

LIBERAL LEARNING FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

It is incredible for me to think that a full year has passed since I started in the president's office here at Case Western Reserve. While I recently sent a full report on the year to all alumni, I'd like to take this opportunity to reflect on one topic in more depth: our commitment to leading the nation in a new vision of liberal learning for the twenty-first century.

This year is the 150th anniversary of the publication of Cardinal Newman's classic treatise, *The Idea of a University*, which defined liberal learning as a pedagogy centered on personal enlightenment. This laudable goal evolved through the twentieth century to include "self discovery" as well as the acquisition of both skills and attitudes that promote rigor in thinking and curiosity about the world—all critical elements of any future agenda for higher education.


But this "classical" view of liberal learning was largely inward-focused. Its identified reward for "learning how to learn for a lifetime" was to be a much more fulfilling life for the recipient of such an education. The unfortunate legacy of this philosophy for the twenty-first century learner has been a relative de-emphasis on the responsibility that accompanies knowledge, and a virtual exclusion of technology and commerce (and often science) from the center of the curriculum: the arts and the humanities were defined as the entire core of a liberal education.

Indeed, the arts and humanities must be the heart and soul of liberal learning, which is one of several reasons we are investing tens of millions of new dollars over the next three years in the College of Arts and Sciences. But even as we invest in those faculty, graduate programs, and other curricular offerings in the college (and make dramatic improvements in amenities for student life in and around campus), a great education for the twenty-first century must *embrace* technology, commerce, and science as *part* of a liberal education, because the goals of this education must extend from personal enlightenment to the public good. Educated citizens must not only know themselves and know how to learn for a lifetime, but also know *how to get things done in the world*, because they must own the responsibility that comes with knowledge: the responsibility to leave the world a better place than they found it.

Case Western Reserve University is uniquely poised to lead the world in this redefinition of liberal learning. I would even say that we have an obligation to do so—it is our destiny. Created by the forward-thinking federation of a great liberal arts school and a leading technology institute, CWRU now emerges a generation of growing pains later as *the* university in the nation where technology, commerce, and science can become core features of a new liberal learning.

The last decade has positioned us well for this ambitious challenge. From President Agnar Pytte's commitment to the educational mission of the University, and the recommendations of a faculty commission on undergraduate education and life that we combine real-world experiences with the rigors of theory only research faculty can provide, to the ambitious SAGES (Seminar

Approach to General Education and Scholarship) Program, in which it was my privilege to teach a freshman seminar this past academic year—all of these initiatives have paved the way for an unparalleled leadership opportunity in American higher education.

All eight of our deans and the leadership of the University Undergraduate Faculty have now charged a faculty group to work through the implementation issues for a University-wide SAGES curriculum to begin with the freshman class entering in 2005. Toward that goal, we have already launched a new Presidential Fellows Program to identify graduate and professional school faculty (as well as selected scholars in the community) to become SAGES seminar leaders. If you know high school students interested in a dynamic college experience at a great research university (I'll highlight our new investments in our research centers of excellence in my next column), where they are likely to have a medical, law, or business school professor leading a freshman or sophomore seminar and where real-world placements in laboratories, clinics, social service agencies, and businesses drive students' curiosity about the latest theories coming out of their own professors' research—tell them to come to Case Western Reserve, where we are striving to be the most powerful learning environment in the world. 

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