who practiced the mechanical or manual arts. This separation was characteristic of Aristotelian as well as Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, and of the later thinking of Thomas Aquinas in the Middle Ages.⁶

By rejecting the medieval emphasis on the contemplative nature of the liberal arts, the Renaissance humanists undermined this polarity too. As the Humanist educational program spread to all of Europe (and influenced the Reformation), it "effectively challenged the

⁵ Proctor, p. 172. Proctor's book gives extensive documentation for this, and concludes provocatively that the professional Humanities disciplines suffer today largely from self-inflicted wounds as they, too, have often become bogged down in methodological concerns.

⁶ Paolo Rossi, *The Birth of Modern Science*, translated by Cynthia De Nardi Ipsen, Blackwell Publishers, 2000, p. 15.

assumption that intellectual knowledge was categorically distinct from practical capabilities." ⁷

Callicles' low view of the practical arts was still alive in the seventeenth century, however: "vile mechanic" was the sort of insult that caused gentlemen to draw their swords. ⁸ This polarity isn't dead yet, either in America or overseas: one of the consequences of European colonialism in Africa, according to retired missionary Lowell Hesterman, is that some of the members of the new civil service, newly credentialed as members of the "educated class," chose to keep their fingernails excessively long to clearly indicate that they no longer did manual work!

Although Augsburg 2004 addressed these tensions, there is evidence that they are still very much with us, despite our general agreement that an Augsburg education is both liberal and professional, both theoretical and experiential. To the extent that our favoring one or the other of these polarities is based on historically incorrect information, I hope we will consider changing our minds. However, to the extent that the external community and our various professional and/or disciplinary traditions continue to hold one side or the other, we will need to continue the difficult task of working together across academic and disciplinary boundaries in order to implement the kind of education that we claim to provide.

2. Faith and Reason

The background for discussing this issue at Augsburg is, of course, the Christian faith. Robert Nisbet notes that "One of the seemingly ineradicable fallacies about Christianity is that it is interested solely in the spiritual and is governed primarily by faith in the next and eternal world. It is not in our time and it was not in the time of the Church Fathers." ⁹

We can turn to Luther himself for reiteration of this point. In his Large Catechism he writes that we're not ultimately justified by what we do, but by what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. "In the sight of God it is really faith that makes a person holy; faith alone serves him, while our works serve the people." ¹⁰ In a sense, this is the ultimate paradoxical gift given to Christians: Instead of having to justify our own existence, we are freed by God to be committed to others. We are thus free to pursue each and any academic discipline or vocational calling, and also to criticize it -- from the Christian tradition, and from others -- for the purpose of sustaining, protecting, and improving our world.

I want to stress that the tension between faith and reason is not at all limited to "Science and Religion," and certainly not to the media circus surrounding the issue of Creation Science, where faith and reason are almost always depicted as enemies. Rather, the deep connections between faith and reason refer to the much larger constellation of questions regarding meaning, certainty, and truth, and the various means of pursuing them. Their relation is seen to be fundamentally more complementary than competitive -- again, as in a multivitamin pill. Our concern is more

⁷ Peter Dear, *Revolutionizing the Sciences: European Knowledge and Its Ambitions, 1500-1700*, Princeton University Press, 2001, p. 38

⁸ Rossi, p. 16.

⁹ Robert Nisbet, *History of the Idea of Progress*, Transaction publishers, 1998, p. 56.

¹⁰ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism*, translated by Robert H. Fischer, Fortress Press, 1959, p. 29.

when they are separated too far, or when one is excessively and unnecessarily denigrated as a means of promoting the other.

The quest for academic certainty itself has a long history in Western Culture; its roots go back at least as far as the Medieval Scholastic tradition of Christian thinkers as they rediscovered the writings of some Greek philosophers. The breadth of knowledge, strength of arguments, and use of logic in these ancient writings gave a sense of certainty and great authority. As a result, efforts began (and continue even today) to merge the entire web of knowledge -- religious, philosophical, scientific, and moral -- into one seamless tapestry.

Later, however, the failure of any of the late Medieval theologies or systems of knowledge to stem the advance of the Black Death, along with the discovery of ancient Greek and Latin texts that disagreed with the commonly accepted arguments found in more familiar ancient manuscripts, contributed to a growing sense of unease about the power or ultimate veracity of received knowledge. When Christopher Columbus and other explorers revealed new geographic information as well, including the existence not only of places but entire societies of which the ancients seemed unaware, it became harder and harder to maintain that orthodox scholarship -- or religion -- had all the answers. The Reformation and the ensuing religious wars also gave, often unwittingly, an increasing impetus to make a clean break with the past.

In this regard, the tension between faith and reason is actually more clearly evident in Western culture in the rise of the so-called Positive Sciences (social sciences) than in the natural sciences. Whereas most of those who expounded the new methods and aims of Natural Philosophy (natural science) did so within a clearly Christian context, the model of pursuing knowledge in the Positive Sciences was often explicitly developed in rivalry to Christian views. What both natural and social sciences aimed at, however, was the same: certain and neutral knowledge. The guarantee of that certainty was to be a method of rational study or procedure -- the scientific method, as applied to nature, or to society.

The late twentieth century was a time of increasing statements that the attempts at certainty in these new disciplines had also failed, despite the brilliance of those who undertook them. Although that's still a controversial assertion, it is one that we do not shy away from addressing at this college. In what follows I will give first some examples related to the academic side, and then some related to society and ethics.

In Proctor's words, "The nineteenth century was a great age of Faith, not in God, but in Science." An "understanding of the actual history of science is important precisely because the mesmerizing power that the word science exercises over people is due to a greater extent than most of us realize, not to what modern science actually reveals about the structure of the universe, but to what it promises to reveal. Modern science always seems to be on the verge of unlocking the riddles of the universe. But it has not, and, if our understanding of the history of science is at least partially correct, there is no reason to believe that it ever will. Discoveries of new 'facts' always raise new questions, some of which serve primarily to throw current theories into doubt."¹¹

¹¹ Proctor, p. 157.

Oxford professor Alister McGrath noted that "With the passage of time, there has been increasing recognition of the provisionality of scientific understanding. As Karl Popper has pointed out, part of the paradox of the scientific method is that while science is the most critically tested and evaluated form of knowledge available, it is nevertheless tentative and provisional. Science is to be seen as an 'unended quest', whose findings may be up-to-date but are never final. As techniques are refined and conceptual frameworks modified, the understandings of one generation of natural scientists give way to those of another. Although there is a clear degree of continuity between the understandings of successive generations, this can be argued to be based more on the methods which they applied than the outcome of their application."¹²

More poetically, here is Albert Camus' take on modern physics: "At the final stage you tell me that this multi-colored universe can be reduced to the atom and that the atom itself can be reduced to the electron. All this is good and I wait for you to continue. But you tell me of an invisible planetary system where electrons gravitate around a nucleus. You explain this to me with an image. I realize then that you have been reduced to poetry: I shall never know. Have I the time to become indignant? You have changed theories. So that science that was to teach me everything ends up in a hypothesis, that lucidity founders in metaphor, that uncertainty is resolved in a work of art."¹³

The above perspectives are one reason why in our physics curriculum we repeatedly emphasize the limitations and uncertainty of scientific knowledge as well as its methods and capabilities – and I'm aware that several other departments do similarly.

In the social sciences, too, the twentieth century has seen a significant loss of faith in their ultimate capabilities. Robert Nisbet, himself a sociologist, writes that there is a wide gulf between the high expectations for the social sciences, as expressed by social scientists and by the public at large at the beginning of the twentieth century, and the reality 50 -100 years later.¹⁴

In the past decades we have seen the rise and fall of many social/economic movements founded with great zeal, the most prominent of them being Marxist/Leninist Communism. However, as the recent accounting scandals at Enron and MCI/WorldComm and the dot.com collapse have exemplified, Western Capitalism is also not immune to either unethical behavior or short-sightedness.

I've recently learned that Adam Smith's famous book of 1776, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, was not his first major work. Seventeen years before, he wrote *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, which focuses on the "passions" toward altruism and cooperation that he believed are the major sources of the capacity of human beings to live together amicably and constructively. Robert Nisbet stresses the importance of this prior work, noting that "... it is because the social order has been cemented securely by all the values and institutions which spring from altruism and cooperation that an economic system driven by

¹² Alister McGrath, in a lecture at Oxford University published online in Metanexus Views, July 28, 2003 which also cites Karl R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963].

¹³ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus*, quoted by Robert March in *Physics for Poets*, second edition, McGraw-Hill, 1978, p 212.

¹⁴ Nisbet, pp. 346-347.

enlightened self-interest is possible within that order." ¹⁵ In this regard, I'm pleased to note that our Department of Business Administration has explicitly incorporated material on ethics into its majors program.

To summarize this section on tensions: I hope it's clear that I am not attempting to devalue any one academic tradition, but rather trying to indicate that today, as in the past, education needs to impart both faith and reason, both the theoretical and the experiential, and both the liberal and the professional. To go back to the analogy of vitamins, I want to insist on the value of multivitamin pills, and I don't want to see different groups of students receiving only one or a select few ingredients!

B. Transforming Education at Augsburg: Progress since 1998 and Unfinished Business

First, let's review what has happened regarding "Transforming Education" at Augsburg in the past five years.

1. Recent Accomplishments

1. The requirement of an Augsburg Experience, the first element of the new Augsburg Core Curriculum to be adopted (in spring 2002), was developed further this past year. Augsburg Experiences, whether accompanying credit-bearing courses or not, are being developed in the following five categories:

- a. Internships, Cooperative Education, Student Teaching, Practica, Field Work, and Clinicals;
- b. Service-Learning Courses and Service-Learning Experiences;
- c. Study Abroad;
- d. Faculty-Student Research; and
- e. Special and Individualized Off-Campus Immersion Experiences

Detailed guidelines for experiences in each category were prepared and adopted in spring 2003, and a 7-person faculty-staff Leadership Team was established to work with departments and individual faculty beginning this fall to further develop and implement these various experiential programs. Indeed, each of the above categories includes activities that are already occurring at Augsburg, with significant impact.

There has also been steady support for continuing efforts to incorporate experiential education into other curricular and extracurricular activities, based on an increasing realization that experiential education is sound pedagogy. We are gratified to see the overwhelming weight of evidence reported in the educational research literature that experiential education works – in multiple ways, and in both academic and professional contexts.

2. A general education program (the Augsburg Core Curriculum) that is distinctively characteristic of Augsburg's mission and vision has now been adopted. It combines more explicit attention to the positive interaction of the liberal arts with professional and pre-professional studies as well as significant interdisciplinary and cross-departmental efforts. It incorporates structured opportunities for experiential education at both the introductory and

¹⁵ Nisbet, p. 188.

advanced levels (the latter being the Augsburg Experiences), and includes explicit academic focus on both the concept and the professional implementation of the idea of vocation. Much work remains to be done, because its many interlocking parts will take several years to design and implement fully. This program will again make use of a participatory development and oversight model, and if adequate time and support are provided, we can hope for significant "transforming of education" at Augsburg in the next few years.

3. While Augsburg remains supportive of many traditional majors, it has implemented several new majors and/or combination programs, including Music Business, Marketing, American Indian Studies, Clinical Laboratory Sciences, Computational Economics, and Computational Philosophy, and plans are being developed for several more, including Materials Science. These have been carefully scrutinized by the College's Academic Affairs Committee and Faculty Senate, and often revised in the light of college-wide concerns, before being approved by the full faculty.

4. Other examples of progress within and beyond the academic sector include a new academic calendar; many significant upgrades in Information Technology organization and capabilities; a new capital campaign; stronger relationships with many of Augsburg's historical constituencies; an improved academic profile; new relationships with donors across the country; revolutionized public relations and external publications, including especially the NOW; and successful recruiting of new talent across many areas of the campus. These actions and accomplishments have occurred despite several challenges: an almost completely new administrative team at the Vice Presidential level; a significant downturn in the economy at both the national and state levels, and the continued disparity between ideas and the economic resources to carry all of them out, or carry them out well.

2. Some next steps and challenges

One major item of unfinished business is to better define the meaning of "transforming education." What is "transforming"? Changing one's orientation, politically, socially, or otherwise? Empowering one? ... and for what? Giving one wisdom?

We also need to be able to measure our success in providing a "transforming education." To the extent that students will work and study "toward the test," what tests do we give? Will a "transforming education" show up in an exit interview, or ten years later in an alumni survey? ... Or is "transformation" like art or certain other creatively or morally defined items, for which most people can say only "I'll recognize it when I see it"?

Garry Hesser, who provided me with many helpful images related to transformation, has adapted some of the phrasing Richard Hughes used in his book, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*, to develop the following description: "An Augsburg education is transformative because our understanding of the Christian faith and the liberal arts equip us to pursue the truth wherever that pursuit may lead, empowers the believing student/scholar to engage a wide range of conversation partners, even when those partners hold positions that threaten our most cherished beliefs, and empowers the Augsburg graduate to think in paradoxical terms, to

simultaneously hold conflicting positions, and allow that conflict to generate imaginative creativity." ¹⁶

Our current use of the words "Transforming Education" suggests that it is both affective and cognitive – related to values and the will as well as to information, skills, and the intellect. In outcome-based terms, I submit that it involves at least the following: "An Augsburg graduate will have experienced significant growth in a) abilities and skills (developing one's talents), b) accessing truth (getting one's facts straight), c) personal and interpersonal efficaciousness (getting one's act together), and d) integrity, character, leadership, faith, imagination, and inventiveness (developing higher order creative and moral abilities)." Much more briefly, perhaps, "An Augsburg graduate will have a significantly enhanced motivation and means (or intellectual ability?) to take charge of his/her future and to effectively contribute to the human community." Because "Transforming Education" may be a phrase used on our campus for some time, I trust that these brief comments will not be the end of our discussion on these matters, but rather more of an introduction.

Other steps in implementing "transforming education" at Augsburg are more incremental, but also need highlighting.

1. The implementation of the new Augsburg Core Curriculum demands considerable time and creativity of faculty from many departments. Development of new courses and course components involves significant experimentation and risks. Because the January Interim term, with its focused nature and flexible schedule, no longer exists as a venue to develop and try out new courses, I suggest that serious consideration be given to encouraging faculty to test new and significantly revised courses either during May or during summer school terms.
2. The developers of the Augsburg Core have asked faculty to consider ways that this program might stimulate changes in various majors and minors. This must be done in the context of a wide divergence of opinion across campus on the nature and size of academic majors, the necessity for minors, and the value of earning double or triple majors.

Departments and majors are influenced by a variety of different factors, and external, professional, and market expectations are at times in tension with internal standards and local limitations on resources. We expect that each department, and the faculty as a whole, will consider, on behalf of our students, both the stance of their disciplines and the pressures of the external society. To put the matter strongly, discord and mistrust on these matters is at times fueled by an arrogance about one's own discipline, accompanied by ignorance of other disciplines and their perspectives and pressures. I see an urgent need for better understanding of the viewpoint of others on this issue, and believe that if any one "side" wins, our entire campus, and many of our students, will lose.

3. There are likely also to be frequent boundary disputes between academic disciplines as we continue to interpret and implement two other themes from the Augsburg 2004 documents: a)

¹⁶ Garry Hesser, personal communication August 1, 2003, based on ideas from Richard T. Hughes, *How Christian Faith Can Sustain the Life of the Mind*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2001, p. 5.

incorporating liberal arts principles into the entire curriculum (including professional programs), and b) implementing the College's commitment to diversity in its various forms.

If we are pleased that educational research supports experiential education, and it does, we might want also to take seriously other results of educational research. The educational research literature has stressed that professional identification of students with their instructors is at least as important in student learning of affective matters as are the professional / academic credentials of their instructors. In particular, it suggests that mixing of instructors from various departments is not automatically the best means of imparting "liberal" educational components to students in professional majors, or even of staging interdisciplinary courses. Rather, it suggests that if Augsburg is to make a significant impact on its students in these areas, it must have faculty in many, if not all, departments, who can "profess" in these matters (i.e., who can present at least "professional" values, and better yet, provide perspectives and values informed by the concept of vocation). This research thus reinforces the importance of continuing education for and dialogue among faculty across disciplinary and divisional boundaries. It also has implications for the way in which Augsburg structures its education in matters of citizenship, civility, and international/intercultural awareness; it does not provide strong support for older "inoculation" models of one-course exposure to each of several areas of social concern.¹⁷

Augsburg 2004 had already noted the importance of the above in the hiring process:

It is of primary importance to Augsburg's mission to hire and retain staff, faculty, and administration of the highest quality, and who are a good "fit" to its purposes. To this end, they must be clearly informed at the time of hiring about Augsburg's mission, and they must "buy in" to the College's longer-range goals and values. One specific corollary is that faculty and staff should be hired to the College, not just to a specific department; consistent attention needs to be paid to balancing the needs of specific programs against the needs and purposes of the institution as a whole.¹⁸

Augsburg has made significant (but perhaps inconsistent) strides in this area, most notably with the addition of Faculty Interview Committee meetings with each finalist for a faculty position, focusing explicitly on the candidate's fit to the broader character and mission of the College. I understand that further efforts to link recruitment to the College's vision are underway, including some for staff and regents as well.

4. Our 1998 documents did not address our growing list of Master's degree programs, which include Cross-Cultural Nursing, Education, Leadership, Physician Assistant, and Social Work. More may be on their way, including a proposal to inaugurate an MBA program. How many graduate programs should be offered, and in what fields? What criteria should be used to select and evaluate them? How quickly should they / can they / be introduced? Should any or all of these be authorized for Rochester? To what extent should they be directed or guided to incorporate e-learning resources? And to what extent should any or all of them be "distinctively Augsburg"?

¹⁷ Joan Griffin's paper reviews recent thinking on this subject in more detail.

¹⁸ Augsburg 2004, p. 35.

5. External and internal expectations of faculty priorities continue to be in some tension with each other. Increased attention to productive / creative scholarship is now mandated by recently adopted tenure and promotion documents. The nature of faculty "service," again part of these documents, is not yet clear to all: for some, the meaning of such service is simply collapsed into "committee work." Collegiality, commitment to the College's mission, and attendance at events such as the convocation series, the senior Honors Convocation, and the Senior Breakfast are not always understood as other venues of such service. At the same time, there are increasing calls for student, staff, and faculty activism from both on and off campus. How will individual faculty, departments, and the College as a whole resolve these increased and sometimes conflicting demands on their time? How will the Committee on Tenure, Promotions, and Leaves evaluate the choices of individual faculty, especially in light of these new mandates? Of at least equal importance in the long run, of course, is whether future faculty hiring will reflect and build on these new expectations.

6. There continue to be considerably different views across campus in regard to the appropriate level and quantity of academic work expected of students, and even the appropriate skill level to be required of all graduates in writing, thinking, and quantitative reasoning. These issues will be addressed as necessary in the further development of the Augsburg Core and revised major and minor programs.

3. Opportunity and Challenge

The following summary of Augsburg's mission, cited in the report of the Commission on Faith and Reason in spring 1998, is taken from Augsburg's successful proposal to the Bush Foundation for Augsburg's second Faculty Development Grant. It points out several factors relevant to Augsburg's mission and vision:

Augsburg College until 1963 was the only college of the Lutheran Free Church. It saw itself acting in the service of young people with an enormous range of capabilities, yet sharing with the faculty and the College's constituency a common concern for values and a religious tradition. The fact that this tradition was explicitly egalitarian and democratic made it possible to accept average as well as outstanding students without any expectation of equivalent educational outcomes. All students would be challenged on their own terms, yet each found a place at Augsburg and in the church constituency. Augsburg's ethos also made possible the welcoming of faculty and students from outside the sponsoring religious body, as well as persons with dissenting views on a broad range of social, political, and religious issues. Out of this affirmed breadth came a style of teaching and learning that accepted and cherished diversity and welcomed innovation.¹⁹

This mission description highlights another tension / dialectic that is characteristic of Augsburg and related to our vision of a "Transforming Education," one noted on pages 23-24 of the Augsburg 2004 document. Augsburg has historically lived out a motivation to serve the underserved; to help students personally, academically, and spiritually. For reasons both

¹⁹ Augsburg College Proposal to the Bush Foundation, The Role of Teaching at Augsburg College, Section V, p. 1, quoted in the report of the Commission on Faith and Reason, 1998, p. 54.

practical and related to its vision, Augsburg has welcomed many who were not viewed as typical "private college material" or even "college material." Our value-added contribution is perhaps made most clear when we see someone with an undistinguished (or even deprived) past do well, and we may be justifiably proud of our contributions to their success, but we must not overlook others when we attempt to define our mission as a College and as individual faculty and staff. We also have had the challenge of "transforming" those who come to Augsburg already well-schooled in faith and/or in intellect; of moving Saul to Paul, and of influencing the Lukes of this world to not cease being Physicians but to also be highly effective servants of Christ. Augsburg's traditional mission, which was reiterated in the Augsburg 2004 document, included not just one segment of students, but all.

This tension is continually played out in faculty committees, and in particular in the Academic Affairs Committee, of which I have been a member for the past 6 years. We have wrestled repeatedly with the tension between quality and rigor (high expectations, challenge) and intellectual accessibility (opportunity) to our current students and student profile. As our document noted, this is a difficult matter, and I've seen enough variation in opinions on this issue in recent years to know that it represents a real tension here. We need to continue to work hard to keep both "sides" together on this one, too.

Conflicting partial views of the College's mission are a frequent source of misunderstanding on campus, and have confused and disappointed some of our most loyal external supporters. Our external face has at times placed such stress on access, with relative silence on excellence, that our academic reputation has suffered. We have at times, intentionally or not, sent the message that this is a place where we would not send our own college-age children – and where our alumni would not send theirs!

There is of course a natural tendency to focus on the group with which we work most often. There is at least anecdotal evidence that we at Augsburg work with such an academically (and otherwise) diverse group that we have a much tougher task than most other private colleges – that we must be able to work with university-scale diversity and complexity, but with small-college resources and budget – but it is imperative that we grapple with the breadth of this tension, and do so in a positive, helpful manner.

It also happens that we sometimes must counsel "no." Some may feel fully called to a particular vocation, but do not, or cannot, perform adequately in that role. Although we often have the opportunity to help students, or even each other, set their sights higher or in a different direction than society typically encourages them to do, we cannot relax the tension between calling and ability if we are to properly represent the idea of Christian vocation.

4. Opportunities Related to Augsburg's Lilly Grant program, "Exploring our Gifts: Connecting Faith, Vocation, and Work"

The Lilly grant has both made possible the attainment of some of the goals suggested by the Commission on Faith and Reason in its 1998 report, and increased the urgency of finding ways to incorporate such activities permanently into the College's life, mission, and budget.

The Commission's report recommended that Augsburg a) provide more regular opportunities for both Day School and Weekend College students to participate in the dialogue between faith and

reason outside their classes, by means of special and/or ongoing forums and both public and small-group gatherings, at either no or minimal cost to participants; b) provide time and economic support for faculty scholarship (research, writing, and course development) in areas related to this dialogue; c) stimulate the intellectual environment on campus through the establishment of visiting professorships in one or more areas in which faith and reason interact, such as urban studies, global justice, community service, science and ethics, and various business-related majors, as well as in areas not well represented among current faculty and staff; and d) create an Institute for Faith and Learning.

Almost immediately after the completion of Augsburg 2004, Augsburg instituted a yearly convocation series, focusing on a single yearly theme, which when appropriate incorporated our three previously endowed annual convocations (Christensen, Batalden, and Sverdrup). In addition to providing public forums for day students, these have provided special events for faculty and the public, and at least in a few cases have now made possible such opportunities for Weekend College students and faculty as well. Augsburg's Lilly program has provided funds supporting additional convocations and the development of courses or course modules related to the idea of vocation. It has also functioned in many ways as an Institute for Faith and Learning: it supports both curricular and extracurricular activities focused on vocation for students, including experiential education opportunities and support, forums and community events for faculty and staff, and public events for the larger community. Lilly Endowment support has also spurred collaboration between several ELCA colleges and seminaries on issues related both to conveying the idea and value of vocation to prospective students and employees, and to developing what we at Augsburg call a "transforming education."

As with any grant-supported program, the duration of funding for the Lilly program at Augsburg is finite. Because of the centrality of many of its thrusts to Augsburg's vision of a Transforming Education, especially in the area of vocation, it will be important to find the means to support a continuation of these activities in future years.

C. Continuing Challenges in the Academic Workplace

Section V of Augsburg 2004 ²⁰ addressed the nature of the Augsburg work community and, among other things, called for greatly increased cooperation between faculty, staff, and administrators.

The task of implementing the academic parts of Augsburg's educational vision necessarily continues to rest on faculty committees, departments, and individual faculty members. In order to be realized, the principles of the Augsburg 2004 document must be understood and agreed to by the faculty involved, and then followed by both coherent planning and detailed implementation in courses, programs, majors, and entire curricula.

However, the documents are quite clear that staff as well as faculty are involved in educating the "whole person" and in making a "transforming education" possible. The section of Augsburg 2004 on Transforming Education included mention of faculty-staff relations: "To achieve this, faculty and staff must transform their vision of their roles and relationships in the college community, identifying ways in which the education of Augsburg's students is truly a collaborative enterprise." ²¹

Faculty-staff relations were, according to many accounts, the most productive and fruitful in years during the 1997-1998 academic year, when the five Commissions constituted by President Frame met to produce the several reports that were foundational to the Augsburg 2004 document. Many different groups were well represented and heavily involved. This set up a role and a promise for staff that hasn't been sustained -- of opportunities to work together, and to share ideas and perspectives. Although there continue to be many examples of successful work and interaction across organizational and staffing boundaries (e.g., the faculty-staff mentoring program for new hires, which allows new faculty and staff, including adjuncts, to meet together in a focused way to become familiar with the College's mission and with each other), the increased expectations have in several cases led to aborted new ventures, and as a result, to at least temporarily significant levels of frustration.

Enough of us have read of the success of quality circles and worker empowerment to realize that what we participated in was a significant break from the normal way of doing business here (and in most for-profit and nonprofit institutions in the country). Unfortunately, followup efforts in many cases have reverted to older, more hierarchical models. From what I've been able to gather, there was support all across campus for the cooperative planning model, but some problems in execution and communication -- and perhaps the reality that real cooperation would require sacrificing some perceived advantages -- have led to significant disappointment.

1. Expectations: Vocation, Quality, and Workload

In addition to its call for all members of the Augsburg community to understand their own work in the context of vocation, Augsburg 2004 called for more attention to the quality of work done, and to the ongoing tension between high and excessive expectations for its employees.

I have heard from some that the idea of vocation is not broadly understood, especially by staff. Many faculty members are given opportunities to learn about it and reflect on it, but staff access

²⁰ Augsburg 2004, pp. 25-26.

²¹ Augsburg 2004, p. 13.

to these opportunities and occasions at which staff can reflect on these ideas are not always clearly articulated. Perhaps paradoxically, many or even most of the participants in last year's Vocation workshops were staff!

It may also be cause for some concern that nearly every citation for outstanding staff employee awards in recent years has included mention of time commitments above and beyond the standard work week. Is there a functional, as opposed to written, requirement for overtime at Augsburg? Such requirements can work, and in some cases have worked, to the detriment of employees' commitments to families, churches, etc. Can we do a better job of recognizing those who are both dedicated and effective in their work, using evaluations based on more than time spent?

A related concern is that there appears to be a rather wide gap in perceptions and in expectations in regard to staffing levels. On the one hand, older faculty note that there are clearly many more staff at Augsburg than there were 20-30 years ago. On the other hand, many staff have heard that Augsburg is staffed more lightly than our sister colleges. An example of this is the Division of Natural Science and Mathematics, which has one half-time secretarial position to support its 20-30 faculty members. Over this same period the load of administrative paperwork for faculty has steadily increased.

This conflicting anecdotal evidence and experience can lead to widely divergent views of the role and importance of existing staff at Augsburg, and for the need to augment, realign, or even reduce their numbers! I advocate some clarity here, especially in light of the fact that both governmental regulations and perceived competitive pressures are responsible for substantial fractions of the increase in nonacademic staffing.

2. Cooperation Across the Campus

It appears that not all of us are "on the same page" when it comes to presenting Augsburg, especially to external audiences. How do we, and how can we, keep focus on the College's priorities? How can they be communicated clearly and consistently to both internal and external audiences? How will we work together to realize them? How can each group remain focused on its designated priorities amid the cacophony of competing concerns and interests? How can we celebrate the diversity of our strengths – and our needs – without diluting our current plans and initiatives and confusing the very ones outside our work community whose support we most need? Ben Franklin put it this way to his colleagues during the American Revolution: "We must indeed all hang together, or, most assuredly, we shall hang separately." ²²

3. Investments in People: Continuing Education and Sabbatical Leaves

The perennial tensions between current needs and future investment and between human capital and tangible assets are exacerbated not only by Augsburg's limited financial resources but also by some apparent jealousy between different sectors of the College, and between faculty and staff, each thinking that "the grass is greener on the other side of the fence." Professional training, including sabbaticals for faculty, has been a longstanding component of Augsburg's investment in its employees, and is mentioned here primarily to highlight the importance of both faculty and staff using these opportunities as wisely as possible. Various Augsburg offices provide opportunities for training and continuing education. Most on-campus events are organized by the Human Resources office and the Center for Professional Development / Faculty

²² According to the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, Franklin was responding to a remark made by John Hancock, "There must be no pulling different ways: we must all hang together."

Development, while most participation in individual off-campus events or continuing programs is supported by the respective Vice Presidential offices.

Faculty might be encouraged whenever possible to use their sabbaticals strategically, to enhance not only their own capabilities for scholarly research (or creative performance), teaching, and professional service, but also to enhance their own visibility, and the College's reputation – in both the nationwide and statewide contexts. The faculty handbook's greatly increased and clarified emphasis on scholarship as a condition for tenure and promotion also makes it important that Augsburg's faculty choose their sabbatical leaves wisely. For example, it is a fact of academic life today that most financial support for both scholarly research and educational innovations – whether from government, nonprofits, or industry -- originates not in Minnesota but in Washington, New York, and other national centers of power and organization.

It seems to be a matter of course that both faculty and staff should be increasingly alert for opportunities to make helpful external contacts such as these whenever feasible.

Finally, two disconnected remarks that I haven't yet succeeded in fitting into the above:

1. At times we look for leadership from others, but are reluctant to take that role ourselves. How can we encourage our fellow faculty and staff members to take ownership of their mission?
2. It's psychologically difficult to hire people better than ourselves, yet that's vital to the future of this institution.

Conclusion

As I have been writing down my thoughts these past few weeks, it has been heartening to realize all that has been accomplished at Augsburg since the planning efforts of 1997-1998. While no one would mistake Augsburg for a fairy tale castle, this institution remains remarkably committed to its complex ideals, surprisingly nimble as an organization, and for many of us -- and for most of the time -- a wonderful place to work.

This essay has not attempted to restate or refine the "greater good" that the Augsburg 2004 documents presented to us. Instead, my thoughts have focused on several issues related to its educational vision and the complex relations between various components of that vision. I have tried to remind us that producing a "transforming education," combining as it does educational components as disparate as the acids, bases, and salts in a vitamin pill, will require a renewed commitment to recognizing our necessarily partial viewpoints and performing the difficult task of working together in a sustained fashion.

To the extent that we continue to prefer partial visions, we may well exemplify those persons described by John Henry Newman, whose book *The Idea of a University* described over one hundred years ago an ideal of higher education that is strikingly consistent with Augsburg's: "[m]en, whose minds are possessed with some one object, take exaggerated views of its importance, are feverish in the pursuit of it, make it the measure of things which are utterly foreign to it, and are startled and despond if it happens to fail them."²³

²³ John Henry Newman, *The Idea of a University*, Discourse 6.6, ed. Frank M. Turner, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996, pp. 99-100, cited by Proctor, p. 207.

What can we do to enhance Augsburg's reputation and effectiveness? What is the "greater good" that we might be able to collectively agree on, and use to transcend our various perspectives? How can we collectively deliver a "transforming education" to our students? We need to hear from you.

I want to thank many faculty and staff for their helpful comments before and during the writing of this paper, and in particular Bill Wittenbreer for his help in tracking down some of the citations.