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AGLS News

*The Newsletter of
the Association for General
and Liberal Studies*
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From the President

Rob Mauldin: The Major: An 800 lb Gorilla

Where does an 800 lb gorilla sleep? Anywhere it wants! Although the major appeared very recently in the history of higher education (Johns Hopkins University in 1878), I liken the major to an 800 lb gorilla. Indeed, the major does pretty much what it wants to do these days in higher education. For example, when a student tells someone that he or she is going to college, what is the first thing that typically is asked of that student? What's your major? They don't ask about what type of general education program the institution has, the size of the program, whether the program achieves coherence by skills or content or ways of knowing or some other way, whether the program has a requirement in ethics or cultural studies, whether the program has a freshman seminar, whether there is an upper-level component to the program, etc. The departmental structure of universities and colleges protects and promotes the major. The high value of the major is supported by faculty members, most of whom would rather teach a small class of upper-level majors than to have to deal with lower-level classes filled with students who don't really want to be there. The size of the major has grown to the extent that for many degree programs, elective hours no longer exist. As the amount of information continues to grow, the major continues to grow and puts pressure on general education to the point that many courses in general education programs really are courses designed for particular majors. The major has a powerful ally in professional accrediting bodies and they often are touted as the reason why majors have so many hours (which we all know is a faulty argument). As my friend and mentor John Hinni, Dean Emeritus of the School of University Studies at Southeast Missouri State University

once said, "the major has become synonymous with the university experience."

In an article regarding vegetarianism in the July 15 issue of *Time*, the authors noted that gorillas "are less social than the more omnivorous chimpanzees, possibly because collecting all that forage takes so darned much time." Tending to majors and doing research in the discipline do take an enormous amount of time. It is our job to make sure that departments don't forget the defining trait of a college education: general education.

The Association for General and Liberal Studies is the only national organization that has as its only goal the promotion of that part of the curriculum that we call general education. Other organizations pay considerable attention to general education, but we are the only national organization that has general education as its *sole raison d'etre*. Thanks to the leadership of John Nichols during the past two years, AGLS has done an excellent job by advocating the centrality of general education to North Central and by suggesting that we not integrate general education into the major to AAC&U. Let's continue this advocacy both on our own campuses and through this fine organization. Please contact me, or someone on the executive council, if you have an idea regarding a way in which AGLS can be an advocate for general education at the national level. Contact information is included at the end of this newsletter.

Rob Mauldin, Ph.D.
President, AGLS



The passing of the gavel from outgoing President John Nichols to incoming President Rob Mauldin

Nominations for AGLS Executive Council

Each year three AGLS members in good standing are elected to three-year terms on the Executive Council. The Past President chairs a committee of four members, none of whom are currently on the Executive Council, whose task it is to prepare a slate of candidates. This committee works entirely from the nominations made by the membership at large—in response to this invitation in this issue of our newsletter.

To nominate someone, first please secure that person's acceptance of nomination. The Executive Council meets twice a year—once at the end of the annual AGLS conference and once in (usually) February at the site of the next conference—so your nominee ought to have that information. Members may, of course, nominate themselves. Then please send by **March 1** the name, institutional affiliation, phone number, and e-mail address to John Nichols [nichols@saintjoe.edu].

Porter ends long service with AGLS and Missouri

Dr. Gil Porter, Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies and Director of the General Education Program at the University of Missouri-Columbia, tendered his resignation from the executive council of the Association for General and Liberal Studies on Dec. 10, 2002. Porter's decision was based on an early retirement package offered by the state of Missouri.

Some highlights of Gil's service to AGLS include:

- A charter member of the group that created the Council for the Administration of General and Liberal Studies (CAGLS) in Savannah in 1994 under the leadership of John Hinni
- Presentations at several AGLS conferences and, with other AGLS members, at other conferences
- Co-drafter of the revised AGLS Mission Statement
- Report on Best Practices for AGLS and CAGLS
- Member of the AGLS Executive Council 2000-2002

At the University of Missouri, Gil most recently served as Director of the General Education Program. Fred Janzow, Dean of the School of University Studies at Southeast Missouri State University, had the following to say about Gil Porter's service to his institution and his state:

Gil Porter has been a leader in general education in the state of Missouri. He achieved a significant innovative revision in the general education program at the

University of Missouri-Columbia. His work on that program won the university the coveted Hesburgh award. Gil also was a member of the Missouri Coordinating Board for Higher Education's statewide General Education Steering Committee. That committee revised the general education model for the Missouri CBHE's statewide credit transfer policy.

With typical Porter humor, Gil noted in his resignation letter that the executive council will "be better served, anyway, by an active faculty member who is less battered than I am by the gen-ed wars." Gil finished his letter with the following note:

It has been a pleasure and a privilege to serve with such intelligent and dedicated academics as you are, and I wish you all strong hearts, stout resolve, and endless patience in the struggle ahead. AGLS has made a major contribution to the cause of liberal education in the nation, and I hope you can find ways to continue your important work. Thank you for the knowledge you have shared with me and for the good fellowship.

Gil plans to move to Oregon in order to enjoy a newly constructed cabin. Thanks again, Gil, for your service to AGLS, students, your institution, and your state. We wish you all the best!

Rob Mauldin
AGLS President

AGLS News is the newsletter of the Association for General and Liberal Studies.

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AGLS News online: www.stedwards.edu/bss/AGLS/index.htm

AGLS and CAGLS Exert Influence

Those of you who attended the 2002 AGLS Conference in Louisville will remember that you were pestered no end, especially if you came from an institution in the North Central region, to sign a letter to the Executive Director of the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association, Steve Crow. What prompted this “campaign” was the publication of the first draft of new criteria for accreditation in that region. The current North Central Handbook contains wonderful statements about and requirements for establishing the “centrality of general education” in degree programs. The first draft of the new criteria contained one minimalist mention of general education: in short, saying simply that “there will be some.”

Rob Mauldin, Tom Lowe, John Gottcent, and I wrote a letter, arguing that a robust general education program was even **more** necessary in undergraduate education in the 21st century, due to the complexity of careers and life. The letter asked North Central not to ignore all that we had learned about powerful general education in the last 25 years—and not to toss away the effective leadership North Central exhibited in general education during this time. About 40 people signed this letter in Louisville, and perhaps a dozen took a copy of it home with them to try to get their president to write to North Central.

Bill Jenkins also organized a letter writing campaign that went one level higher. He got the CAGLS Executive Committee to sign a letter that went to every member of the Higher Learning Commission’s Board. In the winter meeting of this board, the members received all of the comments that were sent to North Central about their new criteria. The most recent NCA newsletter contains the notice that the board instructed its staff to prepare a policy statement on general education to be prominently displayed in the new NCA Handbook.

The process North Central used to revise its criteria has been very open, and Steve Crow himself has been wonderfully receptive to the suggestions that we sent. He replied to every communication, whether in print or via e-mail. As soon as this GE policy statement is published, we will get it into our newsletter and on our web site. We know we accomplished something here in terms of the AGLS mission “to support the centrality of general education in the undergraduate degree,” but we’ll have to follow up on the matter as long as the process goes on. Regional accreditation’s requirements with regard to general education constitute strong support for what we try to do on campus.

John Nichols
AGLS Past President

We know we accomplished something here in terms of the AGLS mission “to support the centrality of general education in the undergraduate degree,” but we’ll have to follow up on the matter as long as the process goes on.

AGLS presents faculty awards at Louisville conference

AGLS presented to three individuals faculty awards in appreciation of their contributions to teaching and leadership in general and liberal studies at their respective universities.

Mary Dickson

Chair, English Department at Broome Community College, Binghamton, New York;

Fred Albertson

Department of Art at the University of Memphis, Memphis, Tennessee

Gail Schiffer

General Education Science Coordinator at Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, Georgia

Details of the award recipients accomplishments will be provided in the next newsletter.



Fred Albertson



Gail Schiffer

Louisville conference report



Dr. George Boggs

The 42nd annual conference of the Association for General and Liberal Studies was held in Louisville, Kentucky, Oct. 16-19, 2002. More than 100 participants gathered to explore the theme "Liberal Education and Character," and to enjoy the sights and sounds of Kentucky's largest city.

AGLS's interest in establishing connections with community colleges was highlighted in the conference's first keynote address by Dr. George Boggs, president and CEO of the American Association of Community Colleges. He spoke of the need to see higher education as a seamless web, even in the age of the multiple-transfer student, and of the roles played by both two-year and four-year institutions in providing valuable general and liberal education.

At our annual luncheon plenary, Dr. J. Herman Blake, Professor of Sociology and Director of the African-American Studies Program at Iowa State University, mesmerized the audience with his impassioned address on the conference theme. His comments on liberal education and character were both personal and universal, and his talk was cited by many participants as the highlight of the weekend.

As always, the conference was filled with



Dr. J. Herman Blake

breakout presentations on a wide range of topics centering not only on character but on such traditional AGLS concerns as assessment, curriculum planning, and faculty development. A new event was the session on "AGLS: What, Where, When, and For Whom?" at the Friday morning breakfast. Officers of the organization introduced themselves and explained briefly both what they do for AGLS and what it has done for them, not only at the annual conference, but throughout the year.

Participants were impressed by the stylish architecture and personalized service at the Camberly Brown Hotel, the conference site in the heart of downtown Louisville. Several fine restaurants were either a walk or a short cab ride away. A unique highlight was a (very) early morning visit to Churchill Downs on Saturday, when over twenty-five brave souls ventured onto the backside of the racecourse for a special breakfast and a chance to watch the thoroughbreds in their early morning workouts.

AGLS can now add Louisville to the roster of fine cities it has visited over the years, and we look forward to another great conference in Charlotte this coming fall.

*John Gottcent
Conference Planner*

Gathering Faculty Feedback for Curricular Review: The UNCA Listening Project

Since February 2000 the University of North Carolina at Asheville has been reviewing its general education curriculum, our first review since the mid-1980s, arising as part of re-accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The review occurs in the midst of a state budgetary crisis, which has imposed serious constraints on the university. Along with re-accreditation and fiscal retrenchment, UNCA is also working on an administrative reorganization in order to increase our institutional flexibility and effectiveness in long-range strategic development.

Designated as the state's public liberal arts institution, UNCA has a large general education program: in addition to a distribution of 33 credit-hours in Natural Science, Social Science, Mathematics, Foreign Language, Writing, Health and Fitness, and Library Research, we require students to take a 16 credit-hour core Humanities sequence and a 4-credit-hour Arts and Ideas course. With more than 26 departments and pro-

grams contributing to this curriculum, there are so many constituencies with a stake in the revision effort that UNCA's General Education Review Task Force (GERTF) found it difficult to know exactly what conditions and concerns existed across campus. Nonetheless, the GERTF was committed to a faculty-driven process. Frequently, curricular review committees obtain their information through faculty forums and surveys. But, with these approaches, input can be limited to the vocal few, often senior full-timers, while junior and part-time faculty may be reticent to offer their views; some individuals might even feel alienated by these approaches. And with so much going on at UNCA, such a review might also give rise to counter-productive tensions, which we were eager to avoid. The question then was: how best to gather useful feedback, while fostering inclusiveness?

As an alternative to forums and surveys, we employed a simplified version of the focus-group interview, which we called "The Listening Project." (An excellent introduction to the focus-

Continues, next page

group process is David L. Morgan and Richard A. Krueger's *The Focus Group Kit* [Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998], a six-volume collection with materials on planning, analysis, and more.) The listening project was designed to gather input on the current curriculum from a wide cross-section of the faculty. The GERTF sent two-person facilitation teams into all departments and programs contributing to the general education requirements. Teams were instructed to restrict their participation to posing a set of five questions and, if necessary, to clarifying responses. In all, we conducted 26 separate sessions and wrote reports for each. After drafting their reports, teams sent them to department chairs for review; chairs in turn solicited additional comments in order to reflect more accurately the ideas, practices, and values of their faculty.

Only after receiving this second level of input did we post the responses, in their entirety and without further editing, on our website (www.unca.edu/genedrev/listening_project_responses.htm). All responses were posted in anonymity: neither departments nor individuals were identified as authors of specific comments. Because of their sheer volume GERTF decided to post this material in sets. In this way, faculty, staff, and administrators were able to go directly to those questions they were interested in, without being

overwhelmed by too much information at once. Finally, GERTF conducted a summary analysis of the project in which we identified recurrent themes arising in response to each question (www.unca.edu/genedrev/listeningproject_analysis.htm).

The Listening Project placed us among our colleagues, highlighting the public nature of the review effort. The process symbolized our desire to reach out to faculty, rather than asking them to come before us, which might have sent the wrong message. By reducing the size of the interview group, we gained a better idea of the perspectives of specific departments and programs. Moreover, conducting interviews at this level encouraged participation of faculty of all ranks. Posting the responses on our website in their entirety and preserving anonymity elicited more honest and critical feedback. As individuals saw their views represented, they began to trust the process more, to feel that it represented their interests. Finally, the project highlighted the sorts of issues, ideas, and concerns most frequently, if not unanimously, held among members of the campus community.

Edward J. Katz
Associate Professor of Literature and Language
Chair, General Education Review Task Force
University of North Carolina at Asheville

Gathering Faculty...
continued from page 4

Does your university have an innovative liberal studies program or process? Write a short piece for AGLS News and send it to the editor.

Joseph Katz Award nominees sought

AGLS has as its mission to support and advance the centrality of general and liberal education in undergraduate degrees. One of the most celebratory ways of doing this occurs every other year, when the association confers the Joseph Katz Award on someone who has exercised national leadership in general education. The award recognizes a person who reflects Joseph Katz's commitment to students, his passion for the improvement of undergraduate education, and his understanding of the significant role to be played by general education. The six previous winners of the award are Kathryn Mohrman, Jerry Gaff, Jack Newell, Richard Weeks, John Nichols, and John Hinni.

The Past President of AGLS has the great joy of chairing the committee that runs the process of seeking someone worthy of this award—"for distinguished contributions to the practice and

discourse of general and liberal education," as the citation reads. Any member of AGLS may submit the name of someone who excels in the following areas:

- 1) Someone who provides leadership on campus in implementing general education in such a way as to broaden student horizons beyond the immediate concerns of professionalism;
- 2) Someone who has publicly reflected on the meaning and importance of general education through publications, public conferences, and consultation;
- 3) Someone who has a clear record of leadership in general education beyond the local campus as an advocate for general education in the national arena.

You are invited to nominate a person who, in your judgment, shows outstanding merit on the three points just listed. Please send by **April 1** the name, title, institutional affiliation, telephone number, and e-mail address of your nominee to John Nichols [nichols@saintjoe.edu].

Then the person nominating and the person nominated will be jointly responsible for completing the packet that the committee will need in order to make its selection: 1) a complete curriculum vitae; 2) a brief description of the contribution the person has made to general education; 3) an account of how this person's commitment and activity have contributed to the improvement of educational experiences of students on campus; 4) commentary on how this person has shown leadership among colleagues; and 5) examples of contributions to the theory and practice of general education at the national level.

All finalists will be recognized at the annual AGLS National Conference to be held in Charlotte, NC, in October 2003. AGLS will pay travel expenses for the winner of the Katz Award and honor this individual in a special plenary ceremony during the conference.

Liberal Arts Institute at the University of Dallas opens

Inquiries concerning the Liberal Arts Institute at the University of Dallas, the annual conference of ACTC (April 3-6 in Atlanta), and the development of projects may be directed to: J. Scott Lee, Executive Director ACTC and the Liberal Arts Institute, 972-721-4062. Interested parties are encouraged to visit our website at: astro.temple.edu/~szelnick/actc/

The Association for Core Texts and Courses at Temple University in Philadelphia announces an expansion: the opening of the ACTC Liberal Arts Institute at the University of Dallas.

The ACTC Liberal Arts Institute, generously supported by the University of Dallas, will engage in national and international projects benefiting core text liberal education. To facilitate these projects, the Liberal Arts Institute recently held its first planning meeting which was attended by representatives from the following institutions: Colorado College, Columbia University, The Great Books Foundation, Malaspina University-College, Mercer University, Temple University, The United States Naval Academy, The University of Dallas, The University of North Carolina at Asheville, The University of Notre Dame

Projects which ACTC and the ACTC Liberal Arts Institute are already engaged in include:

- Trends in the Liberal Arts Core: a former FIPSE/Mellon longitudinal study of the causes and evolution of changes in general liberal education in 66 institutions; this study is expanding into

a second phase involving 36 new institutions.

ACTC seeks institutions to participate in this second phase which are engaged in strategic planning revolving around general education review or reform and assessment of general, liberal education programs.

- Bridging the Gap Between the Humanities and Sciences: the Liberal Arts Institute seeks institutions to participate in this proposed NEH curriculum and faculty development project which seeks to develop core text based courses for general liberal education that will include works of the humanities and sciences. ACTC is seeking institutions that are willing to pilot two such courses in their general education programs.

Several other projects are currently under development at the Liberal Arts Institute at the University of Dallas and announcements will be forthcoming.

ACTC also announces its new president: Phillip R. Sloan, Chair, Program of Liberal Studies at the University of Notre Dame.

2003 National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) conference announcements

Academic Advising Administrators' Institute

February 12-14, 2003 (FULL)

February 15-17, 2003 (SPACE AVAILABLE)

The 1st Annual Academic Advising Administrators' Institute is the only professional development opportunity that focuses specifically on the issues facing academic advising administrators. The NACADA-sponsored institute will be held at the Holiday Inn Riverwalk, San Antonio, Texas. Contact: National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Executive Office, (785) 532-5717; e-mail, nacada@ksu.edu; Web site, www.nacada.ksu.edu

NACADA Mid-South Regional Conference

February 23-25, 2003

"Making History in Charleston" offers an opportunity for advisors to explore the best methods and practices in academic advising, to what extent technology has been incorporated into advising, and where technology may take us in the future. This conference will be held at the Embassy Suites Downtown in the Historic District of Charleston, South Carolina. Contact: National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Executive Office,

(785) 532-5717; e-mail, nacada@ksu.edu; Web site, www.nacada.ksu.edu

NACADA Rocky Mountain Regional Conference

February 26-28, 2003

The theme for this year's conference is "The Spirit of Academic Advising: A Commitment to Students." Sessions regarding exemplary practice, models of effective organizational design, research studies, and facts regarding how advisors contribute to our students' futures will be presented. The conference will be held in Sedona, Arizona. Contact: National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Executive Office, (785) 532-5717; e-mail, nacada@ksu.edu; Web site, www.nacada.ksu.edu

NACADA Southeast Regional Conference

March 9-11, 2003

The conference theme of "Catch the Wave" is meant to empower advisors to think about advising in new ways and to create new possibilities in advising. The conference will be held at the Beachside Resort & Conference Center in Pensacola Beach, Florida. Contact: National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Executive Office, (785) 532-5717; e-mail, nacada@ksu.edu;

Web site, www.nacada.ksu.edu

NACADA Northeast Regional Conference

March 17-19, 2003

The theme "ADVISOR Newport: Can You Survive the Challenges?" offers participants the opportunity to share strategies used to positively influence student retention and success. This 19th annual conference will be held at the Newport Marriott in Newport, Rhode Island.

Contact: National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Executive Office, (785) 532-5717; e-mail, nacada@ksu.edu; Web site, www.nacada.ksu.edu

NACADA Great Lakes & North Central Regional Conference

March 23-25, 2003

"MAD-IS-ON: Allies for Success" will be the theme as members from NACADA Regions V and VI meet at the Monona Terrace Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin. The link between student success and retention and quality advising will be explored in a wide variety of presentations.

Contact: National Academic Advising Association (NACADA) Executive Office, (785) 532-5717; e-mail, nacada@ksu.edu; Web site, www.nacada.ksu.edu

AGLS Executive Council 2002

The following is a list of Executive Council members. If you have any issues, concerns or questions you would like taken up by the Executive Council, please contact us. We would like to hear from you.

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Is your membership in AGLS due for renewal? Look at your mailing label on this newsletter. The date following your name is the year your membership expires. Use the membership renewal form included here. If you think our records are wrong, or if you have questions about your membership, contact the Executive Director, Tom Lowe.

AGLS Membership Form

New Membership Renewal

Name _____

Department or Program _____

University/College Address _____

City, State & Zip Code _____

Phone _____

E-mail _____

Membership Fees

Faculty/Administration: One Year \$40 Two Years \$70 Three Years \$100

Student \$10 Institution \$60 Adjuncts \$25

Send with your check made payable to AGLS and mail to: B. Thomas Lowe, AGLS Executive Director, Dean of University College, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306