

Report to De Anza College
September 1, 2005



good work
in higher education



Acknowledgements

The Study of Good Work in Higher Education extends sincere thanks to the administrators, faculty, staff, trustees, students, and other members of the De Anza community who made this research possible.

Our special thanks are due to:

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Leo Chavez, Former Chancellor
Ruth Hayes, Senior Administrator
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I. INTRODUCTION

The Good Work Project

The Good Work Project is a set of allied studies undertaken by Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi of Claremont Graduate University, William Damon of Stanford University, and Howard Gardner of Harvard University, along with their research groups at these schools. By “good work” we mean work that is simultaneously of high quality, socially responsible, and fulfilling to the worker. Since 1995, we have been investigating how individuals are able to carry out good work in their chosen professions during an era when conditions are changing at a rapid rate and market forces hold unprecedented sway. Science, journalism, business, and organized philanthropy are among the fields we have studied; at this time, over 1,000 interviews have been conducted with young, established, and leading professionals who include Nobel prize-winning researchers, Pulitzer-winning journalists, and Fortune 500 CEOs. The findings have been reported in *Good Work* (Gardner, Csikszentmihalyi, & Damon, 2001), *Good Business* (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003), *The Moral Advantage* (Damon, 2004), *Making Good* (Fischman, Solomon, Greenspan, & Gardner, 2004), and other writings. Supported by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Atlantic Philanthropies, the present study extends this research to the critical profession of higher education.

Report on the Study of Good Work in Higher Education

Higher Education today faces not only perennial challenges but also a set of profound changes. These emerging challenges represent threats to some institutions, and opportunities to others. The most frequently mentioned current challenges include the following: pursuing a school’s stated mission in a market environment; serving a student population that is increasingly diverse with respect to age, ethnicity, and educational goals; finding ways to assess educational outcomes; and making the best use of distance-learning and other new technologies. The purpose of the Study of Good Work in Higher Education has been to (1) illuminate the nature of good work in undergraduate education under present conditions, and then (2) build upon our findings to construct and distribute a curriculum for institutional reflection and development. The present report:

- Examines how exceptional educators perceive institutional mission and their own goals as workers;
- Highlights what we learned about students at these schools, how they perceive institutional goals and supports, and how these and educator goals relate to student outcomes;
- Forms hypotheses about what institutional factors seem to contribute most to positive student outcomes at these schools; and
- Solicits your expertise in developing a curriculum for institutional reflection and development.

In this Introductory section of the report (Section I), we provide an overview of what we are learning about the pursuit of good work in higher education, based on all ten of the schools

we studied. Against this backdrop, Section II then focuses on what we have been learning specifically about your school. Following a profile of your institution, we again stand back and look across the schools studied. Section III presents a set of lessons learned, tensions identified, and questions stimulated. Some of these are drawn from the sample as a whole; others are inspired by the example of individual schools. They concern both (1) the *goals* that the schools embrace, and the tensions that accompany their choices; and (2) the *means* that the schools have developed in order to reach these goals. In each case, the import of these lessons promises to extend beyond the particular cases chosen for study.

The Design of the Study. We chose an exemplar approach focused on a small number of outstanding institutions of undergraduate education. To identify the schools, we interviewed 20 scholars of higher education. They nominated schools that they perceived as outstanding – ones they thought were doing good work today as opposed to coasting on past reputations or hewing to no longer relevant goals. From the nominated institutions, we selected ten “core” schools to study in depth (we also interviewed leaders of several other schools, to broaden our understanding). Because there is extreme variation in missions, student populations, and other basic characteristics from one type of institution to the next, we represented each of five different institution-types: community colleges, historically black colleges (HBCs), other liberal arts colleges, teaching-centered research universities, and new-model providers (e.g., for-profit institutions).

We then asked stakeholders in each school to nominate the individuals most responsible for its excellence in undergraduate education. More than 1,000 internal nominations were returned; interviewees were selected at each school from this pool of admired individuals. We conducted interviews with 6 to 13 nominees per school, resulting in a sample of 88 “key gatekeepers,” including faculty (n=37), administrators (n=43), trustees (n=6), and staff (n=2). In the 90-minute interviews, we asked what aims inspire these distinguished institutions and individuals and how they were able to go about pursuing good work under the conditions that prevail in the profession today.

One way of understanding the work actually being performed by a school is to examine the experiences of its current students. In a second phase of the study, we thus surveyed students at each of the ten core institutions, probing their goals and educational experiences. Their self-reports could then be compared with the gatekeepers’ responses. Altogether, some 2,000 surveys were returned by juniors and seniors, or from students of comparable standing at the schools not offering a four-year degree program.

The Study’s Guiding Questions. In analyzing the data that we have collected, prominent among our guiding questions have been these two:

- What institutional missions inspire outstanding schools, and to what extent is there an alignment of purpose among leaders within a given institution?
- How do students’ expectations and experiences relate to their schools’ missions?

Institutional Aims as Seen by Key Gatekeepers

In higher education far more than in most of the other professions we have studied, individuals work within institutions that have crafted official mission statements. The multiple functions served by these public professions of purpose are well recognized. They may be aspirational; they may be mere window dressing. However, even when they have been carefully thought through, a clearer picture of what guides the institution’s efforts is likely to be offered by a group of individuals viewed as responsible for their school’s

educational excellence. When interviewed, the key gatekeepers shared their perspectives on the goals that guide their institutions today and we begin with their reflections.

Clarity of Institutional Purpose. With remarkable unanimity, at almost every school, the interviewed gatekeepers ascribed to their institution a well-delineated mission that it deems important. At a Catholic women's college, one of the clearest examples, the mission takes this form, as expressed by a long-time faculty-administrator:

The worthy purpose – the work that we do with the students here – is something that is part of a very old tradition ... [the] mission has been to empower women so that they could care for themselves, be successful, and do good.

First and foremost, gatekeepers describe their institutions as *student-centered*, mobilizing resources to meet the needs – often quite distinctive – of their students.¹ As one outstanding instructor at a liberal arts college put it:

The student is the most important person here. The student is the reason why we're here. *If the students were not here, there'd be no reason for us to be here.* If you keep that in mind, your priorities are in the right order. You're looking at the right sequence of places to put your effort.

The interviews convey positive attitudes toward the students and keen awareness of their needs. Gatekeepers at the liberal arts colleges and the community colleges, in particular, expressed positive perceptions of their students, and virtually no negative perceptions.

Having a clear, agreed upon, relevant mission matters because it functions to focus the energies of both the institution and the individual who works in it. It does so in at least three interrelated ways. First, a clear and shared mission mediates the relationship between the institution and the outside world. It provides the institution with a compass for navigating a course when tension or outright conflict arises between the school and its environment; and it helps the school decide when and how to change as the environment, and the needs of those being served, inevitably undergo change. Second, it helps integrate the school's internal stakeholders, channeling their energies in complementary directions. Finally, a clear, shared mission establishes an overarching goal toward which any given worker can meaningfully direct his or her efforts. By doing so, it fosters the individual workers' engagement and sense of vocation. A president stated well the overall friction-reducing function of a clear, common cause in an enterprise that is always inherently challenging:

When you make day-to-day decisions and you don't have to discuss first principles but you know that you share them, it makes it easier to do hard things... Then a lot of things are easy, and the hard things are hard because they're genuinely hard, not because you're struggling to orient yourself in the first place.

In short, the schools studied tend to be described by key gatekeepers as animated by a mission, focused on students, and aligned internally. They are perceived as creating an environment in which those interviewed could feel engaged, even inspired, in their work.

¹ This was true even at the two major research universities nominated for outstanding undergraduate education – although in that milieu a distinction may persist between “permitting” faculty dedication to teaching alongside disciplinary scholarship, versus aggressively encouraging and rewarding it via hiring and promotion criteria, etc.

Plurality of Desired Student-Outcomes. This clarity of focus coexists with the same plurality of aims that distinguishes higher education in the U.S more generally. The interviews confirm that strong, important differences in mission exist *between* types of outstanding schools. What is valued as higher education at an intimate liberal arts college that serves highly prepared, traditional-age students has relatively little in common with the mission embraced by the for-profit giant we studied; nor does it overlap much with the agenda of an urban community college serving students hailing from over 150 different countries. More surprising are the differences among schools one would assume to belong to the same institutional category. For example, two historically black colleges prove to have common cause but also divergent ambitions in relation to the undergraduates they serve, as do two Catholic colleges.

The interviews show that the plurality of institutional missions has several facets. First, for the most part, these ten outstanding institutions are characterized by mission complexity. Pursuing multiple goals has the potential to severely obstruct good work in any kind of institution – via fragmentation of community, diffusion of resources, and so on – if the goals constitute different, conflicting directions. And indeed, even outstanding schools don't escape the challenges built into institutions of their type. At a community college and a research university we studied, a degree of tension among plural missions was discernible because these aims were perceived as entailing service to distinct student populations (college-bound vs. vocational) in one case, and competing commitments of faculty time (teaching vs. research) in the other. At most of the institutions, however, differentiation of aims was accompanied by their integration into a remarkably coherent whole, yielding a complex, rather than merely complicated, set of goals. In the best cases, the mission contained multiple strands but these were interwoven in a manner that rendered them mutually reinforcing; for example, a liberally educated individual with a commitment to social justice.

It should be pointed out that these key gatekeepers' consensus about institutional aims was not limited to a single, most salient goal. At the finer of two levels of analysis, we distinguished among 25 different institutional goals, such as fostering excellence or cultivating leadership, and then identified the three or four most-discussed educational aims at each school. At all ten schools, each of these most-characteristic aims was spontaneously mentioned by at least half of the interviewees.

Different types of institution do pursue predictably different missions, according to these key gatekeepers. Liberal learning was prominently discussed as a central institutional aim only at liberal arts colleges; achieving equality through education was the focus of much of the talk about institutional mission at the two community colleges in our sample. At both of the Catholic schools, and at no others, preparation for a life of service counted among the goals that were discussed the most. Thus, the schools studied are exemplars of their *type* of institution.

However, the goals described by key gatekeepers at schools of the same institution-type were not identical by any means. Every school had a somewhat different configuration of salient goals; and some schools had distinctive aims. Although other schools serve working adults, for instance, one school featured the relevance of learning to working life as a defining aspect of the institutional mission. In addition, signature purposes of a given institution-type were not prominently mentioned by all schools in the category. For example, interviewees discussed liberal learning at length as an institutional goal at only three of the seven liberal arts schools.

In addition, there were patterns that cut across types of institution. To the extent that they point to common denominators of undergraduate education at highly regarded institutions today, they demand attention. One aim is notable by its relative absence. In spite of rising concern about the need for colleges to play a more active role in civic education, at the community colleges, the research universities, and most of the liberal arts colleges we studied, the cultivation of social responsibility was only a minor theme in the interviews. This was true even though the official mission statements at the majority of the schools incorporate social responsibility in some guise – service, social justice, community participation, citizenship – among the institution’s desired student outcomes.² Only at schools where the cultivation of social responsibility is part of the school’s longstanding tradition was it discussed widely.³

A second aim is notable by its widespread salience. With variations on the theme at the different schools, much of the talk at seven of the ten institutions concerned the fostering of student development. At one school, personal and character development is the focus; at another, the acquisition of leadership or other interpersonal capacities. What strikes us most is that at the majority of the schools, the interviewees talked about their schools’ role in fostering students’ psycho-social development as much as they talked about its roles in two other, more predictable areas: the transmission of knowledge and the achievement of equality and/or excellence. Could it be that at many outstanding institutions, the traditional educational aim – “know thyself” – remains central today? ⁴ The salience of student development as an institutional aim proved to be mirrored in the individual gatekeepers’ goals, as we see next.

The Gatekeepers’ Own Aims

Most interviewees reported that their schools had a clear set of aims and also that the mission was agreed upon within the institution. Certainly this ought to mean that they themselves *agree with* the aims they ascribe to the institution as a whole. However, the 88 individuals were nominated for playing a wide range of roles within their institutions: president, provost, chaplain, sports coach, department chair, faculty member, vice president of student affairs, and so on. To what extent did their own goals in their respective roles align with the overall mission of the institution?

When the interview was detailed enough to make it possible, we formed a global judgment of the degree to which alignment and support characterized the gatekeeper’s relationship with the school. The vast majority of those who addressed the issue gave an overall impression both that their institution *supported* them in the pursuit of their individual goals and that these goals were *aligned* with the aims of the institution.

Speaking generally, two sets of priorities are discernible. First, interviewees from schools with traditional-age students were likely to dwell on *students’ psycho-social development*, with one or more additional broad goals also salient at many schools. This emphasis within the educators’ own priorities echoes or amplifies student development as an aspect of the institution’s mission.

² Birdwhistell, D. (in preparation). *Environmental variables for promoting social responsibility among college students*.

³ In contrast, another “emerging” aim, fostering an appreciation of diversity, was discussed at most schools even if primarily in aspirational terms.

⁴ Verducci, S., & Percer, L. (2004). *Understanding the student-centered goals of good workers in higher education*. Paper presented at the AERA Annual Meeting, San Francisco.

The remaining schools reveal a second story. At the three large schools where the institutional mission was *not* perceived as prioritizing student psycho-social development, the interviewees dwelled on their aim to perform roles and create structures supportive of desired student outcomes: for example, making education relevant or achieving equality through education.

To summarize, the picture is one of apparent alignment of purpose within the institutions in the study. In terms of the kinds of goals toward which collective energy is directed, we recognize the possibility that the transmission of knowledge was taken for granted by educators and thus not be discussed at length; nevertheless, the extent to which talk focused on various aspects of student development, was impressive. At almost every school there was as much talk about student development as there was about the transmission of knowledge, both as an aspect of institutional mission and as an aim of educators' individual work.

What Do Students Say?

Gatekeeper reports yield substantial insight into the aspirations and efforts of educators, but leave questions unanswered if they are not paired with the perspective of students at the same institutions. The survey data, paired with the gatekeeper reports, allowed us to develop an understanding of two topics:

Student Goals Compared with Student Perception of Institutional Goals: The data suggest that students' own goals differ from those they believe the institution holds. By examining student ratings of a group of goals, their perception of institutional expectations, and self-reported student gains, we can better understand (1) the relative importance of various student goals, and how institutions can effect outcomes in areas in which students seem to express little interest; and (2) the relative influence of varying degrees of alignment between goals, expectations, and provision.

Appropriate and Responsive Environments – Key Institutional Factors: The student data suggest that positive student outcomes are largely contingent upon how an institution structures itself and how educators approach students in response to a student body's unique needs. By examining student outcomes alongside demographic and goals data, we can better understand what institutional variables most effect positive outcomes for various types of students.

In the remainder of this report, we focus on the educational experience at these outstanding schools as described by students. We report on selected items from the student survey which probe student perceptions of (1) student and institutional goals, and other institutional characteristics and (2) the impact of the college experience (see Appendix).

Student Perceptions of Institutional Mission. Students were asked how important their school considers each of 17 student outcomes. We were interested in knowing, first of all, *how well each school was communicating its mission to its students.*

Clearly, students are aware of some of their schools' most distinctive aims. For example, the students at the large for-profit university stood apart in their view that making education relevant was a leading goal at their institution; this is consistent with the school's distinctive institutional aims.

However, students' perceptions did not match up across the board with what gatekeepers talked about most. In fact, more striking than the differences among schools was how similarly the students perceived the highest institutional priorities, whether they were at elite liberal arts colleges, community colleges, research universities, or the large for-profit university. At institutions of all types, students saw their schools as being most concerned with academic outcomes and less concerned with societal ends on the one hand (e.g., service) and psycho-social gains on the other. Specifically, at 8 of 10 schools, learning to think critically, being challenged to reach excellence, and getting the preparation needed for later academic success ranked among the five most important institutional goals in the students' eyes. At all 10 schools, students also viewed the acquisition of knowledge as a leading institutional goal; this meant a broad liberal arts education at the elite colleges, and knowledge and skill in specific fields at the other schools. In contrast to these academic outcomes, students consistently felt that their schools did not prioritize learning how to find happiness and contentment (among the lowest five goals at 9 schools) or getting to know people from different backgrounds (among the lowest five goals at 8 schools).

It is true that, in discussing their schools' institutional missions, the gatekeepers talked very little about helping students learn how to find happiness. In this respect, the students' and gatekeepers' views align. However, we have seen that at most institutions, the gatekeepers talked quite a lot about students' psycho-social development (including helping them get to know people from different backgrounds) and at a small number of schools, cultivating social responsibility was a high priority. In these respects, there was some apparent lack of alignment between institutional goals as described by leading gatekeepers and by students.

Alignment of Institutional Mission with Students' Own Goals. From the students' perspective, all of the schools prioritize academic outcomes. How does this align with the students' own goals in life? Students were asked how important they consider each of the 17 possible outcomes. For summary purposes, it is useful to group the schools in two clusters: liberal arts schools and "non-traditional" schools (i.e., non-residential schools many of whose students are not of traditional college age) although the clusters of course obscure each school's distinctive pattern. The overall picture is one of greater similarity between groups than difference, and the similarities may be more surprising and interesting than the differences.

For students at the two broad types of institution, four of the five highest priorities are the same, though the ordering differs: these include academic ends (*Learning to think critically* and *Acquiring knowledge and skills in specific fields*) and the most personal of psycho-social aims (*Understanding yourself and your goals better* and *Learning to find contentment, happiness, satisfaction in your life*). The two groups differ in that *Pursuing your intellectual curiosity, getting to enjoy learning* is among the top five priorities at the liberal arts colleges whereas *Getting a good job* is among them for students at the non-traditional schools.

In terms of the outcomes to which they assigned the lowest importance (keeping in mind that they deemed everything quite important), students at the two kinds of institution again resembled one another as much as they differed. Surprisingly, *Acquiring a broad liberal arts education* was an equally low priority for students at non-traditionals and for students at the liberal arts colleges – the only exception being the most elite schools. Interpersonal capacities (*Learning to work with others* and *Getting to know students from different backgrounds*) also rated lower than other goals for students at both types of institution. At this end of the spectrum, the two groups differed in that students at liberal arts schools placed even less emphasis than their counterparts on practical and remedial goals (*Making schoolwork relevant to your life* and *Getting up to speed academically*) while students at non-traditionals placed even less emphasis than the liberal arts students on enacting social

change (*Preparing to actively transform society for the better and Contributing to your community, becoming a good citizen*).

To what extent do the students' own goals align with their understanding of the aims of the institutions they attend? To generalize, the strongest alignment perceived by students concerns academic goals; the strongest misalignment arises from the students' greater concern with their own personal development, which they do not perceive the schools to share. At the non-traditionals there is, in addition, a perception that they are more concerned about *Finding a good job* than their schools are. Despite students' perception that the schools do not prioritize helping them develop in these ways, however, we see in the next subsection that students may in fact report significant gains in these areas.

Before turning to the students' perception of how they have been affected by their educational experiences, it is instructive to step back and compare the students' perceptions to the gatekeepers' discussions of institutional mission. The gatekeeper interviews in fact suggest that the schools are more concerned with the students' psycho-social development than the students appear to realize. However, this includes a level of concern with students' development of interpersonal capacities that the students may not recognize or share. In addition, at least when they talk about institutional mission in general terms, it appears to be true that the gatekeepers do not dwell on their students' more personal goals (e.g., learning how to find happiness).

The picture is, thus, a complex and provocative one. It is unclear what accounts for the gaps between gatekeeper goals and views of institutional mission, and what students perceive as being the primary concerns of the university. However, students in fact often describe gains in areas for which they perceive comparatively less institutional interest or support, such as personal development. The data suggest that specific individuals within the college environment (professors, peers, etc.) have a high degree of influence on students. One possibility is therefore that student gains are more closely tied to the influence of these specific individuals, rather than the perceived degree of overall institutional support for a specific goal or outcome.

Student Outcomes. In closing, it will help to consider briefly what students report they learn from the college experience. The survey data suggest students experience a wide range of outcomes, some of which are expected, some less so. Students at liberal arts schools are more likely than non-traditional students to say that they have developed self-knowledge, general perspectives on success, and a sense of social responsibility; non-traditional students are more likely to cite building communication skills, developing higher levels of motivation, and learning to work with others in a shared task. Across the board, more than three-quarters of students believe their college experience influenced their goals or development as a person.

The following table summarizes the types of gains (not mutually exclusive) that students cite when asked to identify the most important thing they learned during their college experience.

Student Outcomes: “Most Important Thing Learned”		
Learning Outcomes	% of Students Citing each Outcome	
	Liberal Arts Schools	Non-Traditional Schools
Intellectual	32%	45%
+ <i>Perspective on Learning</i>	6%	6%
+ <i>Lesson for Schooling</i>	11%	17%
+ <i>Skills Gained</i>	10%	15%
+ <i>Knowledge Built</i>	5%	7%
Practical/Instrumental	47%	34%
+ <i>Life Lesson</i>	26%	11%
+ <i>Clarified Ambitions</i>	10%	9%
+ <i>Gained Skills</i>	11%	14%
Motivation, Work-Ethic	20%	22%
+ <i>Practical Lesson</i>	13%	14%
+ <i>Tangible Skills</i>	5%	7%
+ <i>Love of Learning</i>	2%	1%
Social Responsibility	9%	3%
+ <i>Diversity</i>	2%	2%
Ethics, Values, Beliefs	2%	1%
Self-Knowledge, Happiness	34%	16%
+ <i>Perspective on Self, Happiness</i>	7%	2%
+ <i>Lessons for Development, Happiness</i>	19%	9%
+ <i>Skills and Capacities Built</i>	8%	5%
Interpersonal	12%	11%
+ <i>Teamwork</i>	1%	9%

It may seem counter-intuitive that students at community colleges and for-profit institutions mention intellectual gains from their college experience more frequently than students in traditional liberal arts colleges – or conversely, students in the liberal arts colleges mention practical and instrumental outcomes more. Perhaps this pattern indicates that each constituency perceives to have learned what it most lacks: students at traditional liberal art schools appreciate having learned real-life experience, while their counterparts at non-traditional schools appreciate immersion in an academic atmosphere. The largest difference between the two groups is in terms of self-knowledge; students at traditional schools mention this outcome almost twice as frequently. In other respects both types of students report similar gains from college: about one fifth in each group mentions improvement in motivation and work habits, and almost none mention an effect on their values or beliefs.

This first section has provided a snapshot of the sample as a whole. However, each of the outstanding schools that participated in the study has its own distinctive student body and (largely because of its students’ distinctive characteristics) each has a somewhat different set of institutional goals. In Section II of the report, we narrow our focus and present a profile of your school. To place findings for the single institution in context, we use data for a comparison group comprised of the study’s other schools of the same general kind – either (1) the six other liberal arts schools or (2) the two other “non-traditionals” (i.e., non-residential schools serving students older than traditional college age).



II. PROFILE OF DE ANZA COLLEGE

The general school profile for this study has been compiled from interviews with twelve gatekeepers, i.e., administrators and faculty, who were nominated by their peers for exemplifying the values and educational mission of De Anza. In order to see how these values are perceived by students, we surveyed 343 students who have been enrolled at De Anza for at least one year. To highlight specific attributes that contribute to the excellence at De Anza, we use data from other schools that have also been recognized for their good work; quantitative comparisons to similar schools are made with data representing another community college and a new provider.

In this profile, we have featured what we believe to be the most salient and interesting findings from our study of good work at De Anza. Given De Anza's tradition of self-reflection, the findings described below are unlikely to surprise; however, we believe that our study has captured, among other things, important insights about what makes De Anza exemplary in the field of higher education.

In the first section of the profile, we present the goals of students and educators. The second section entails a discussion of various interpretations of the schools' goals by gatekeepers and students. In the third section, we examine student data that reveals their perceptions of the school's contribution to their development. Finally, we share general factors that make the students' experience distinct and contribute to the good work at De Anza.

Section 1: Students, Faculty and Administrators' Educational Goals

1.1 Student goals: academic and practical goals that parallel similar schools.

The student rankings of seventeen personal goals resemble those of similar schools in our study. The students at De Anza appear to be strongly interested in acquiring knowledge and skills in specific fields as well getting a good job. Also important to students is learning to find contentment, happiness and satisfaction in their life. As was the case at the other schools we studied, acquiring a broad liberal arts education, getting to know diverse students, and preparing for social action obtained the lowest ratings among 17 student goals. Although getting to know peers of diverse backgrounds is not a high priority of many students, they still feel exposure to diversity has enhanced their educational experience. Contributing to their community is also a comparatively low student priority, but this may reflect a developmental level where students are focused on career aspirations while educators realize their students will eventually serve the community.

The table that follows highlights the rank orders of the 17 goals for De Anza students, as compared to the average rankings of similar schools in our study.

Students drawn to community colleges appear to have largely similar priorities, judging by the degree to which rankings of student goals at De Anza parallel those of student goals at comparable schools. In contrast, liberal arts students tend to put less emphasis on obtaining a good job. The career focus of De Anza students is to be expected and in later sections we will look at De Anza’s contribution to these career goals.

17 Student Goals	Ranking of Student Goals: De Anza	Ranking of Student Goals: Similar Schools
Building specific knowledge and skills	1	1
Finding, obtaining job	2	2
Learning to find happiness	3	5
Developing self-knowledge	4	3
Developing a love of learning	5	9
Gaining academic preparation	6	8
Developing critical thinking skills	7	4
Being challenged to reach excellence	8	6
Developing a code of values and ethics	9	10
Getting up to speed academically	10	11
Making knowledge relevant	11	12
Building cooperation, teamwork skills	12	13
Building leadership skills	13	7
Contributing to community, citizenship	14	14
Preparing to promote social change	15	15
Getting to know a diverse group of students	16	16
Acquiring a broad liberal arts education	17	17

On two of the 17 goals there is a slight divergence between De Anza students and those at comparable schools. At De Anza, students rate “Developing a love of learning” higher, and “Building leadership skills” lower than their counterparts do at similar schools.

1.2 Educators’ goals and challenges: A developmental approach that builds confidence and fosters independence.

In the preliminary stages of our study, we asked more than two hundred informants at De Anza (mainly faculty and administrators) to nominate their peers who exemplified good work and the educational mission of De Anza. The interviews revealed that the nominated educators share a strong focus on individual student achievement and advancement, especially when compared to gatekeepers at other schools who often prioritized students’ psycho-social development and/or the transmission of knowledge. De Anza stands out among the other institutions we studied by virtue of its attention to this one primary mission, to prepare students for later success; this belief seems prominent at both institutional and individual levels. Perspectives on academic knowledge and student independence vary, but gatekeepers across campus agree that student achievement is their central role at De Anza. One faculty explains his primary duty to help “students acquire the skills and the confidence they need to be independent.” Over the past twenty-five years, gatekeepers have noticed a change in the overall attitudes of faculty who used to treat students like they were in high school. Now it appears faculty are trying to instill a sense of responsibility and independence in their students while developing relationships built on trust.

A common educational model shared by most gatekeepers at De Anza is the “developmental approach” that meets students at their individual ability level. At times this can be a challenge, but individuals at De Anza take great pride in serving every student that walks through the doors:

That was the hallmark for the community colleges; to be a place for people, not for the elite, top eighth, 12-1/2 percent of the high school graduates that would be eligible for the University of California, and it was not the top third that could go to the state university. It was literally everyone.

This is not to say that an education for all means lower standards for De Anza students; rather the gatekeepers recognize the need for supporting students while raising the standards. Many of the experienced gatekeepers report having initial difficulties meeting students at their level of understanding, but a certain momentum to learn builds as students reach higher standards each week. Watching students struggle and eventually succeed appears to be one of the most satisfying aspects of most gatekeepers’ jobs.

Because of the diverse student body, student needs vary tremendously, but one general concern that arose has to do with the ongoing psychological issues facing the community as a whole. Instructors recognize they are not trained to handle depression and other personal issues that affect students’ academic performance in the classroom. At the same time, administrators and counselors are troubled by the students that are not utilizing special services and seem to be slipping through the cracks; however, the gatekeepers that did share stories of students in crisis felt their colleagues and De Anza fully supported the students. The concerns of how to address the broader set of psychological issues in the community seem to be increasingly affecting the classroom. Is De Anza different from most campuses across the United States that are trying to address the personal needs of their students? This issue was not prominent among gatekeepers at other institutions which suggests either (1) De Anza’s gatekeepers are more aware of psychological issues in students or (2) De Anza’s students are facing more such problems.

Another problem some of the gatekeepers mentioned is the students’ overall perceptions of learning. One administrator shares her concern, “There seems to be more emphasis on getting here and being there on time, than on learning what needs to be learned in the meantime, in order to succeed when you get to wherever it is you’re going.” Whether the students intend to transfer to four-year colleges or are seeking upward mobility in their career, they seem to be missing the point of an education. We may want to brush this off as typical students focused on external rewards, but the good workers at De Anza feel this issue needs to be addressed and wish they could better instill the value of critical thinking and a love for learning. In a later section, we will see that students actually believe De Anza is contributing to developing critical thinking skills while gatekeepers do not think it is doing enough.

In order to address students’ needs, the gatekeepers interviewed at De Anza believe the whole educational system at De Anza needs minor tinkering and improvements. It is good, but it could be better was the sentiment shared by most of the individuals we interviewed. The scope of each individual’s contribution to improving the institution varies significantly, some take active roles in school governance or other administrative capacities while others focus their attention on improving curriculum and instruction of specific programs. Many of the gatekeepers say they do not necessarily enjoy the diplomatic and political aspects of administrative tasks they assume, but many enjoy the feeling of a family that has emerged while working together to make De Anza a better place. As in other community colleges,

professionals at De Anza sometimes see the transient nature of part-time students and instructors; however, many find there is a core group of that supports them when a whirlwind of change approaches. As a whole, this core group makes efforts to hire new people into the family that represent the backgrounds of students and are dedicated to meeting individual students at their developmental level. In order to better meet the needs of the student body, this core group also encourages innovative instruction and programming. The message heard is, "Try things, experiment, while you keep students first in your mind." From the educators' perspective, one key feature of the developmental approach is lacking; there is a need for more dialogue with both high schools and alumni and future employers to ensure De Anza better understands the strengths and weaknesses of its entering students as well as of its graduates in the workforce.

Section 2: De Anza's Mission

2.1 Gatekeepers' interpretation: Student academic achievement.

One of the focuses of the Good Work Project is how students, faculty and administrators interpret the mission and goals of the institution. De Anza's mission statement as posted on the website reads:

Building on its tradition of excellence, De Anza College challenges students of every background to: develop their intellect, character and abilities; achieve their educational goals; and, serve their community in a diverse and changing world.

In the interviews and surveys we asked educators and students what they thought were the goals and mission of De Anza. Some gatekeepers felt the mission was well understood across the campus while others admitted to not knowing or identifying with the institutional mission at all. These few individuals felt the mission was not geared specifically toward their program or contribution to the school.

In the majority of the interviews, educators' talk about institutional mission was focused on one set of student-outcomes, academic advancement and achievement. At no other school in the study was so much attention given to this aspect of the institution's mission. Across campus, individuals were determined to help students get up to speed academically or push them beyond the walls of the classroom to achieve new levels of knowledge and understanding. Talk about the institutional mission also centered on achieving equality both for students and faculty with much of the action for equity in the hiring process. Although serving the community is mentioned in the mission statement, there was virtually no mention of citizenship or social responsibility by educators, which is true of some, but not all the other schools in our study. Some gatekeepers, especially ones in occupational programs, discuss how the expectations for graduates in the workforce have increased over the years and how it is becoming more difficult for students to find their place in the community and economy. These ideas emerged at other schools, but often coupled with developing a purpose in life or serving the community; this was not the case at De Anza. Student success was usually talked about from an academic and vocational standpoint.

2.2 Institutional goals and expectations through students' eyes.

Much of our data illustrates students' perceptions of institutional goals or what message they receive from educators on campus. While not constituting a formal evaluation of outcomes, these data do allow us to better understand how institutional goals are framed,

communicated, and adopted within the student body, relative to the students' own goals and perceptions of outcomes.

The primary goals of De Anza College as seen through students' eyes are to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for academic preparation so they may one day obtain the job of their choice. De Anza students feel the institution is dedicated to helping them obtain a good job; however, in the next section we will see that students do not feel the school always follows through with this goal. As with most schools the students did not feel De Anza places a high priority on helping them learn to find happiness, but it appears students do not believe this necessarily should be a primary goal of the school. The following table juxtaposes students' personal goals with their perception of the institution's goals:

17 Institutional Goals	Student Personal Goal Ranking: De Anza	Student Perception of Institutional Goal Ranking: De Anza	Student Perception of Institutional Goal Ranking: Similar Schools
Building specific knowledge and skills	1	1	3
Finding, obtaining job	2	5	9
Learning to find happiness	3	11	16
Developing self-knowledge	4	7	12
Developing a love of learning	5	8	10
Gaining academic preparation	6	2	4
Developing critical thinking skills	7	3	2
Being challenged to reach excellence	8	4	5
Developing a code of values and ethics	9	10	11
Getting up to speed academically	10	6	8
Making knowledge relevant	11	13	6
Building cooperation, teamwork skills	12	9	1
Building leadership skills	13	12	7
Contributing to community, citizenship	14	17	17
Preparing to promote social change	15	16	15
Getting to know a diverse group of students	16	15	13
Acquiring a broad liberal arts education	17	14	14

Our student survey also included questions regarding the qualities De Anza expects its students to strive for. The data illustrate the extent to which institutional goals seem to be effectively communicated by educators. Students feel that De Anza generally expects them to strive for excellence. Students most often cite instrumental and career expectations, highlighting a strong emphasis on earning good grades and transferring to a four-year school as primary institutional goals. One student said, "Most seem to want to use this as a stepping stone to a four-year college or university. I feel this is a great way to do it." A small number of students disagree with these expectations, however, saying they overshadow the importance of learning, "Completing classes to fill requirements for degrees. I disagree – it has nothing to do with learning." In addition to instrumental expectations, students' work ethic was most often cited and students perceived that they were expected to work hard, "do their best," exhibit dedication, attend class, complete assignments on time, and actively participate in their learning.

Section 3: The Student Perspective: Institutional Contribution to Learning and Personal Growth

We consider student outcomes from three perspectives: student perceptions of the institution’s contribution to growth, what students cite as the most important things they have learned, and how they feel De Anza has affected their goals and orientations in life.

3.1 Students believe De Anza is better preparing them academically than helping them find a career.

It may be reassuring that the students believe De Anza is helping them achieve their highest ranked goal by contributing to their growth in specific areas of knowledge and skills; however, the students do not feel the institution is contributing to the same degree in their pursuit of a good job. This is no different than the other schools in our study, but there is a potential misalignment between students’ goals (and their perception of institutional goals) and what they feel the institution is actually contributing to helping them find a good job.

The diverse student body at De Anza appears to be contributing significantly to students’ exposure to and familiarity with people of different backgrounds. In additional open-ended responses, students feel these diverse perspectives help develop their ability to think critically. As mentioned in a previous section, not all gatekeepers are confident that students are acquiring the intellectual skills necessary for future success, but these data reveal students feel the school is helping them develop critical thinking skills and contributing to their love of learning. The following table lists the rankings of students’ perception of how De Anza has contributed to fulfilling the specified goals next to their personal goals, perceptions of institutional goals, and the contribution rankings of other schools:

17 Areas of Institutional Contribution	Student Personal Goal Ranking: De Anza	Student Perception of Institutional Goal Ranking: De Anza	Rank of Perceived Contribution: De Anza	Rank of Perceived Contribution: Similar Schools
Building specific knowledge and skills	1	1	1	3
Finding, obtaining job	2	5	12	13
Learning to find happiness	3	11	14	15
Developing self-knowledge	4	7	9	11
Developing a love of learning	5	8	4	9
Gaining academic preparation	6	2	2	4
Developing critical thinking skills	7	3	3	1
Being challenged to reach excellence	8	4	6	6
Developing a code of values & ethics	9	10	13	12
Getting up to speed academically	10	6	8	8
Making knowledge relevant	11	13	11	5
Building cooperation, teamwork skills	12	9	7	2
Building leadership skills	13	12	16	7
Contributing to community, citizenship	14	17	17	17
Preparing to promote social change	15	16	15	14
Getting to know a diverse group of students	16	15	5	10
Acquiring a broad liberal arts education	17	14	10	16

Relative to other similar schools, De Anza students see their school as contributing more to their love of learning, and to their getting to know a diverse group of peers. Conversely, they feel that De Anza contributes less to making knowledge relevant to their lives, and to developing leadership and teamwork skills.

3.2 Students learning lessons for life.

We asked students what they believe to be the most important thing they have learned while at De Anza, and the results from this open-ended question offer a view of student's self-reported outcomes. Students list a variety of lessons learned, perspectives acquired, and skills gained which fall into seven primary categories: intellectual, practical, motivational, social responsibility, ethical, self-knowledge, and interpersonal. The following table shows the breakdown of responses (many individual responses are counted twice):

Learning Outcomes	% of Students Citing
Intellectual and Academic	47%
+ <i>Perspective on Learning</i>	6%
+ <i>Lesson for Schooling</i>	22%
+ <i>Skills Gained</i>	10%
+ <i>Knowledge Built</i>	9%
Practical and Career	31%
+ <i>Life Lesson</i>	13%
+ <i>Clarified Ambitions</i>	9%
+ <i>Gained Skills</i>	9%
Motivation and Work Ethic	19%
+ <i>Perspective on Motivation</i>	14%
+ <i>Tangible Skills</i>	4%
+ <i>Love of Learning</i>	1%
Social Responsibility	3%
+ <i>Diversity</i>	2%
Ethical	1%
Self-Knowledge and Happiness	17%
+ <i>Perspective on Self, Happiness</i>	4%
+ <i>Lessons for Development, Happiness</i>	10%
+ <i>Skills and Capacities Built</i>	3%
Interpersonal	7%
+ <i>Teamwork</i>	2%

Intellectual, practical, and motivational lessons are the types of learning most frequently cited by students at De Anza. Within these broader categories, students often mentioned learning how to learn and other life lessons that are useful outside of school. A few examples of these lessons will help illustrate the students' perspectives:

- Intellectual lessons for schooling (22%): a high percentage of students cite learning to succeed in school as the most important lesson for thriving in this community college environment, e.g., "The most important thing I learned is that if I go to class more often, I'll have better grades" and "To take early classes and to be focused on school."

- Instrumental life lessons (13%): students also mention general lessons for success in school as well as life in general, “What you do now is what people will remember” and “Experience is the best educator.”
- Motivational lessons to apply in life (14%): many of the students’ lessons have a driving force behind them, “Don’t procrastinate,” “The more you devote, the more you get” and “To keep on going when the going gets tough.”

Students at De Anza are pleased with the applicability of their learning; this is not the case at many of the liberal arts schools in our study where students often feel disconnected from life outside of school. The data also show students believe they are learning about themselves, but they are not necessarily seeing these lessons as developing a core of ethics or a responsibility to society like we find at some schools in our study.

3.3 Students’ personal growth and De Anza’s impact on their goals

Section 3.1 presented student rankings of students’ perception of the institution’s contribution to their growth, Section 3.2 discussed specific lessons students reported learning at college, and in this final section we share student reports of personal growth and changes in their goals that occurred as a result of their experience at De Anza. Almost all (98%) of the students responding to this portion of the survey feel De Anza has influenced their goals and personal growth. Many report that De Anza broadened their perspectives on life and the world or that the school helped them better define and clarify individual goals and ambitions in life. Students believed the following aspects have been affected by De Anza: career, personal outlook on life, motivation, knowledge and understanding, social views, and other general maturation.

Influence on Goals and Personal Growth	% of Students Citing
Self-knowledge and Happiness	30%
Practical and Career	24%
Interpersonal and Social Responsibility	13%
Motivation and Work-Ethic	11%
Intellectual and Academic	11%
Other	9%
No Change	2%

As students did at other colleges, many students report a change in their career choice or major as a result of a particular class. In previous sections, we have seen that De Anza is contributing to students’ practical intellectual growth, but these data suggest many students (30%) are also changing their perspective on life or other personal qualities (e.g., finding enjoyment in life, gaining self-knowledge, or developing a code of conduct) as a result of their experience at De Anza.

Section 4: Good Work at De Anza

When considering the perspectives of faculty, administrators and students within the framework of good work, there are two key factors that appear to contribute to the success of De Anza’s students: (1) exceptional professionals that are dedicated to student achievement and (2) an excellent quality of education that is affordable and convenient for students.

1. Exceptional faculty and staff: De Anza students are grateful to have caring instructors dedicated to educating students. It seems most of the faculty and other personnel are genuinely concerned about individual student success. Many students share similar sentiments about the faculty at De Anza, "They are personable and seem to really care about their students and are passionate about the subjects they are teaching." Students feel the high caliber and diverse perspectives of instructors enhance their learning, especially the instructors with years of experience or still active in their respective fields. One student explains her excitement for class and, "The presence of outstanding teachers who make the material they teach fun and you look forward to class." Students were impressed by both the small classes that fostered personalized attention and the teachers capable of engaging large classes in thought provoking discussions. Many instructors often opened their hearts to students and shared personal experiences that captured student interests. A student expressed her appreciation of De Anza's dedicated faculty, "It's nice to know someone cares."

2. Excellent quality that is affordable and convenient: Students feel De Anza maintains high academic standards through accredited programs while providing flexible schedules to meet the diverse needs of students. Many students believe De Anza offers a program tailored to their needs; some programs were designed around careers, like the paralegal, film and television, and nursing programs while others, including the Renew Program for older students and Distance Learning, offer opportunities for non-traditional students. The diverse opportunities at De Anza offer both challenge and choice for students; as one student put it, "the atmosphere is really welcoming, but at the same time individual motivation is expected." Many students were proud of De Anza's exceptional transfer rate and exceptional array of free services for students. There seems to be a support system in place to assure all students can succeed; a part-time student said "I am doing this at my pace while I am working and raising a family." A few students who previously attended four-year colleges reported De Anza was more challenging and motivated them to achieve higher goals. De Anza offers a practical education that emphasizes critical thinking and complexity while exposing students to world affairs through both coursework and international students. One student shares the impact of De Anza, "It has motivated me greatly to continue school for the purpose of gaining a deeper understanding of the world and myself."

III. LESSONS AND QUESTIONS DERIVED FROM THE STUDY

The ten institutions studied are widely believed to provide outstanding college educations despite the many challenges that face those working in higher education today. What are we learning from the examples of good work provided by these institutions? The reflections offered by gatekeepers and students at these schools have raised a host of questions. Some of these concern a single type of institution; others concern the field as a whole. In addition, the schools studied offer valuable lessons about the pursuit of good work in undergraduate education today. The following items illustrate what we are learning from the study (both from individual schools and from looking across schools), and some of the questions that remain. The first several items foreground approaches that these schools have developed in order to accomplish their student-centered goals. The last several items foreground questions about the ends that institutions of higher education pursue.

A. Attracting and Supporting Intellectually Curious Students: At two elite schools in our study, students often mentioned that the highly motivated, engaged, and talented student body is what made their experience special or distinct. Students cited two items: (1) students are talented and intellectually curious and (2) the institution supports their interests with abundant financial and human resources. These institutions are in the unique position of being able to attract and support such students; one went as far as saying that his institution "is special because it has enough cash to buy great students and great professors."

The following responses convey the stimulation derived from belonging to an intellectually engaged community of students:

- "(I'm) constantly surrounded by an incredibly talented group of peers"
- "The student body is so universally talented and intelligent that it makes (it) an enriching environment"
- "Everyone here is intellectually engaged in something, and whatever that is it makes for a great environment to be engaged and engage with others"
- "(It is) special because of the intellectual curiosity and vigor of its students"
- "The future goals of my peers are just as far-reaching, something that is inspiring to me"

From interactions with peers, students seem to be challenged, motivated, and inspired on both emotional and intellectual levels. At other schools in our study, peers are equally as influential, but with primarily motivational and practical outcomes.

Our question, then, is this: If being able to attract and support the explorations of intellectually curious and talented students is central to building a lively and challenging intellectual community, what can institutions with fewer resources do to either (1) attract these types of students or (2) spark and support this level of curiosity among its students?

B. Heightened Intellectual Development through Independent Research: At some elite schools, juniors and seniors are required to develop and present an independent research project. This emphasis seems to spark (1) involved and challenging relationships with professors that would not otherwise have developed and (2) a heightened level of intellectual development and independent thought among students. Though other schools encouraged independent work, the model at one of them allows us to better understand how students perceive this emphasis, what institutional variables are involved in this structure, and what outcomes students develop from this level of intellectual work.

Students recognize that "very few undergrads get to do real research," and that the opportunity this institution provides is a natural extension of the emphasis on liberal learning: "The emphasis (is) placed on the student to be mature enough to direct his/her own learning in the manner that best suits him/her." One student even claimed to have selected this institution based on this one feature. The gatekeeper data at this school support this idea that educators believe independent work to be a critical component of the undergraduate experience.

Unique Relationships with Professors: Professors at this institution are often experts in their respective fields, and thus have great demands on their time. One student believes "the emphasis on independent work...is one of the reasons why many faculty members are conscious of being accessible." Students recognize this opportunity as unique: "Interacting individually with an expert in my field on a topic of great personal interest to me has been an incredibly rewarding and enjoyable experience - one that I perhaps would not have had at other institutions."

These thesis advisors seem to offer a unique source of intellectual challenge, practical skills, and new opportunities:

- "My senior thesis advisor...raised the bar for academic work and forced me to push myself in terms of conducting independent research"
- "My thesis advisor, pushing me to my intellectual limits and serving as a wonderful support in a ponderous undertaking"
- "My senior thesis advisor...has given me amazing and unique opportunities, while also teaching me research skills, modeling techniques, leadership, and how to enjoy what you are learning"

Heightened Intellectual Development: Students seem to develop a wide range of outcomes based on their independent work. Chief among them are advanced critical thinking skills, intellectual motivation and a commitment to rigor, and an identification of personal interests and ambitions stemming from the challenge of honing in on a specific item of study.

To what extent could other schools benefit from a greater focus on independent research? What would motivate students who have more practical and career goals to respond to this emphasis?

C. Nurturing, Family-Like Learning Communities: At two of the liberal arts schools in our study, students are primarily first-time college goers, often in need of remedial learning, and interested in primarily practical and career goals. Each of these institutions seems to be effective in responding to these needs by cultivating a nurturing, supportive environment that balances emotional support, motivation, and learning. Implicit here is a tension educators face between having high standards for students, while at the same time acknowledging the need for promoting realistic outcomes.

These family-like environments seem to be cultivated most by four distinct conditions:

Small size of institution, small class sizes: At each of these schools, students feel that they are familiar with most everyone on campus, including professors; they also mention the unique learning which can occur in small classes:

- "The campus is small which helps you know almost everyone on campus."
- "...its small campus allows for the growth of a family-like atmosphere."
- "The small classes allow for a more intimate setting for questions and getting to know the professor."

Other students also perceived the small size of the institution as making it a *safe* community: "I love the comfort of walking into a small school and feeling safe and welcome."

Involved, engaging educators who balance high standards with academic supports: Effective educators at these institutions seem to take an active interest in the lives of their students. This individualized attention promotes higher levels of involvement and interest among students:

- "...the teachers care about our success."
- "The faculty gives you the feeling that every student is important and that they are genuinely concerned with your academic and professional development."
- "Also, most of the faculty appear to care about whether you pass or fail. They want to see you succeed and they want you to understand the subject matter."

Educators voiced a commitment to setting high standards for their students, while at the same time offering remedial support. This is most often done at these institutions through individualized attention. Says one educator: "...the faculty (is) very generous with nurturing students, mentoring them, whether it's through advisement, letters of recommendation, spending time with them, having open doors, knowing their names, all of those things I think is very characteristic."

Emphasis on and support for excellence: At each of these schools, students perceived the institution as having high expectations of them in the areas of striving for excellence and work ethic; students also expressed high degrees of agreement with these expectations. Furthermore, students perceived the institution as providing high levels of support for them in each of these areas. Students cited the following perceived expectations:

- "Students are expected to strive for the best"
- "Excellence and nothing less. I agree with the school's expectation for students."
- "Well, we are expected to strive for the best and go higher and further"

These expectations were also often framed alongside expectations of character and responsibility, which seem to enrich the coherence of and meaning ascribed to the greater learning community. Among cited personal qualities were integrity, honesty, and leadership. The focus on excellence at these two schools was most often linked to practical and career outcomes; at the two elite schools in our study, it seemed to be framed in a more holistic context of personal development.

Support structures that relay general life lessons or perspectives on success:

At each of these schools, as well as one of the community colleges in our study, students cite specific life lessons or perspectives on success as among the most important things learned during their college experience. These lessons are often linked to specific support structures for personal or career development found at each of these schools.

How can a college unable to restrict class-size, or provide a family-like environment, still create engaging learning communities?

D. Cohesive Community Based in Shared Situation, High Expectations, and Sense of Continuity:

At about half of the schools in our study, students mentioned a sense of *community* among the items that set their institution apart. At each school, "community" seemed to mean different things: at schools with a practically-oriented student body, *community* had to do with a nurturing atmosphere that offers academic and personal supports; at the elite schools in our study, *community* had more to do with the inspiration derived from and challenge provided by a highly talented student body. An additional type of *community*, based in different institutional and student traits, was the "Brotherhood" cultivated among students at one all-male historically black college.

At this institution, a significant number of students discussed a rich sense of community based in a combination of shared demographic situation, high expectations of character and achievement, and a sense that this community is integrated with the world outside of the university. From this institutional trait seems to spring a greater sense of equality and support, accountability, and potential for later career success:

Shared demographic situation promoting equality and support: Students discussed the importance of shared situation: "Being in the company of positive, intelligent African-American males like myself, who face many of the same issues (is what makes this school distinct)." Students believe that "it is the only institution designed for African-American males and it allows us to learn and work cohesively." Students at this school cited shared demographics much more frequently than did students at an all-female, Catholic school in our study. This institutional trait seemed to contribute to a sense of equality and support among students.

Perception of and agreement with high expectations of character and ethics:

The sense of community appears to derive in part from absorbing a shared ideal toward which all are striving. 30% of students at this school perceive that the institution expects them to exhibit high qualities of character, and 16% of students perceive expectations of ethics and morals. One student highlighted that the school "is special because of the caliber of expectations (it) demands of (its) students." The institution is able to effectively paint for students a picture of what these young men should strive to be. Two students illustrate this picture: "He is a fighter. He is passionate. He is a perfectionist and ambitious," says one student; another shares, "He is someone who demands no less than excellence of himself and his cohorts...and seeks to achieve this lofty goal with every fiber of his being." Students also exhibit an unusually high degree of agreement with the expectations they believe the school places on them. Though lacking the data to reach this conclusion with assurance, it appears as though these types of expectations establish a sense of accountability among students.

Sense of continuity and extension promoting career outcomes: Students also believe that this sense of brotherhood and community integrates them with the outside world, and that the benefits derived from it will transfer to life after college. Students

cited higher levels of influence from community leaders than did students at other schools; furthermore, students also often cited networking and strong links with alumni as central to their later success.

What can other schools learn from the type of community that seems to be cultivated among students at this school? How can schools communicate the expectations they have for students? How can they enrich the post-college reach of the community?

E. Influential Professors Adapting to Unique Needs of Students: At both liberal arts and non-traditional schools, professors were cited as highly influential. When asked who had the most influence on them during their college career, 39% of students mentioned a professor. The following characterizes the differences among different types of schools:

Community College Students: Diverse, mixed-age student body, primarily practical and work-related goals; often balancing work and family demands

Practically Oriented Students at Liberal Arts School: Students are primarily first-generation college goers, and are interested in practical and personal outcomes. Students often in need of remediation and individual attention

Intellectually Engaged Students at Elite Liberal Arts School or Research University: Highly motivated, intellectually curious, and competitive students primarily interested in intellectual and personal goals

Examining two schools representing each population, we were able to identify different ways professors effectively influence students, and to what ends. Professors reach community college students primarily through in-class intellectual means such as teaching and advising, with primarily intellectual, practical, and interpersonal (teamwork) outcomes; professors seem to be most effective when they make knowledge directly relevant to students' work. Practically-oriented students at liberal arts schools are best influenced through intellectual means that are paired with emotional support and attention; these influences foster practical/career outcomes, intellectual development, and personal motivation. Professors at elite liberal arts schools impact their students through both in-class and out-of-class teaching and advising, as well as serving as intellectual and personal role models; these influences promote primarily intellectual development. Of special note at these schools is the high degree of special attention given to students in independent and supervised independent studies.

F. Pedagogical Focus Groups: At several schools, gatekeepers found "pedagogical focus groups" to be a useful step in confronting changing conditions. These groups range in nature and scope from one school to the next, but the purpose of all of them is to promote and support innovative teaching centered on student development. Some of the focus groups stemmed from internal initiatives that provided time and funding to a group of teachers over a given time period while other focus groups were external to the college or university, such as the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and the William Perry Network, and create an educational network of teachers at colleges and universities. The success of this practice seems to hinge on the ability to select a topic that is shared by peers within the institution. The less-than-ideal tendency of many of these initiatives is that one leader takes ownership and all others are disciples.

It is also important for participants in these groups to reflect on pedagogy, instead of insisting to "teach this way." Our study interviewed various professors and instructors committed to a particular teaching approach they believed worked best; but more

importantly they realized their pedagogy improved through dialogue, and used these focus groups to provide a platform for learning to teach better.

G. Promoting Interpersonal Understanding and Teamwork: At several institutions, educators cite as a central goal the development of their students' interpersonal understanding and skills for interacting with different types of people. At these schools, roughly a tenth of students report gains in these areas. Fewer students, however, cite developing cooperation and teamwork skills. The notable exception is one new, for-profit provider which integrates online and classroom learning; here, over a fifth of students claim gains in this area. Students perceive this to be the top goal the institution has for its students, and they believe that this is the area for which the institution provides the most support.

From these teamwork experiences, students learn (1) the value of cooperation, (2) how to deal with and manage a diverse group of individuals effectively, and (3) how to apply these skills in the workplace; some students also cited their teamwork experience as central in helping them develop a sense of confidence and clarify their ambitions. Two institutional variables seem to contribute to these gains:

Tying individual performance to group work: By leveraging a substantial amount of learning and evaluation in group work, students seem to be more committed to other team members and the work itself. This creates a sense of accountability among team members: "My teammates... (we) work hard and we all help each other. If one of us does not understand the class or the assignment, someone else will. We keep each other going." Another student said of team members: "They hold me accountable and keep me performing at my highest level, because I do not want to let myself or them down."

Creating continuity of teams across multiple tasks and courses: Students are divided into cohorts in order to provide continuity through various different tracks. Students regularly point out that having the same peers with them across multiple courses adds tremendous value to their experience: "My group has influenced me greatly. We have been together for over a year and this has been a great asset."

At this institution, the teams also seem to have the secondary effect of forming personal connections among students who may otherwise feel quite disconnected. These personal relationships often end up being a source of motivation that prevents students from getting discouraged or dropping out of the courses: "(A) Learning team member has given me emotional support and pushes me whenever I'm thinking of giving up."

There seems to be less emphasis on teamwork at the liberal arts schools and community colleges in our study. At the liberal arts schools, one can argue that these skills are cultivated through involvement in student activities and sports, or general interactions through shared living. As work environments increasingly move from models of individual excellence to collaboration through distributed networks, these institutions will likely face added pressure to place more direct emphasis on promoting these outcomes. Can the teamwork practice developed by "new providers" offer a model for traditional colleges?

H. Promoting Social Responsibility at Liberal Arts Schools: At all of the schools in our study, students mentioned social change and service among their lowest goals, relative to practical and self-knowledge goals. These same students perceived their institutions as only moderately interested in promoting and providing the support for developing these outcomes. Despite this pattern of benign neglect, students at the seven liberal arts schools do seem to be quite involved in volunteer activities (almost half spend more than 1 hour a

week in service activities; about 15% participate in more than 6 hours a week) and about a tenth of students in this sample reported a gain in the area of social responsibility.

Further analyses allow us to (1) better understand the relationship between student goals, perceived institutional goals and support, and volunteerism and social responsibility and (2) identify the types of academic and non-academic institutional factors which appear to contribute to these outcomes among college students.

Types of Social Responsibility Outcomes (SR Outcomes) Among Liberal Arts Students: 9.2% of students cited an outcome in this area; the following highlights the six types of outcomes, and the relative salience of each:

Perspective and Knowledge (38%): Developing perspective on the nature of service and helping, and how it fits into a life-course view of happiness and success; building knowledge of specific issues or needs

- "Success is measured by how many people you reach."
- "I am more self-aware and knowledgeable about the condition of the oppressed."

Action Plans and Personal Qualities (31%): Gaining sense of how to best help, address issues; developing tangible skills or capacities to aid in service

- "I have learned how to help"
- "I can affect change...through education, awareness and action."

Motivation and Commitment (23%): Gaining motivation to serve, developing commitment

- "Challenged me to take up my calling"
- "I am now committed to serving"

Obligation (18%): Developing a sense of social responsibility or obligation

- "That with receiving an education comes an obligation to give back to your greater community."
- "Reaching out to others is important"

Capability (13%): Building a sense of personal capability to make a difference

- "That it's possible to make a real difference...and that I can be part of that."
- "We all have something to contribute to society."
- "In my own way, I can affect change."

Service/Career Alignment (6%): Aligning one's work ambitions with service goals

- "Convinced me to pursue a career that contributes positively to society."

SR Goals and Provision vs. Volunteerism and SR Outcomes: As expected, students who cited higher levels of personal goals for social change and service were more likely to volunteer and to mention educational outcomes relevant to social goals. There is also a strong relationship between citing SR outcomes and believing the institution provides for one's development in this area; however, nearly one-fifth of students who exhibit these outcomes believe the institution provides little support in this domain. Among the SR

outcomes sample, 22% believed the institution expected them to develop or devote time to this domain; however, students' level of volunteering was not directly related to SR outcomes.

These findings indicate that schools which establish and effectively communicate an emphasis on social change and service are more likely to promote volunteerism and SR outcomes; however, our data suggest that other means of influence and learning may be at least as (if not more) effective in promoting these outcomes.

Creating SR Outcomes -- Looking Beyond Service and Volunteerism: One-third of the students reported the underlying reasons they believe their SR increased. The majority of influences were academic, occurring inside the classroom; second were general inspiration, encouragement, or instrumental guidance from professors or friends; and last were specific lessons learned or things gained from volunteer or service activities.

At least half of these outcomes were attributed to the influence of a single individual, most often a professor. These professors influenced students in three primary ways:

Intellectual – Teaching, revealing foundations of issues, highlighting knowledge as a solution

- “He inspired me to take action against racism in myself as well as others. I joined a nine week Conversations on Race class just because he brought awareness of the issue of racism that exists today.”

Instrumental – Providing guidance, highlighting opportunities for learning or service; mentoring

- “(She) challenged me to take up my calling to actively pursue systemic change in our culture and society to protect those who are in the most need.”
- “He accepted me into the study abroad program in Mali, in West Africa. The experience was unbelievable. Being in Mali changed some of my fundamental values.”

Role Model – Inspiring deeper thought or active service, through example

- “She was very passionate about her work and had a lot of experience...She really taught me how I can make a difference in the world one community at a time.”

Friends most often provide intellectual challenge and perspective on global issues, and emotional support and encouragement once students decide to make a commitment to social change or service.

These findings are consistent with claims that volunteerism can promote social responsibility among college students, and that students who perceive greater levels of support for development in this area are more likely to reach SR outcomes. However, the data indicate that students may reach a wide variety of SR outcomes through means other than engaged service.

The academic sphere can be a source of both foundational understanding and perspective on an issue and at the same time provide a prescription for how to leverage knowledge to promote change. This method is bolstered by professors who take an active interest in their

students and inspire action as role models. The findings thus challenge institutions interested in SR to anchor this commitment firmly in the curriculum and classroom learning.

I. Making Knowledge Relevant to Adult Learners: At the three non-traditional schools in our study, there is an emphasis on making knowledge relevant for their adult learners. Educators recognize their role in promoting this: "Classes revolve around real world issues that have to do with work. All the homework is designed to be applicable to what they would be doing at work. So the reports you write are all in a business format. There are some classes that do the academic stuff, but most are geared so that you can go to work the next day and apply what you learned the night before. You can't do that at a traditional school."

These institutions promote this level of relevance through employing a practitioner faculty. This was especially the case at the one new provider in our study. The adult learners in our study recognize this element as being distinctive: "The instructors have real life experience in the field they teach. It is nice to learn from somebody who is not just teaching from theory." Another student shared that "Facilitators provide practical knowledge that the student can use and apply in his or her own life, whether at work, home, or in another class."

J. Student Perception of the Value of a Liberal Arts Education: Students in our study claim that they are less interested in obtaining a liberal arts education than we had expected them to be. At none of the seven liberal arts schools did students rate "acquiring a broad, liberal arts education" higher than 6th among the 17 possible goals presented to them. Aggregating all seven schools, the rating actually falls close to the bottom of the list. This raises two important questions:

What do students believe a liberal arts education (and its values) to be?

Students are interested in practical goals such as finding a job and building specific knowledge and skills; however, at the same time, they do cite self-knowledge, critical thinking, and general excellence goals that many would consider components of a broad, liberal arts education. Few students seem to consider these as aspects of such an education, though. The data seem to suggest that students may perceive this level of education as having to do more with the classics, and as such, of little relevance to a changing world and their specific goals.

How can educators better communicate the nature and value of a liberal arts education? Because students often cited as goals and outcomes many of the components of a liberal arts education, we are concerned that if students misunderstand the nature and relevance of such an education, that they will fail to realize its full benefits. How do educators currently communicate the nature of the liberal arts education? In what ways can this communication be formulated so that students see it as being relevant to their own goals?



IV. AN INVITATION

We have barely begun to explore the complex questions surrounding the pursuit of good work in undergraduate education. The Good Work Project welcomes your comments on the report, or the topics we have taken up in this document. If you wish to be informed about future publications and other plans for dissemination, please let us know.

Please direct correspondence to Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Ph.D., Claremont Graduate University, 1021 N. Dartmouth Avenue, Claremont, CA 91711, or send us an email at feedback@goodwork-highered.org.

APPENDIX

Analysis of the following survey items provided the basis for the discussion of student perceptions presented in this report.

Student and Institutional Characteristics

Student goals:

How important to you is each of the goals listed below? (17 student outcomes; Acquiring knowledge and skills in specific fields, etc.)

Institutional goals:

For each area listed below, please indicate how important you believe it is to your school's goals for students. (17 student outcomes; Acquiring knowledge and skills in specific fields, etc.)

Institutional expectations:

What qualities are students at your school expected to strive for? Do you agree or disagree with these expectations?

Distinctive characteristics of the school:

What is it that makes [your school] a special place?

Perceived Impact of the College Experience

Contribution to student development:

How much does your school contribute to your development in each area? (17 student outcomes; Acquiring knowledge and skills in specific fields, etc.)

Influence of faculty, fellow students, others:

Who is the one person at your school who has influenced you the most? In what ways did s/he influence you?

When you think about the most important things you have learned so far at this school, how influential has each of the following persons been? (friends, classmates, teachers, administrators, counselor and student-life staff, coaches, clergy, employers, leaders in the community, others)

Most important thing learned:

What is the most important thing you have learned so far at this school?

Effect on self or on life goals:

Has attending this school affected your goals in life or changed you as a person? If yes, how?