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| **Note from Liberal Arts Lunch in Middlebury** |

December 13, 2012

Pete S. started the meeting... As EAC members, we're charged with looking at a number of issues and prompted by a number of sources - task forces, EAC priorities, RDLs letter, external landscape

Paul Monod - admin only talks about something when it is marketing something or eliminating something, so which prompts this conversation?

This is not a direct response to an administrative mandate, but perhaps to the changing external climate that RDL rightly pointed us to

Will that changing context affect what we do, or the kinds of students we teach?

Affect our own international students, for instance?

Some conversation about the risk of seeing education here as job training, though liberal arts should empower students to be effective in the world, including the marketplace

What are the values that are at the heart of a liberal arts education?  Can we articulate it beyond economic value?  Would it be better to speak of the benefits of an education, to further avoid the narrow  implications of economic language?

Discussion of philosophy's data on the professional usefulness of the major... But does that exercise  confirm the supremacy of economic criteria?

Do we need to be mindful of the pressing realistic needs of parents and students to see the economic promise of that investment in education.  We marginalize ourselves if we remain naive about those concerns.  Instead we honor our students for who they are today - as people in today, not yesterday - by taking these concerns seriously

Things that should concern us:  use our resources efficiently, which means in part not trying to emulate a research university... Furthermore, we should be offering courses that students need, not necessarily courses that reflect our own field or research interests...  This responsibility for determining what our students should be learning, and applying that principle to our curricular decisions, is important for faculty at large, for departments, as well as the EAC.  The value added is in the love of learning.

Pressures on us:  commodification of education, and the need for hyper specialization in our faculty in order to be funded and promoted

Discussion of the virtues of breadth in teaching... And the need for conversation across the faculty about the experience of this breadth of responsibility

We don't talk enough about what we think is the heart of liberal arts, and we certainly don't sufficiently pass it along to our students, who often don't come here with a sharp commitment to the liberal arts

*Discussion of online courses:*

Paul Monod - presented idea of intro courses online, perhaps as prerequisites for entrance

JCD - does this imply that the function of intro courses is information transfer, whereas what we do in upper level courses is something different?

Jeff -  is that concern that information transfer is primarily what MOOCs can deliver accurate?  See recent Time magazine ... We don't know what we're talking about yet with regard to MOOCs, nor enough about what other institutions are doing

Is there a difference between disciplines in the compatibility with online forum?

*Internships:*

Is this another example of an educational experience that should not be treated as the parallel to the liberal arts educational experience?

Community - is that an integral part of the liberal arts experience?

We should explore this notion of community, what we mean by this, and what kinds of promise different kinds of community hold?

We should engage our students in this set for hard questions, because they've grown up in another world than many of us, and may have different notions of community

We also should engage alumni -five and ten years out- on this question, and other issues related to an exploration of the liberal arts meaning

Let's not lose the emphasis on life-learning in all of the conversation about technology, etc.

Let's also acknowledge the workload implication to students and faculty of strategies like,flipping the classroom

Discussion of sharing in one another's teachings - the importance of this kind of mutual learning... Can the admin help with facilitating this... We as an institution should reward teaching more clearly, rather than research

Discussion of advising students - at beginning and end of career here- for them to take advantage of the breadth in a liberal arts education... Getting them to see requirements as opportunities

Advising is difficult but crucial... The curriculum has exploded, so no one can have a hold on everything here... So we need to collectively think about the mechanisms and support for advising

Matty's idea:  Clifford symposium on the history and future of the liberal arts?  Engage the classic roots and the options currently in front of us.