

Faculty Center for Teaching Excellence

Responses to Ellerd Hulbert

As a new faculty member at WCU I was glad to read Ellerd Hulbert's piece on internationalizing the curriculum. I think that a global perspective is very important, in part because I grew up in another culture, participated in international exchange, and have traveled extensively. It is becoming more and more obvious to me that the issues facing us as a "people" are the same all over the world. We are more similar than we are dissimilar.

I try to translate this into the classroom by making it clear that I think of myself, my thoughts, and my plans for the future as though the world were one large country with many special areas, interests, and idiosyncrasies that I need to understand and respect. For instance, I usually take a few minutes at the beginning of each class to highlight what struck me in that day's news, asking students what caught their attention. Then I proceed with a comment like "how does this relate to our current focus?" Once this habit is established, students will often bring unsolicited questions or issues to class, sharing information and keeping us all involved in a global perspective. This may seem like a pebble in the ocean of training, but until we change the curriculum and give each course specific learning objectives, this informal approach can provide an immediate and easy way to combat the misunderstanding and fear often at the bottom of international conflict and a narrow social perspective.

Barbara Luoma, Social Work

Internationalizing the curriculum is, as Ellerd Hulbert has indicated, a multifaceted endeavor which requires the involvement of administrators, faculty, and students.

However, until we can convince all those various constituents that internationalization is not only desirable but essential, it is unlikely that this will be achieved. Until we all--administrators, faculty, and students alike--see this as a priority, internationalization is not going to receive the support it needs, whether in the form of funds or in the form of a commitment to expose students to international issues. If we as faculty are indeed strongly committed to this goal, we will have to make that commitment clear. We will also have to support that commitment by including international issues in our curriculum, by searching for funding on our own to finance international experiences, and by providing encouragement to administrators who are working to make international opportunities available for both faculty and students. My own experience with students in the summer in Mexico program has convinced me more than ever of the need to expose students to life in developing nations. They return with not only an understanding of the problems faced by those nations, but with an increased appreciation of their own country. While limited financial resources are a problem now and are likely to be for some time, if we search together for creative solutions, we may find creative ways to accomplish our goals.

Anne Rogers, Anthropology

Ellerd's arguments seem persuasive, but talk is cheap. To test our REAL commitment in this area, I suggest that someone propose reinstating a foreign language requirement for all undergraduate degrees.

Lee Minor, Mathematics

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