

THE CRESSSET

A review of literature, the arts, and public affairs

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Religion, Liberal Education, and Professional Studies

*An interview with Bruce Kimball,
Charles Foster, and Carol Geary Schneider*

Of the six visiting scholars, the one whose writing probably has done the most to shape contemporary conversation about liberal education and its relationship to professional study is Professor Bruce Kimball, Director of the School of Educational Policy and Leadership at Ohio State University. In 1986, he wrote what was, and probably remains, the best book on liberal education over the course of the last quarter-century, *Orators and Philosophers: A History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (Columbia University, 1986). He also has written a detailed history of the ideal of professionalism in America, entitled *The "True Professional Ideal" in America: A History* (Ohio State, 1992). When we talked together on 18 April 2008, I began by asking him to revisit the two sometimes competing, sometimes complementary strains that he had identified within the centuries-old tradition of liberal education, the philosophical or "critical thinking" strain that began with Athens and was embodied most memorably by Socrates, and the oratorical or "formation-for-citizenship" strain that was most memorably articulated by Cicero.



Mark Schwehn: At the end of *Orators and Philosophers*, you begin to develop the argument that, in fact, in the twentieth century the "philosophers" have triumphed over the "orators," given the ascendancy of the liberal free, or critical thinking, or knowledge-for-its-own-sake ideal, and that the oratorical tradition has been for decades somewhat at bay. Nonetheless, just after you published the book, a great deal of commotion arose that I'm sure you are aware of, some of it initiated by large educational associations like the American Association of Colleges and Universities in projects like "Education for Citizenship" or "Education for Democracy." Such programmatic initiatives are akin to some of the strains of discourse you identify rightly as going all the way back to Cicero and the oratorical tradition. Moreover, a number of philosophers—I am thinking of Charles Taylor in particular—at about the same time came to place a very high premium on articulacy (that is, the capacity to give voice to something) as being integrally connected to the quality of ideas and ideals. So we have on the one hand philosophers like Taylor and a lot of other people who work in linguistics and philosophy who are returning us to an appreciation of something like Cicero's sense of the integral connection between thought and speech. On the other hand, we have all these initiatives for education for citizenship. I'm just wondering if those taken together have begun, in your judgment, to elevate a bit more the oratorical strain of the tradition of liberal education over where it was when you finished writing.

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Bruce Kimball: Yes, if I had known more or been prescient I might have seen the beginnings of that trend. I think Richard Rorty called it “the rhetorical turn” of scholarship in general. So it’s happening in philosophy to be sure, but it seems to be happening generally in all sorts of social studies and in humanities. There is an emphasis on rhetoric, on the way things are expressed. It goes hand in hand with some of these developments that you spoke about regarding the AAC&U and so forth. I would interpret them as a broad movement toward the kind of oratorical tradition that’s manifested in the liberal arts and in culture more generally. After I wrote *Orators and Philosophers*, I did a study for the College Board on pragmatism and liberal education. I then wrote a long essay, and twenty-five people commented on it (*The Condition of American Liberal Education: Pragmatism and a Changing Tradition*. New York, 1995). Most of them were quite critical. What I tried to say in that essay was that neo-pragmatism, exemplified in Rorty’s work, which was very prominent at that point, was an idiom through which this oratorical movement was taking place. I think there is a lot of overlap between the philosophical school of pragmatism and some of the intellectual characteristics of the oratorical tradition.

MS: I take it that this renewal of the oratorical tradition is a development you welcome.

BK: Yes, it is. My argument in *Orators and Philosophers* was empirical, and I tried not to be advocating either side, although I’ve been interpreted as advocating the oratorical tradition. And, in a sense, I was, because I was trying to recover it. I felt it was lost. So, to that extent, I was advocating. But my sense really is that these two traditions will persevere indefinitely, because I do see the two strains as coherent, as I argue in the book, each having certain irreconcilable presuppositions about the nature of knowledge and virtue. They represent, I think, very deep aspects of being human, and liberal education oscillates between the two.

MS: I gather that you think that the oratorical tradition is in fact as old as the philosophical tradition, perhaps even older.

BK: I was struck when you were speaking about Charles Taylor’s emphasis upon the importance of articulacy. That is exactly how I try to characterize Isocrates. There was a term I saw one time—radical linguistic behaviorism. It’s a psychological school of thought that argues that if you are trying to study what someone thinks, since you can never get inside their head, you just have to look at what they utter. I think that was Isocrates’ and Cicero’s viewpoint: you really can’t make a distinction between thinking and speaking. Taylor is getting close, but he is still presuming that there is a distinction between the two. But once you make that distinction I think you tend to privilege the interior thought as purer. Then, you are on Plato’s road. If you go to the point where you can’t separate the tongue and the brain, then the only way you can evaluate thinking is by what is articulated, what is spoken. In explaining this, I always say to teachers and professors who object to this point that if you ever have been at your desk counseling a student from your course, and the student is sitting there, saying, “I know what I want to say. I just can’t say it,” and if you’ve ever turned to them and said, “If you can’t say it, then you don’t really know it,” then you are at that point a Ciceronian. I think we’ve all been in that position.

MS: Absolutely. That’s exactly where I think most of my colleagues would agree. Based upon similar experiences to the one you mention, they have a kind of Ciceronian view of the relationship between thought and speech. E. M. Forster once famously said, “I do not know what I think until I see what I have written.” I think that’s another way of putting it.

BK: I find that too in my own writing, that I think I understand something, and I think I know it, and I start writing and I get so frustrated because I can’t express it exactly. Then I see I’m confronted with my own confusion on something that I thought I understand clearly, because I can’t express it.

MS: Let me ask you another question, if you don’t mind getting just a little autobiographical. I was struck by the fact that you did an MDiv at Harvard and worked with the late George MacRae, a New Testament scholar. In any event, I wonder to what extent you think that experience has shaped the way you think, both about liberal education and about (even more especially) professional study. What struck me about your book *The “True Professional Ideal” in America: A History* is that you spend a great deal of time sympathetically engaging the whole profession of divinity, all the way up to the twen-

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tieth century. You also take to task some of the students of professionalism who tend to ignore the clergy as any longer a learned profession worth their attention, and you have some great arguments to show how they are completely mistaken. So that would be one example of how your education in a divinity school shaped the book for the better. To what extent do *you* think your education in a divinity school shaped both of the books we're foregrounding here?

BK: That's interesting. I had never thought about that, but I think it's very insightful and true in two respects. One way is, I think that divinity training, because I think divinity is naturally, to some extent, a more oratorical profession, directed me at some subliminal level to be sensitive to the oratorical tradition and to see value in it. So that experience may very well have oriented me in my approach to the study of liberal education in that sense, and I had never put that together before. I think the same can be said for the professions book too. I was aware that I was in a sense recovering the theological profession in America when I was writing that book. In reading through the scholarship on the professions (written mostly by historians and sociologists), one of my litmus tests (rapid litmus tests, I should say, crude litmus tests) for whether a scholar was on point or not was whether he or she saw theology as a profession or not. If their scanner (whatever their scanner was) didn't pick up theology as a profession, I knew there was something wrong with the scanner, not only contemporarily, but also historically. That in turn led me to think about what was a proper methodology for studying the professions. I might point out that I actually (in both of those books) adopted what some have considered a curious methodology, which is that in looking at both topics historically, I am actually following the meaning of the central words historically: *liberal education*, or *profession*. Within the scholarship that had been written in both of those domains, people had pretty much ignored that procedure. My own historical method seemed straightforward to me, and perhaps somewhat banal, but it paid dividends. The point is that when you are in the seventeenth century, if you are asking what liberal education in the seventeenth century is, you have to mean *what the people in the seventeenth century called liberal education*. If you don't approach it that way, you are presupposing something that you define as liberal education or professions, and then you look at what people say about that. But you've introduced a presupposition about the definition.

MS: I am very sympathetic, being an historian myself, with the approach you take in both of those books. Many scholars who should know better simply project back onto the past their own current preoccupations and understandings.

BK: Of course, I suppose I was projecting back my concern for divinity and oratory.

MS: It's conceivable, except that you have substantial, even compelling, evidence for the claims that you make. Let me return once more, though from a different angle, to this question about your formation at the divinity school. Just to lay some of my cards on the table here, one of the worries I have in my own honors college—I shouldn't say worry, one of the consistent issues of exploration—is the whole relation between religion and liberal education. In particular, you show in your book how deeply imbedded liberal learning was within religious institutions for hundreds of years and how that imbeddedness gave to liberal learning a distinctive coloration for a millennium almost. I wonder whether or not some habits of reflection and some virtues like humility that were originally understood as parts of religious practice remain crucial for a complete understanding of texts like those that have been honored by the oratorical tradition. It seems to me that for a religious tradition that has a whole set of sacred scriptures (where some texts are thought to be presumed wise before you, so to speak, deconstruct them), if you don't understand the text, the problem is with you, not with the text. I think so much of modernity has reversed that. The problem is probably with the text; therefore, our task is to deconstruct it. Many of our basic habits of interpretation would have been unthinkable within a religious tradition. So I guess my question is how essential do you think those collections of habits and a certain kind of piety and a certain kind of tradition of reading are as background for liberal education, particularly within the oratorical tradition?

BK: That's a very interesting question, Mark. One thing I notice, to go back to your asking me earlier about my divinity background and what influence that had on liberal education, and I said divinity is oratorical, so it sort of pointed me in that direction—I was thinking to myself, well, why is it oratorical? And the reason is exactly in the text. Law is the same. In writing the work on the history of liberal education, one of the things that pointed me to the professions was the fact that, thinking about orators and philosophers, I saw that in divinity there is the same relationship between preachers and

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theologians. In law, it's between the advocate and the jurist. So, these fundamental intellectual traditions both ramified into two fields. You don't see it so much in medicine, because it is a necessarily natural and scientific field, but it makes sense that the oratorical and philosophical traditions are felt in law and theology, because they are both text-based traditions. Broaching the question of how that's related to undergraduate liberal education today, I think your observation is very insightful that the study of divinity is related to liberal education or strengthens it because divinity does preserve the text. You can't take the text away. You can't totally deconstruct the text. That's just counter to the basis of the tradition. My dean at Rochester was a critical sociological theorist, and I remember him summing up Derrida's view as, when you take the text away, you have readers, and then you see what is really going on. I always have that picture in mind of four people in the room discussing a text, and the text is removed, and then you see what they're bringing to it. That's insightful, but you can't take the text away in the traditions of reading in divinity and law. Within those professions, you're going to criticize the text, you're going to interpret it, but you can't take it away. As long as you have a religious tradition ancillary to, or forming, or strengthening a liberal education tradition, it keeps the text on the table. It keeps the text in the room. In that sense, a religious tradition or teachers informed by that tradition, respecting that tradition, would keep the text on the table and in the room. That's a very profound point and observation.

MS: Do you remember the moment in your own formation, either at Dartmouth, or later at Harvard, when you really decided you wanted to spend a lot of time thinking and writing about liberal education? What first interested you in that subject? What drew you to it?

BK: Actually, I came to liberal education through the question of what is liberal religion. I was brought up in a federated Protestant church in a small town in Massachusetts, which was predominantly Congregational. Then I went to college and (like so many people) fell away from the church, and then went to divinity school on one of those Rockefeller, trial-year fellowships. That was how I got to Harvard Divinity School and then discovered Unitarianism there. I didn't know anything about Unitarianism, which is often called euphemistically "liberal religion" (or that's how Unitarians referred to themselves). And I knew I had gotten (or was told I had gotten) liberal education at Dartmouth, and I didn't know what that was. So I had these two fuzzy ideas, liberal education and liberal religion, and I began during my first year to ask, well what are those things? How are they related? How are they related to liberalism? I went through Harvard with a foot in the Divinity School and a foot in the School of Education, and towards the end of my coursework in the Divinity School I was starting to think about writing a dissertation on the history and meaning of liberal education. And I was getting very confused because there was liberal religion, and there was liberal education, and then there was liberalism. I was just trying to get some foothold.

David Riesman had taken me under his wing, because he was teaching in the Harvard Education School, and he referred me to an assistant professor of government for some insight. I went to see him, and said, "I want to figure out what liberalism is, and I thought maybe you could point me to some books about liberalism." He was a young hot shot, and he was totally unimpressed by the fact that I was in the Education School and the Divinity School, and I remember him standing up in his office and saying, "So, you want to know what liberalism is?" and he went over to his bookshelf and he started taking down books and throwing them on his desk and saying, "Here's liberalism! Here's liberalism!" And he piled up over ten books, and I was just sitting there, kind of dumbfounded. He was virtually contemptuous, saying, in effect, "What are you doing in my office? You don't know anything about this." So I just took down the titles and said thank you very much, and walked out, kind of humiliated. I haven't thought about that in a long time.

The experience was very powerful, and it illustrates how I was wandering around Harvard for a long time trying to find somebody to study with. I was puzzled methodologically. Where to begin in order to grasp how political liberalism, liberal education, religious liberalism, and intellectual liberalism are related? It was just a total quagmire. I spent at least a year or two reading stuff and trying to gain some traction. I finished Harvard Divinity School in 1978 and then went to China on a Luce scholarship for a year. So that interrupted my graduate studies, and I spent that year—actually I was in China and then Japan—reading about Japanese religion. But in the back of my mind, I was trying to figure out how to gain a foothold on the study of liberalism. I was spinning my wheels for a long time.

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A few months before Bruce Kimball talked about the connections between his studies in the Harvard Divinity School and his later work on both the history of liberal education and the history of the professions in America, Dr. Charles Foster had explored the connections between liberal learning, professional studies, and divinity schools from a very different perspective. Since 2001, Foster had been a Senior Scholar at the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching where he directed a massive study that resulted in the publication of the widely discussed book, *Educating Clergy: Teaching Practices and Pastoral Imagination* (Jossey-Bass, 2005). That volume is part of a very ambitious “Carnegie Preparation of the Professions Project” that is studying the formation of lawyers, engineers, doctors, and nurses, as well as clergy.

Whereas Kimball thought about the relationship between professional study and liberal learning historically, primarily through the linkages between the oratorical strain of liberal education and the character of professional life as it evolved in the United States, Foster thought about similar linkages pedagogically by examining the way that professionals are now being formed in seminaries and divinity schools and then wondering about how those pedagogical processes resemble liberal education. He was especially well prepared to do this kind of comparative reflection, since in his many publications he has written on both teaching and congregational life, he had taught for thirteen years at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University, and he had served as a consultant to scores of institutions that are part of the Association of Theological Schools. We began by discussing the ways in which any given profession can be understood in terms of the “signature pedagogy” that characterizes the education of its practitioners.



MS: Where did the idea of a “signature pedagogy” come from? Was it the outcome of an inductive process, developed after you finished all your work? Or was it a kind of loose articulation of the kind of thing you were looking for and hoping to find, a sort of normative paradigm that you had in mind before you started?

Charles Foster: The way you’ve asked the question actually highlights one of the tensions we experienced in the study, because the notion of “a signature pedagogy” was one that Lee Shulman, president of the Carnegie Foundation, had been exploring for some time. Its origins may be traced back to his experience as a cognitive psychologist helping Michigan State University in the establishment of its medical school. Lee was the educational consultant to that entire process. As he worked with MSU and as he worked with professional educators in professional schools in subsequent years, one of the things he noticed, particularly in medical and legal education, was something he came to call a “signature pedagogy.” His notion of a “signature pedagogy” was confirmed in the Carnegie study of legal education. In legal education, it is the case-study dialogue methodology that almost every single faculty member in every single law school across the country employs, no matter what the particular area of law he or she is teaching. This “signature pedagogy” dominates the teaching in law schools. In medical school, by way of contrast, faculty members engage student learning through *three* “signature pedagogies.” In the most common one, students follow the professional, the doctor, on his or her rounds while answering questions that lead to a diagnosis of a particular patient’s situation.

Lee anticipated that there would be a signature pedagogy in clergy education as well. He expected that it would center predominately on hermeneutics—homiletics. His hunch sounded reasonable to us, but as we began to interview faculty members, and as we were observing classes, we saw something more than the attention to interpretation, whether it be interpretation of texts, interpretation of what we increasingly came to call contexts, or interpretation of human situations and conditions. Something more was going on in these classes. While the notion of a signature pedagogy seemed valuable, the data was saying to us that it had to be tweaked. We noted the frequency of faculty attention to interpretation or hermeneutics that Lee had assumed. But we also noticed considerable attention to what Bill Sullivan, the director of the Carnegie Project, has called an identity or normative apprenticeship. In other words, we were observing faculty members anticipating certain expectations or normative patterns for the character of their students as priests, rabbis, or pastors through their teaching. We saw faculty members attending to these expectations in highly cognitively oriented classes as in the way prayer functioned in a class on biblical exegesis or the way that an assignment would be directed. Students would be asked to think about interpreting a passage for a preaching occasion, so that it focused not only on the text and its meaning, but also on its significance

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for the setting in which that preaching event might occur. In those same classes, faculty members might also be paying attention to the challenges of performing those interpretations in a sermon or teaching event. So attention to professional practice would be included in the academic teaching of these faculty members. Students might teach a component of the class or preach a three or five minute sermon in the class. This latter emphasis grew out of a growing awareness during the 1960s and 1970s of the influence of social location on the meanings and relationships to be found in any given context. All this has meant that seminary educators often teach to help students understand both the content and agency of context as primary forces in their efforts to be agents of change or transformation in the contexts of their ministry practice.

We ended up identifying four pedagogies in theological education: interpretation, formation, contextualization, and performance. In some cases, a faculty member would emphasize a pedagogy of interpretation with some attention to the others. Another faculty member might attend to pedagogies of formation, with attention to others. Among the faculty members that had been identified for our study, in almost every case, most attended to all four. Each developed in a somewhat distinctive way an integrative framework through which he or she engaged each of these pedagogies. We ended up calling it a “signature pedagogical framework” through which they would weave a teaching practice (which is another concept that we develop in the book). Through that teaching practice, they modeled the interdependence of their expectations for student learning and then coached them into it.

MS: I had not known the deep background about Lee’s initial conception based on his observations of medical education and how that was then more than tweaked but considerably elaborated in some of your own efforts to interpret what you were seeing in the classroom.

CF: You’ll see in each of the Carnegie studies of professional education great attention to the notion of a signature pedagogy. In the law study, which is now out, the case-study method is discussed in detail. As we listened in to the conversations of our colleagues engaged in the engineering study, we heard them describing three signature pedagogies. If I remember correctly, one is analysis, one is design, and one is lab. Analysis pedagogies are heavily cognitive historically. Design pedagogies emphasize practice and identity, because this is the creative edge of the engineer’s work. Lab pedagogies emphasize practice, practice, practice.

MS: Let me see if I understand something correctly with respect to clergy education as distinct from the other professions; there is a kind of interesting problematic here. In every profession, except for clergy, the knowledge base does not itself include questions like, “How should I live before God?” “How shall I love God and neighbor?” By definition, of course, engineering and nursing and law wouldn’t have questions having to do with how we are to be before God. These ethical normative issues are built into the knowledge base of the clergy person, and they are even foregrounded there. So when questions of formative apprenticeship arise within ministry, the student is obviously, on the one hand, being formed into the professional *clergy person*, but on the other hand being formed rightly as a *human being* or a child of God. Potentially these things could come into conflict (the professional identity more narrowly and more broadly the identity as a child of God) in a way that, for example, they sometimes do with law. If you are taught to think and be a lawyer all the time, you are going to have trouble as a parent perhaps, because, as King Lear sadly discovered, trying to rule your family as though it were a kingdom can lead to catastrophe. Or to take another example, it seems to me that engineers may think by virtue of their professional formation that everything can be fixed, but alas in human life more broadly understood, one often has to come to grips with the fact that some things cannot be fixed and one has to learn how to live with that. I am using these as examples to suggest that in the other professions you could imagine some tensions between what it meant to be formed as a human being and what it meant to be formed as a lawyer, engineer, etc. Moreover, the knowledge base in those other professions does not foreground these very normative questions which show up again in the formative apprenticeship side of things. Am I right in seeing clergy as anomalous in those ways? Or is this overdrawn?

CF: The picture you have painted is exactly the agenda that prompted the study. One of the premises for the Carnegie Preparation of the Professions Project is that in the modern research university, the tension you are describing has become too pervasive in professional education. For example, critical ethical questions emerge in medical education as faculty members and students engage the relationship of their notions of wellbeing and health with some vision of society and how people are to function and thrive in society. The challenge medical educators experience when teaching students how to do the diagnostic

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work around cancer, for example, inevitably poses a whole series of ethical questions having to do with the relationship of the doctor not only to medical knowledge and skill but also to the person and life-world of the patient and the community from which the patient comes. These questions ultimately have to do with the identification of the medical student with the values and norms of the profession and practice of medicine. Similar ethical and normative issues can be found in legal education around the relationship of law and the notion of justice. Carnegie colleagues involved in the study of law schools often observed that a significant number of people enroll in law school because they want to address some justice issue. Although it is often drummed out of them during their education, students enter law school with some sense of what it is the profession can be about, what it can do, all rooted in some kind of ethical framework. They bring to their education some kind of ethical expectations, if not norms, about the contributions lawyers can make to society. The same thing can be said of engineers. The collapse of the bridge in Minneapolis, which now seems to be attributed to a design flaw, for example, highlights the relationship of technical skill and social responsibility in the education of engineering students. Normative questions for engineers originate in their quest to understand the ways in which any structure they design facilitates human interaction (movement, habitat, all the questions about the well-being of a community).

So the challenge of educating a student as a future doctor, lawyer, or engineer raises a whole series of questions that have to do with identity, formation, ethics, etc. In fact, next week I am participating in a conference at the University of St. Thomas that is looking at the formation of an ethical professional identity. I am representing obviously the theological/clergy world, but lawyers, engineers, doctors, etc., also will be present and speaking to that question of formation of the professional person in the midst of their professional education. So in a very real way, the Carnegie Foundation is challenging not the strengths of the research university, but its limitations.

MS: That's very interesting. It is almost as though what you have in the cognitive apprenticeship within clergy education is (among other things) the appropriation of the tradition having to do with what makes for the Christian life, what makes for the devout Jew, whatever, which can be drawn upon to inform the narrower question, what does it mean to be a good rabbi, priest, etc. By contrast, although the cognitive bases of the other professions may once have had built into them some of that kind of discourse, when those professions migrated from apprenticeship practices into the university, that got lost. Eventually you have (as I think Bill Sullivan observes) Talcott Parsons's description and analysis of the professions in the 1960s, such that it would be dubious by his standards that clergy should even count as a profession, because their knowledge base isn't strictly scientific and empirical.

CF: What Bill Sullivan as a social philosopher brings to the study is a kind of grassroots awareness that Talcott Parsons's argument, while having been embraced by the academic community, has not been embraced by the general public. So that one of the issues is how do you deal with the disconnect between expectations that exist within the public realm around the function of the university on the one hand and the role of the professions on the other.

MS: It seems to me that if we come to a point where our professions, partly as a consequence of all of your good work and the Carnegie Foundation's good work, come around to retrieving, recovering, and renewing a sense of their own professional formation that engages deeper questions about what makes for the good life—what makes for health, what makes for human flourishing, what makes for the good life for human kind—it will be progressively more and more difficult, if not even impossible, to distinguish between liberal and professional education.

CF: That would be my assumption.

MS: Which would really lead, I think, to some drastic reorganization of the university, not just the professional schools, of the way in which we educate young people. All of these hallowed distinctions that go way back: distinctions between knowledge for its own sake and knowledge for the sake of something else, distinctions between useful and...

CF: But don't you think that transformation is occurring? Consider "service learning," which is now everywhere embedded within university curricula even though it did not exist thirty years ago. Service learning is alien to the kind of cognitive, rational approach that characterizes most classrooms. When I was serving on the Deans Council at Emory, one of the most fascinating curricular innovations taking place in the university at that time was in the undergraduate business school. Every

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student had to be involved in some kind of a practice-oriented learning project that had to be within a corporation and that had to have some sense of human wellbeing and the public good as a focus. That's really interesting—merging public good and profit motivations in the same thing. And every student in the program had to be a part of it. That is so far from where this business school was ten years before that.

MS: Yes, that's fascinating. So now talk a little bit more about this term which has come up already several times in our conversation. I want to understand a little more deeply the whole matter of formation. Sometimes people would say, if they, for example, are loosely speaking Aristotelian, that it would seem odd ever to distinguish the practical from the formative, in that the way you get to be a certain kind of human being for Aristotle is precisely practice. It is only by acting, not by study and abstract cognitive knowledge bases, that you become the kind of human being that is virtuous. So you may know all you want about virtue or about what God requires (or whatever knowledge base you are talking about); such knowledge is not going to get you from here to the door when it comes to actually being virtuous. I say this by way of suggesting that in order to keep the practical and the formative discreet, or identity and practice discreet, in two different apprenticeships, there must be something more going on here than simply what Aristotle talks about (in effect, habituation through action). I don't know quite what you have in mind, but I'm just explaining the source of my puzzlement, in what's meant by formation.

CF: To be candid, I would say that in that conversation (I mean, between the Platonists on one side and the Aristotelians on the other) the project simply finesses those issues by doing what good social science would do. It moves to ethnography. We clearly finesse the argument in the book because some programs of clergy formation in the spectrum of schools we visited would fall much more closely in line with the Aristotelian notion and other programs would be much more in tune with a kind of Platonic notion of formation. In fact, one of the real struggles that we brought as theological educators to the conversation at the foundation was an awareness of the ambiguity surrounding the very notion of formation that you described, which for some was a new conversation. Still, they liked the category and rather precipitously appropriated it. So some of the kinds of issues that you're talking about simply have not been addressed up front and will have to be probably at some point. That will have to be the subject of a future conversation.

MS: This is all very interesting to me, especially its implications for liberal education. Bill Sullivan writes in the preface to *Educating Clergy*,

The recognition of the formative dimension of education is profoundly important for liberal arts and liberal education. In the face of the ubiquitous demands that education pay off in career and economic terms (that is, above all, it should be useful), advocates of the venerable traditions of liberal education have usually been torn between incompatible approaches. One is the idea of liberal education as the importing of some basic cultural literacy based on content thought indispensable to being an educated person in our time. The other rallying point has been the notion of inquiry, especially resident among those in scientific fields who have paid attention to these matters or the notion of critical thinking. Here the emphasis has been on form rather than content. Advocates of this direction have seized on the observable effects of liberal education. For many of its graduates it seems clear that it inculcates versatility of mind and intellectual strength. These qualities are useful, indeed, but they rarely come in neutral generic form.

When you come at the same idea of formation from the liberal education side—if you start to immerse yourself in Bruce Kimball's work, for example—you attribute new significance to what he sees as a persistent tension within liberal education between two traditions. One is the philosophical and the other is the oratorical. What he means by the philosophical is, in effect, Athens and critical thinking, one of the two things that Bill Sullivan mentions. But what Kimball means by the oratorical is not the other thing Bill mentions, cultural literacy, but precisely formation, character, preparation for citizenship—which starts out in Cicero. So he thinks liberal education, from the beginning, has been concerned with formation. What Kimball's history says, in effect, is that sometimes the philosophers have been dominant, and at other times, the oratorical tradition has been dominant. Most of the time, these two traditions have been held in a kind of productive tension, as they still are today, readily observed in any college or university catalogue in the description of the College of Arts and Sciences. What's almost completely disappeared from the academy, remaining here and there as a kind of quaint leftover, is the business about

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cultural literacy. The commotion in the aftermath of E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* and the growing emphasis upon multiculturalism have rendered any notion of some definitive content that would render everyone culturally literate completely untenable in the mind of most academics. So what the liberal arts are still left with (and I think will be indefinitely) is this kind of tension between the philosophical and oratorical traditions. I think furthermore that the growing conversation about formation is going to be the vocabulary that helps to forge new linkages between liberal education and professional study. However, the historical account of how this renewed emphasis upon formation came to be is going to look different coming at it from the professional side as distinct from the liberal arts side.

CF: I would say that your description of Kimball's categories resonates with my own experience, resonates with my own commitment in many ways. Your own analysis provides a very clear picture of the situation in which both liberal and professional education find themselves. The challenge, it seems to me, is to specify how the values, norms and practices of each can continue to exist productively within the dominance of the contemporary research university. The drive to see knowledge as an objective reality in and of itself is very intense, despite the fact that we have also been deeply chastened when the practice of pure knowledge has led to serious negative social and political consequences. So it's a time for creative energy on the part of both liberal and professional education.

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The conviction that there are new and educationally significant points of convergence between liberal learning and professional studies, a view shared by both Bruce Kimball and Chuck Foster among others, was also made manifest in "College Learning for the New Global Century," a report from the National Leadership Council for a decade-long initiative of the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), called "Liberal Education and America's Promise" (LEAP). That initiative, extending from 2005 through at least 2015, involves both public advocacy and campus action designed to engage students and the public with what really matters in a college education for the twenty-first century. Carol Geary Schneider who as the president of AAC&U led the LEAP initiative, visited the faculty seminar on 7 December 2007 and led a conversation about the recommendations in "College Learning for the New Global Century." In response to a question from one of the seminar participants, she quoted from the council's report in order to clarify what liberal education had come to mean for the LEAP initiative.

Seminar Participant: I noticed in the course of the conversation as well as in some of the exhibits within the report, such as the one entitled "Essential Learning Outcomes" that we haven't used the words "liberal education" very much. We've sometimes used "general education." Do you think liberal education is not a useful piece of nomenclature and that we ought to refer only to general education because it seems to be more easily understood by the general public and even among ourselves?

Carol Geary Schneider: I think that the academy should use the term "liberal education." I think that we should take a deep breath and say that this is what we are providing. We are providing our students with a liberal and liberating education. The academy should claim, rather than abandon, its signature educational tradition and promote it as the best possible preparation for twenty-first century realities. If it had been left to me and my own views, the "Essential Learning Outcomes" would have been called "The Aims and Outcomes of Liberal Education." The LEAP report was framed by a National Leadership Council which included many non-academics. They in particular advised AAC&U to use the phrase "essential learning outcomes" because—on seeing what the LEAP report recommends—people will agree that these outcomes are essential. They'll be put off by the term "liberal," council members insisted.

Do notice, however, that the body of the LEAP report does not eschew mention of "liberal education." On the con-



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trary, the report defines it in a bold, expansive way, reflecting accurately, we believe, what liberal education has come to be in the twenty-first century:

Reflecting the traditions of American higher education since the founding, the term “liberal education” headlines the kinds of learning needed for a free society and for the full development of human talent. Liberal education has always been this nation’s signature educational tradition, and this report builds on its core values: expanding horizons, building understanding of the wider world, honing analytical and communication skills, and fostering responsibilities beyond the self. However, in a deliberate break with the academic categories developed in the twentieth century, the LEAP National Leadership Council disputes the idea that liberal education is achieved only through studies in the arts and sciences disciplines. It also challenges the conventional view that liberal education is, by definition, “non-vocational.” The council defines liberal education for the twenty-first century as a comprehensive set of aims and outcomes that are essential for all students because they are important to all fields of endeavor... The LEAP National Leadership Council recommends, therefore, that the essential aims and outcomes be emphasized across every field of study, whether the field is conventionally considered one of the arts and sciences disciplines or whether it is one of the professional and technical fields.

SP: Multiple aims and outcomes are fine, but what should a university most effectively do? I’m not sure we are very good at some of these things. I have doubts about civic engagement or moral discernment. These are incredibly important human qualities. The question is what does the university effectively do? How effectively can it teach these things compared to emphasis on knowledge, critical thinking, and communication skills?

CS: I’ve had people from very elite institutions look at this list of outcomes and say our responsibility is the first half of this page. The knowledge, the skills—that’s it. Values, ethics, civic responsibility: these are good things, but they are not our things. But I think that is the question before us. Do we want to settle for a tradition in which we are teaching some version of intellectual, analytical, and communication skills, but not asking students to think through the ethical quandaries that come along with the uses of knowledge *in their own fields*. This is where I think even a good “general education” is not enough. I think you can go a lot further with probing the ethical problems for an engineer, e.g. tearing up a neighborhood to build a bridge, or someone in the health field, e.g. having to struggle with the way we ration health in our society, or for teachers, e.g. struggling with all the equity/ethics questions that are designed into our educational system funding and practices. Those questions are integral to the respective fields.

SP: Taking what you just said, if the university comes to the table and finds what you say are essential learning outcomes and a good teacher focuses only on the top of the list, implicitly you are saying that they are totally wrong. Because knowledge is never neutral and you cannot separate knowledge from value. If you assume that you can separate the first part of the list from the second part, you aren’t doing your job at all, not only part of the job, but not at all. I think this is the challenge of the liberal arts institutions, to pass this on to the research universities. If faculty say they cannot afford the luxury of ethical reflection, they are not teaching their subjects properly.

CS: And this is where Bruce Kimball is going to enter your dialogue. Bruce basically is arguing that the philosophical or analytical tradition has dominated our concept of a good liberal arts education throughout the twentieth century, and now there is an effort to reclaim parts of the tradition that were very important up until the twentieth century because, of course, in the nineteenth and eighteenth century colleges all education included central attention to virtue and ethics. The culminating capstone course in the nineteenth century college was a course on moral theology that put in front of young Christian men the problems they would face as Christians in a troubled world. Not that I’m arguing we should go back to that particular version of the tradition, but the point is that ethics and values were absolutely fundamental to the liberal arts tradition through most of its history. It is only in the twentieth century that we taught ourselves to privilege the analytical, to adopt the model of science and some of its assumptions about neutrality and to prize detached inquiry

THE ESSENTIAL LEARNING OUTCOMES

Beginning in school, and continuing at successively higher levels across their college studies, students should prepare for twenty-first-century challenges by gaining:

KNOWLEDGE OF HUMAN CULTURES AND THE PHYSICAL AND NATURAL WORLD

- Through study in the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts

Focused by engagement with big questions, both contemporary and enduring

INTELLECTUAL AND PRACTICAL SKILLS, INCLUDING

- Inquiry and analysis
- Critical and creative thinking
- Written and oral communication
- Quantitative literacy
- Information literacy
- Teamwork and problem solving

Practiced extensively, across the curriculum, in the context of progressively more challenging problems, projects, and standards for performance

PERSONAL AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY, INCLUDING

- Civic knowledge and engagement—local and global
- Intercultural knowledge and competence
- Ethical reasoning and action
- Foundations and skills for lifelong learning

Anchored through active involvement with diverse communities and real-world challenges

INTEGRATIVE LEARNING, INCLUDING

- Synthesis and advanced accomplishment across general and specialized studies

Demonstrated through the application of knowledge, skills, and responsibilities to new settings and complex problems

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over values inquiry. Now, recognizing the limitations of that posture, we’re struggling to figure out how to address civic and ethical questions in ways that are appropriate to our own time, and without moralizing or proselytizing.

SP: This is slightly from a different angle, and I want you to understand there’s a little of devil’s advocate in my comment. I’m not necessarily endorsing it. I recently had the painful duty to read the Spellings Commission Report, and it just struck me as good old-fashioned American anti-intellectualism right down to the core, just distilled straight without dilution. I just wonder how viable it is to say that we’re going to really deliver a liberal education in terms of the multiple outcomes the LEAP report suggests to great masses of young Americans. Your other problem is that by definition faculties are elites and so, to the extent that you are trying to get them to think in these terms, vast numbers of them will resist. They will say, “I’m trained as a philosopher or an engineer, so why in the world would you spend so much on my education, and then have me become involved in taking kids into my classes that don’t care about any of these things? I’ll deal with those who already have committed to become engineers and I’ll train them in that field. That’s what I’m trained to be.” You get this in liberal arts faculties

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too, and if anything they are even more resistant because they'll say, "Well, I'm trained as a literary critic and I'm fascinated by seventeenth-century versification, what does this have to do with me?"

CS: Where to begin? First of all let me say, whenever I do any of this, I say to myself, "You used to teach seventeenth-century religious history; where are you in all of this?" And I can answer that question. I want you to be aware that I loved my discipline—as most faculty do—and that's the issue you have to keep at the center of this. We need to discover the civic and ethical questions that are intrinsic in our disciplines; they certainly are there to be found. To go back to your question about how to make the case for liberal education outcomes to a broader public, seven years ago I would have said, as you imply, that neither the public nor employers really value liberal education. I had gone through most of my career with the notion that there was the faculty side of things, which I had shared, and the employer view of things, about which I had (to say the least) a great deal of skepticism. When we released the AAC&U report *Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College* (2002) which is the predecessor to LEAP, we got presidents around the country to invite trustees, business leaders, civic leaders (non-academics) to discussions on that report. There were about twenty-five discussions held around the country with about 2,500 people who came, and I went to about ten or twelve of them and listened. I was quite struck. Nobody was talking about liberal education, but I was hearing employers stand up and say exactly the opposite of what I thought they thought. Somebody said in the first one I went to, "What I don't want is a graduate of the Microsoft Certification Program because those people only know how to do things one way. Our company is innovating, we are changing the way we do things every day, and I need people who can run with us, who can anticipate the next question, who can solve problems, who can think outside the box."

And I heard that again and again and again at these dialogues, that we are in a fast race to change both our products and our processes, and we cannot have people who are locked into mental prisons, people who have one way to do things and that therefore get sidelined in our company. We need people with broad skills who will go on learning. I heard about how important diversity is for the workplace. This was right after Enron, so I heard a lot about how important ethics should be in the workplace. I got the insight that maybe, at least at the leadership level, there is more friendliness to the outcomes of a liberal education than I had thought.

When AAC&U formed the National Leadership Council for LEAP, we found people who were willing to think with us about the kind of college learning that is important to our society. And people on that council have said to me, as recently as yesterday, employers are getting desperate. They need to find educated talent, people who can think and work at high levels, and they can't find (in graduates of American colleges and universities) the level of preparation they are looking for. And that is why they are going abroad. And they don't mean just technical skills; they're looking for global knowledge. They're looking for cross-cultural skills. Above all, the language that keeps coming out of the council is that they want people to work in cross-functional teams (interdisciplinary teams; cross-functional is their term, interdisciplinary would be our term), and they can't work with people who have only one mental model.

So, although non-academic vocabulary is different from ours when it comes to college learning, I think the changes in the economy are moving much faster than we realize in the academy and that has made an environment that is more interested in finding broad-based capital talent than used to be the case. The LEAP campaign is trying to capitalize on that. I gave you a summary of the LEAP-commissioned survey research on what employers seek in a college graduate. We asked employers whether or not they thought college graduates were well prepared for the economy. This is not a liberal arts question; this is an economy question. And the answer by 63 percent was no. Then respondents were asked what aspects of learning they wanted to see emphasized. The question was same emphasis, less emphasis, or more emphasis on each of these outcomes on this page I've given you. It shows you that by pretty high numbers (very high in some cases) employers would like to see colleges and universities sending them graduates with much broader knowledge, much higher levels of intellectual and practical skills (critical thinking, communication skills, problem-solving, etc), and better ability to work with diversity, global and ethical issues. They also want graduates to be able to apply their learning to real-world problems. In other words, although employers rarely use the term "liberal education," they do want us to send them graduates who have achieved the defining characteristics of a contemporary liberal education. ♣

Carol Geary Schneider is president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities.