

The American College of Greece: Academic Vision

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Before presenting my recommendation for ACG's future academic vision, it is important to state two critical assumptions upon which the vision is based:

1. we are enrolling an increasingly selective and diverse (Greek, international, US study abroad etc.) student body and
2. we are seeking to strengthen ACG's academic culture to serve well such students, including Greek students who face the daunting task of reimagining and rebuilding the social and economic strength of Greece.

Given these assumptions, my recommendation for the future academic vision of ACG is to support an intentional integrative blending of liberal arts and applied or professional education, specifically business education. I recommend this for several reasons.

First, I believe deeply in the value of the liberal arts as the optimal educational foundation for both life and career. Many proponents of liberal arts education could be cited to unpack the varied and valuable learning outcomes that immersion in the liberal arts can provide. For example, in a speech at the 2002 inauguration of the president of Carleton College (MN), Martha Nussbaum of the University of Chicago argued for the unique contributions of the liberal arts in developing three essential "capacities" for responsible global citizenship in the 21st century:

"First is the capacity for critical examination of oneself and one's traditions...This means a life that accepts no belief as authoritative simply because it has been handed down by tradition or become familiar through habit, a life that questions all beliefs and accepts only those that survive reason's demand for consistency and for justification...

(The second capacity is)... an ability to see (oneself) as not simply (a citizen) of some local region or group but also, and above all, as (a human being) bound to all other human beings by ties of recognition and concern...This requires a great deal of knowledge that American college students rarely got in previous eras, knowledge of non-Western cultures, and also of minorities within their own, of differences of gender and sexuality. I believe that all undergraduates should be led into the rudiments of world history, and a basic understanding of the major world religions; they should then learn to inquire in more depth into at least one unfamiliar culture.

The third (capacity)... closely related to the first two, can be called the narrative imagination. This means the ability to think what it might be like to be in the shoes of a person different from oneself, to be an intelligent reader of that person's story, and to understand the emotions and wishes and desires that someone so placed might have... capacities for imaginative and emotional understanding, capacities that we associate with literature and the other arts”.

Critical thinking with respect to oneself and one’s personal context, a sense of connection to varying expressions and experiences of what it means to be human, and empathic identification with others – these are foundational capacities that are highly relevant to constructively navigating the 21st century. Other apologists for the liberal arts would add other significant capacities and/or skills. My purpose here is not to give a full account of but only to point to the value of the liberal arts and to affirm my belief in the importance of liberal arts education as an essential component of the College’s future academic vision.

Second, I view excellence in business education not only as compatible with but in many ways necessarily connected to excellence in liberal arts education.

Business education and liberal arts education are clearly different. The areas of study typically included within each area of education present the most obvious differences. Liberal arts curricula include the disciplines of the arts, humanities, natural and social sciences. The world’s very few pure liberal arts colleges offer these subject areas exclusively. Business schools, on the other hand, offer curricula including such areas of study as accounting and finance, decision sciences, entrepreneurship, management, marketing, and organizational behavior.

However, the line of separation between the liberal arts and the business disciplines is not utterly distinct. First, the liberal arts are explicitly foundational to many of the business disciplines (e.g. decision sciences are based in mathematics; organizational behavior is based in psychology). Second, some disciplines (e.g. economics) are found in either or both liberal arts and business curricula. (At DERE, economics is part of Arts and Sciences.) Third, some disciplines are explicitly integrative. Business ethics is an interesting and perhaps instructive example because it reflects an evolutionary integration of liberal arts and business disciplines.

In the 1970s courses in business ethics were common in business schools, although these courses were not necessarily labeled business ethics. At the Stanford Graduate School of Business, for example, where I completed a MBA degree between 1975-77, the required course entitled Business and Changing Society was the “ethics course”. That Stanford course was notable, however, for its conspicuous lack of reference to any of the classical moral theories taught in the liberal arts in both philosophy and religious studies.

In the 1980s this disjunction was corrected with the publication of numerous texts that included both moral theory and business ethics cases as well as the production of scholars trained specifically in both classical ethics and the application of these theoretical systems to business issues. Also, in the 1980s, in response to some conspicuous examples of educational and business failures related to ethics (e.g. the teaching of how to lie effectively in courses in negotiation at the Harvard Business School and a string of highly publicized corporate scandals) attention began to be paid in business schools to “ethics across the curriculum”.

But, the compatibility of excellence in business education with excellence in the liberal arts involves more than the disciplinary connection between the two domains. I would argue that there is also a skill and a “capacity” (to use Martha Nussbaum’s phrase) connection. With respect to skills, excellence in business education is not possible without the intellectual disciplines of thought and expression (e.g. creative and critical thinking, logical reasoning, mathematical analysis, effective written, oral and interpersonal communication) that are hallmarks of a liberal arts education. Such skills are essential not only in business education but also for success in a business or leadership career.

The same holds true with respect to “capacities”. For example, the capacities that Nussbaum outlines (i.e. critical thinking with respect to oneself and one’s personal context, a sense of connection to varying expressions and experiences of what it means to be human, and empathic identification with others) form the basis for learning in many of the areas of study in a business curriculum. These capacities also form the basis for success in a business or leadership career. This is the case because to study business or to pursue a career in business is to study or to pursue a field defined by human complexity.

Finally, excellence in business education and liberal arts education are complementary in the art and the science of teaching and learning. I believe that the best models of teaching and learning

in the liberal arts and business are rooted in essentially the same core characteristics. For example, I suspect that the best teachers in both the liberal arts and in business education are characterized by transparent passion for and keen understanding of the subject; the ability to draw historical and contemporary connections; uncommon skill in interpersonal communication, and personal care for students. Similarly, I believe the most powerful learning environments in both educational domains are characterized by effective integration of multiple approaches to the acquisition and application of knowledge.

For all these reasons, then, I see the liberal arts and business education as highly complementary and regard the liberal arts as a *sine qua non* of excellence in business education.

Third, I can imagine, at least in general terms, an effective and powerful integration of liberal arts and business education.

Even if my arguments to this point are persuasive, it does not necessarily follow that liberal arts and business education should be combined in the undergraduate and/or the graduate student experience. The model of four years of liberal arts education followed by professional education (business, law, medicine etc.) is well established in the US. And, I see great value in this model.

However, even in the US and elite higher education contexts alternative models, such as a three-year undergraduate model (by the former president of Stanford, Gerhard Casper), have been proposed. The predominant undergraduate model in the US presently is the comprehensive model combining both liberal arts and applied and professional education.

In this model, however, the liberal arts and applied or professional education generally live separate lives. Students are required to study liberal arts in their General Education courses, and some, usually a minority, choose to major in a liberal arts discipline. But, students selecting applied or professional majors often have extensive major course requirements that have little or no apparent connection to the liberal arts.

As the example of business ethics illustrates, however, there is the possibility of combining or integrating the liberal arts with business education. This integration lies at the base of the recent announcement of Brown University and the IE Business School (Madrid) related to graduate executive education:

“IE Business School and Brown University announce the launch of the IE Brown Executive M.B.A. Program, a one-of-a-kind offering that integrates the innovative approach to management education at IE Business School with Brown University’s excellence in the humanities, social, biological, and physical sciences. The program is designed for senior managers with more than 10 years of experience who want to develop their entrepreneurial mindset and gain a deeper and much richer understanding of the global business environment.

Launching in the spring of 2011, the IE Brown Executive M.B.A. Program mixes content, pedagogies, and faculty from both institutions. For example, the M.B.A. Core module uses real-life case studies to examine the latest management tools and insights. The Liberal Arts and Critical Studies module draws on disciplines such as history, philosophy, legal studies, and psychology to uncover the underpinnings of society — from the dialogue between religion and secularization to capitalism and its hidden economies. Additional modules investigate the political and social forces shaping emerging markets today as well as the corporate innovation processes and leadership skills associated with entrepreneurial management and new business development.

“Together, Brown and IE have created a new kind of program that equips managers with a combination of analytic and humanist skills necessary to confront the challenging environment posed by today’s global economy,” said David Bach, dean of programs at IE Business School. ‘By linking approaches from areas beyond the traditional management disciplines, for example incorporating cultural studies and political discourse into the investigation of emerging markets, the program develops more holistic managers and entrepreneurs who can be leaders and change agents across different types of organizations. Participants should expect to have their perceptions — of management education and the business world in general — challenged every day.’”

I am suggesting that ACG aim to develop a core institutional and academic competence in this sort of integration. This competence would result in at least some of the following: new curricula that draw content from both the liberal arts and business disciplines; blended pedagogical approaches (e.g. case studies, research papers, group projects, problem-based learning, seminar formats); team teaching utilizing liberal arts and business faculty; joint, interdisciplinary scholarship.

Fourth, I believe integrating liberal arts and business education represents a powerful academic expression of our mission and vision and will give ACG students an exemplary educational experience and ACG a competitive advantage.

To begin, this proposal ties very well to the mission, vision and core values we have adopted:

To add distinctive value to the lives of our students as well as to Greece, American education, Hellenic heritage, and the global community through transformative teaching, scholarship and service

To establish The American College of Greece as the premier, comprehensive, non-profit educational institution in southeastern Europe

To offer educational programs of demonstrable excellence creatively integrating:

- *American education best practices*
- *Greece's unique intellectual and cultural heritage*
- *a campus community ethos of mutual respect, responsible action and high achievement*
- *student development for engaged, effective global citizenship*

Further, I believe that the educational experience that could be provided to students in this proposed framework as well as the scholarship and service that could emerge could be exceptional – indeed, in the words of the mission statement, “transformative”.

If we are successful in executing such a vision, I believe that the College's strategic position will be strengthened considerably in at least the following ways:

1. The liberal arts at DEREЕ will be fortified and more attractive to prospective students from all market segments.
2. The College's reputation in business will be enhanced. The case can be made that this combination will address many of the deficiencies in current undergraduate business

- programs and will produce precisely the combination of skills, capacities etc. that businesses and other organizations have called for consistently.
3. Competitors will find it difficult to match this educational profile because it requires both considerable scale and resources, which smaller institutions do not possess, and an interwoven academic culture, which larger more diverse institutions typically cannot achieve.

The integration of ALBA Graduate Business School into ACG as of January 2012 alters and enriches the institutional organizational dynamic within which this academic vision will unfold. The most obvious impacts of the addition of ALBA are the following:

1. An enhancement of the academic prestige of the College in general and specifically in business. DEREЕ already has a well-established reputation in business. Adding ALBA alongside DEREЕ under the ACG umbrella reinforces and improves this reputation.
2. The attainment of critical mass in graduate education. The addition of ALBA has resulted in a total graduate enrollment of over 400 students.
3. A change in faculty composition and culture. ALBA increases our full-time graduate faculty from 10 to 32.
4. A change in faculty culture. ALBA faculty follow an intensive research agenda. This pattern will likely influence, although not impose a singular model related to, the future expectations of faculty even beyond ALBA.

In sum, the integration of liberal arts and business education represents a timely academic vision which ACG, especially post the ALBA collaboration, is uniquely positioned to pursue. I look forward to working with the campus community, the board of trustees and our external constituents to refine and to execute this vision in the coming years.