

An Engagement with God's World: the Core Curriculum of Calvin College

A Statement of Purpose

A Curricular Structure

A Series of Policies and Procedures

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An Engagement with God's World

CHAPTER ONE: A Statement of Purpose for the Core Curriculum of Calvin College

1.1 Preface

Among the many pieces of advice given in the literature on general education reform, two stand out as both sound and of particular relevance to the formulation of a statement of purpose for the core curriculum. One is that, before embarking on any reform or revision of its general education program, an institution should be clear about the purpose of general education. The second is that the purpose of a general education program should be fitted to an institution's understanding of its particular mission as shaped by its tradition. These points are well taken, and so we preface the statement of purpose for the core curriculum with a brief reflection on Calvin's mission and identity.

1.2 The Christian Mission of Calvin College

OF THE SEVERAL FORMULATIONS OF EDUCATIONAL MISSION to be found in Calvin's *Expanded Statement of Mission*, none is more succinct or more precise than the following: "Calvin College seeks to engage in vigorous liberal arts education that promotes lives of Christian service" (ESM, p. 33). The distinctive feature of this mission is not vigorous liberal arts education; for hundreds of institutions of higher education across the North American continent are engaged in that very project. Nor is it to be found in the promotion of lives of service; for many schools are likewise engaged. Rather, it is the combination of these two elements under the heading of "Christian."

The distinguishing mark of the mission of Calvin College derives, like all Christian missions, from Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the king of creation, the savior of all who place their trust in him. For the Christian life, including the Christian academic life, centers on the person of Christ--on his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, and on the sovereign love that these astounding events express. Christians seek to live their whole lives in continuity with Christ, taking on his mind and affections, acting as his body in the world, sharing his sufferings and his victories in the project of overcoming human misery and rebuilding God's good creation. Christians gladly join this project out of gratitude to Christ, out of obedience to Christ, and out of an enkindled desire to work within the Kingdom of Christ. As faithful workers within this kingdom, Christians struggle to align themselves with the redemptive purposes of God in this world, daily mortifying their evil desires and vivifying their good desires. Those who have "died and risen with Christ" in their baptism try to keep this rhythm going throughout their lives.

Thus Christians learn to shun what is evil and to cling to what is good. In so doing, however, they also learn how often good and evil are twisted around each other, so that each seems to grow out of the other, generating the great ironies and mysteries that fill the history of our world. They learn how often we deceive ourselves about where real good and evil lie, and how such deception dulls and distorts our grasp of reality. Indeed, given the power, scope, and deeply ingrown nature of sin, Christians develop a sense that the life God asks of us often goes against the grain of our resident desires and common assumptions. For that reason we are constantly

tempted to make a small thing of the Christian life, to limit it to a modest portion of our beliefs and a narrow slice of our attitudes and behavior.

Faithfulness to Christ, then, includes a kind of wariness where our own judgment of good and evil is concerned, together with a readiness to submit it to the clarifying revelation of Scripture. Reformed Christians take seriously the corrupting force of sin, and therefore lay heavy emphasis upon the need to reform our lives and our view of life according to the incorruptible Word of God. But Reformed Christians also take seriously the renewing power of God's grace, released in human hearts and human societies by the Spirit of God, and they spot signs of this grace wherever they live. In fact, they come to see all of life and culture under the sway of Jesus Christ and as the sphere of faithful obedience to him. They realize that no part of God's fallen creation is left out of God's redemptive intent. This wide view of our life's arena and call, corrected by the lens of God's Word, is what some of our Reformed forebears meant when they spoke of the need to adopt a "Christian world-and-life-view." In the Reformed tradition, Christian education is not just education as usual with Bible classes tacked on; it is an education that is permeated throughout by a Christian view of the world. In the Reformed tradition, the life of Christian service is not limited just to the church and its missions; it is found in every vocation where God's creative and redemptive purposes are pursued. In the Reformed tradition of liberal arts education, the whole life of the mind combines with the whole life of service under the headship Christ.

1.3 The Reformed Identity of Calvin College

Calvin College is an academy rooted in the Reformed Christian tradition. Its educational mission is profoundly shaped by this tradition, a tradition woven of many strands, chief among which are the historical, theological, and practical. Taken together, these strands constitute the main lineaments of Calvin's Reformed identity.

1.3.1 The Historical Strand

While it is natural to think of the origins of Reformed Christianity as residing in the Reformation of the sixteenth century, the theological sources of the Reformed tradition are to be found much earlier than the celebrated year of 1517. The Protestant quarrel with Rome, after all, did not concern the parameters of orthodoxy as defined by the Patristic tradition of the Christian church--most notably in the ecumenical creeds and the doctrines of God and Christ they express--but rather the abuses of power and authority rife in the church of the day. Luther's Ninety-Five Theses were intended to initiate a debate about indulgences and the allied doctrine of justification, not the nature of God or Christ. After much conflict and a growing estrangement from the hierarchy of the Roman Church, Luther became ever more firmly convinced that ultimate authority in matters of faith could not be vested in the pope or the tradition but in holy scripture alone, a most ancient source.

As Luther and his followers came to the conclusion that an inner reform of the church was impossible, they also understood that their departure from Roman Catholic Christianity entailed the daunting task of giving a full and independent articulation to their newfound theological understandings. This articulation would be in part an appropriation of the tradition from which

they came, in part a rejection of that same tradition. For they owned its orthodoxy but rejected its errors and excesses. Born in reaction to the abuses of the church, Protestant Christianity would soon acquire its own set of distinctive emphases: the primary authority of the Word of God as presented in scripture (minus the deuterocanonical books) and all that seemed to follow from this central principle, including a liturgy centered on the sermon, a revised theology of the sacraments, and an emphasis on salvation by grace alone through faith alone.

By the time John Calvin, Ulrich Zwingli, and the second generation of reformers began their work in the cause, serious disputes had broken out among the Protestants themselves. The Reformed theological task then consisted not only of self-identification over against the Roman Church but also against other wings of Protestantism. In the subsequent development of Calvinist thought and practice, which came to be called Reformed in Switzerland and eventually beyond its borders, the articulation of identity was thus initially and for the most part negative: Reformed Christians were not Roman Catholics, Lutherans, or Anabaptists insofar as they differed with these Christian communities on a number of theological points.

But the religious identity of Reformed Christians was only proximately rooted in the work of Calvin and the teachings of the Protestant Reformation. Ultimately, it was anchored in Christian orthodoxy as delivered to the church in the Patristic period. Hence, as their faith and practice spread from Switzerland to other parts of Europe, Reformed Christians came in time to articulate their identity in more positive terms and with lasting significance on the following three confessional points:

1. Reformed Christianity is a species of historic Christianity. As such, it confesses its faith in the triune God who created the heavens and the earth and whose second person became incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth.
2. Reformed Christianity holds the Bible to be the prime authority for faith and life, inspired by God and infallible with respect to its purpose. The Bible reveals the identity and work of the triune God in telling the story of creation, the fall of humankind, the covenant established between God and a chosen people, the redemption of many peoples from all nations by the sacrificial work of the promised Messiah, and the reconciliation of all things through the power of the Spirit.
3. Reformed Christianity is part of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. It adopts a presbyterian form of government and is marked by the preaching of the Word of God, the administration of the sacraments, and firm church discipline.

These three tenets testify to both the ecumenical and the particular moments of Reformed identity. Beyond the creeds which all Christian communions accept, different families of Calvinism staked out their positions in confessions that differentiated their adherents from Roman Catholic and other Protestant Christians. In the species of Calvinism which flowered in the Low Countries during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the confessions which express the Patristic, Protestant, and particularly Reformed consensus are the Belgic Confession, the Heidelberg Catechism, and the Canons of Dort.

In the two centuries following the sixteenth, Calvinism witnessed an attempt by theologians to articulate ever more clearly what it is that Calvinists believe. This period of shoring up

Reformed identity by producing large works of theological erudition is known as the period of Protestant Orthodoxy. Such doctrinal Calvinism seemed ill-prepared, however, to meet the broad and sweeping challenges of the Enlightenment. As Christendom stood either powerless or mesmerized in the face of increasing threats to its very existence--the modern scientific worldview, the recourse to human reason as the final arbiter in matters of belief, the emergent historical-critical investigation of the Bible--Protestantism was busy forging a variety of responses: digging in, the approach taken by orthodoxy; opting out, the maneuver favored by pietism; and making deals, the strategy recommended by liberalism.

Another kind of response to the secularizing influence of the Enlightenment and its political embodiment in the French Revolution was conceived by certain Protestants in the Netherlands. In an attempt to re-establish order on the continent after the Napoleonic wars, King William I reorganized the Dutch Reformed Church (*Nederlandse Hervormde Kerk*) as a unified state church in 1816--a move which brought about a secession (*Afscheiding*) from the DRC in 1834 by pious and doctrinally concerned members of that church. Some of these seceders left for America in the 1840s and settled in West Michigan. In the Netherlands, meanwhile, Groen van Prinsterer (1801-76) and his theological descendants, most notably Abraham Kuyper (1837-1920), were busy articulating a critique of what they took to be an idolatrous revolutionary spirit in Europe.

Trained as a liberal theologian, Kuyper experienced a conversion in his first pastorate through which he came to see the full power of the Calvinism he had too glibly passed over in his youth. Afterwards, in addition to the strictly theological work he undertook with his colleague Herman Bavinck (1854-1921), he committed himself to the translation of Calvinism into a political and cultural program that was to renew Dutch society according to Christian principles. While fully cognizant of the reality of common grace operating in the world at large, Kuyper nonetheless proposed an isomorphic plan of Reformed Christian witness in Dutch society: if there was a press, then there would be a Christian press; if a labor union, then a Christian labor union; if a political party, then a Christian political party; if day schools, then Christian day schools; if a university, then a Christian university. Kuyper's accomplishments in realizing much of this point-for-point program of renewal were prodigious, both in terms of what he himself achieved in the Netherlands and how his principles were applied by subsequent generations, including those who came to shape the mission of Calvin College.

The origins of Calvin College lie in the literary department of a Grand Rapids theological school founded in the year 1876. The nineteenth century Dutch immigrants who had left the Dutch Reformed Church in the Netherlands soon left the Reformed Church in America as well, establishing in 1857 the True Dutch Reformed Church, later known as the Christian Reformed Church. By founding their own theological school some nineteen years later, they were attempting first and foremost to fill the pulpits of their churches with ministers committed to and trained in orthodox Christianity as they understood it. Their concern at the time was the survival and purity of their small community of faith in a foreign land, not the comprehensive transformation of North American society and culture.

But the educational needs of the supporting community soon expanded beyond the preparation of the pastorate. Teachers for Christian day schools of the Dutch Reformed community had to be

trained as well. At the end of the century a college was organized around the school's literary department so that, in the words of Synod, "our young people . . . no longer have to wander in various institutions outside our circles, but can be molded by our own Reformed interests" (*Acts of Synod*, 1898, p. 57). John Calvin Junior College, as it was then known, broadened its program to instruct aspiring teachers in a wide range of subjects. The curriculum evolved, reaching into the classical tradition of liberal arts education even as it extended into domains of modern science. The college granted its first Bachelor of Arts degree as a four year institution in 1921. After the Second World War, its student population exploded. In the 1960s it moved to a new and expansive campus on the edge of town, adopted a discipline-based curriculum and department structure modeled largely on the plan of the research university, and added several professional programs. Among its faculty, mostly Calvin alumni, were many who had received advanced degrees from some of the most prestigious graduate schools on the North American continent.

With such growth and accomplishment came a new sense of cultural confidence that found its proper expression in the Kuyperian worldview. No longer did Calvin conceive of its purpose as shielding students from the secular influence of American society; rather, it was to prepare and send them into that society as agents of transformation. No longer a mere refuge for orthodoxy, it became a training ground for cultural engagement. Now with a student population of some 4,000, 250 faculty members, major concentrations in over seventy areas, eight professional programs, and 46,000 alumni, Calvin College has emerged from its sheltered and provincial existence and entered the mainstream of North American higher education with a solid reputation for academic excellence and its Reformed voice still strong and clear. The ecclesiastical conflicts that originally defined the Reformation have now faded into the historical background. The Enlightenment project that first elicited the Kuyperian response is largely exhausted. The College now steps into a postmodern world, and is once again called upon to embody an education that is academically rigorous, culturally relevant, deeply Christian, and thoroughly Reformed.

1.3.2 The Theological Strand

The word "Reformed" describes the Protestant churches rooted in the Swiss Reformation and organized on the basis of a presbyterian form of government. In that sense, it is an ecclesiastical term. But it has a distinct theological sense as well.

Rooted in the Reformation's insistence on the sole authority of scripture for true knowledge of God, the Reformed theological tradition sought to forge doctrines that would serve as a faithful and consistent expression of its primary source. Educated in the humanist tradition of literary scholarship, John Calvin recognized the signal importance of rigorous training in the liberal arts and a thorough knowledge of the Patristic tradition for the conduct of theology. For these are an invaluable help in rendering the content of scripture accurately, and presenting it persuasively. For this reason Calvin and his theological descendants did not make an enemy of reason and tradition in their attempt to elevate the faith. Rather, they sought to make allies of them according to a certain agreement as to their roles and mutual relationships: the authority of scripture above the authority of tradition, whose role was to develop and retain right

interpretation of scripture; faith serving as a guide to reason, whose primary task was to make the content of faith both perspicuous and persuasive.

In terms of the sources of theology, then, Reformed theology draws on the following in descending order of authority: scripture; the traditions of the church; reason and experience. With respect to the first two sources, Reformed theology recognizes the importance of fidelity to the Christian scriptures and fealty to the Christian tradition of which it is the custodian. Theology must therefore be biblical and confessional. With respect to the third source, Reformed theology recognizes the importance of continued reflection and dynamic engagement with contemporary culture. Theology must also be dialogical.

This ordering of sources has direct implications for theological method. Reformed theology seeks to draw on the Bible as interpreted by the tradition in order to speak a word in the present that is faithful, relevant, and coherent. Reformed theology is therefore an ongoing activity, never finished, running between past and present, in each generation seeking anew to make sense of the faith passed down to it in the time in which it lives. The spirit of the theological project thus understood is captured in the Reformed slogan *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda est*: a reformed church is always to be reforming. In so thinking of the theological task, the Reformed tradition was repeating in its own words an old and venerable way of posing the relation between faith and reason. St. Augustine and St. Anselm conceived of that relationship along the lines of the famous dictum *fides quaerens intellectum*: faith seeking understanding. As in the slogan of the Reformation, there is something stable (faith--an enduring foundation) and yet something dynamic (the search for understanding--a restless quest).

In its theological emphases beyond the ecumenical teachings regarding the nature of God and Christ, the Reformed tradition--taking its cues from the opening and closing acts of scripture, the first article of the Apostles' Creed, and Book One of Calvin's *Institutes*--has sought to make foundational sense of the belief in God the Father who out of nothing created the heavens and the earth. In other words, the Reformed tradition has taken the doctrine of creation to be central to a well-formed theological understanding of the world and the calling of the Christian within it. The doctrine of creation forms the steady and ultimate context for understanding the tragic meaning of humanity's fall into sin, the scope of salvation through the atoning work of Christ, the restoration of all things through the power of the Spirit, and the arena of service that we render to God out of gratitude for electing us as recipients of his grace. Reformed Christians believe that because all things find their ultimate source in God, creation and all of human life within its boundaries, fallen as they may be, remain capable of redirection and worthy of redemption. Despite the rebellion of the human race, God has continued to provide for creation, promised to redeem it, and sent his only-begotten Son, who took upon himself full humanity in order to accomplish that redemption.

World-flight, cultural disengagement, and Gnostic escape theories of redemption have therefore never been hallmarks of a Reformed Christianity that understands the bracing implications of its own theology. By its lights, the Christian life cannot be an inward piety cut off from all worldly involvement, nor can it be divided into a program of social action without remainder. Reformed spirituality insists on the wedding of personal piety and cultural engagement, where each complements and energizes the other in the response of the whole person to the call of God. In

Reformed circles there have been countless lives of Christian vocation spent in business enterprises, scientific endeavors, public service, cultural activity, the helping professions, and educational institutions in addition to those called to serve the institutional church. Such devotion to the welfare of a fallen but good creation, worked out in manifold vocations, has been the mark and mainspring of Reformed people at their best, the cultural expression of a “holy worldliness” to which they have been called.

1.3.3 The Practical Strand

The practical implications of Reformed Christianity--under the aegis of a robust doctrine of creation--are wide-ranging indeed. Some of these implications have been indicated in the previous section on the theological nature of the tradition. With the twin notions of the sovereignty of God and the integrity of creation, Reformed Christians have understood themselves to be charged with a task in this earthly life, a cultural mandate: be busy doing the Father’s work in this world; tend the garden; rule it wisely; develop, explore, and care for it in anticipation of its deliverance from suffering made possible by the Son through the life-giving Spirit.

The Reformed emphasis on world-engagement should be understood in the historical context of the Reformation. Many of the doctors of the church had been thoroughly schooled in the ways of Greek philosophy. And so they imbibed much of the worldview of the Greek philosophers. Many of them thought of the human soul as defined by its powers of knowing, and therefore thought of the fulfillment of human life as an intellectual matter. The intellect finds its completion in knowledge of the highest possible object of knowledge--namely, God. In the afterlife, the saved will be admitted to this exalted form of cognition, called the “beatific vision.” In this life they could only anticipate it with fleeting glimpses of the divine essence achieved through prayer and meditation. Those who were serious about the religious life would leave their occupations in this world and retreat to the monasteries, where the daily schedule was organized around the demands of divine contemplation.

Luther was a monk before he was a reformer. When he broke with the church over the theology of justification, he also broke with the contemplative ideal of the religious life. We are to love our neighbors, Luther taught, not leave them in pursuit of our own spiritual fulfillment. God calls us not to abandon our worldly occupations, but to serve our neighbors through them. This is the Christian’s calling. And Calvin agreed. Those who recommend the contemplative life, he wrote in his commentary on Mark 10, appear to be “indebted to Aristotle, who places the highest good, and ultimate end, of human life in contemplation.” On the contrary, Calvin claims, we know we were created for the express purpose of being employed in labor of various kinds, and that no sacrifice is more pleasing to God than when we apply ourselves diligently to our own callings, and endeavor to live in such a way as to contribute to the common good.

In the Reformed tradition, then, a high view of creation translates into a high view of culture and the engaged life. Reformed Christians take it as their vocation to exercise their gifts and abilities in a life of service to the human community. But they also realize that the conditions under which they do so are less than pristine. For God’s good creation has been twisted by the corrupting power of human sin and disobedience, introducing a deep spiritual division in

humanity as people turn to or away from God's offer of salvation in Christ. Faithful cultural engagement will involve not only the development of creation's many potentials, but a struggle against the evil and falsehood that insinuate themselves in every area of human life, indeed, in every human soul; it will be a contest of opposing principles that runs the entire width and breadth of creation.

Kuyper called the Reformed theological understanding of creation that served as a basis for such broad cultural engagement a Christian "world-and-life-view" (*wereld- en levensbeschouwing*), adapting a term of common use in nineteenth century German scholarship (*Weltanschauung*). In recognition of the universal lordship of Jesus Christ, Kuyper was eager to break down the Enlightenment tendency to privatize and marginalize the Christian faith, to box it into the corner of personal piety. In using the term "worldview" and its variants, he was concerned to communicate his conviction that Christian principles should inform the totality of our being and doing, not just our theology, personal conduct, and church life. The lordship of Jesus Christ is universal, he maintained, extending over every square inch of our world.

A liberal arts college that not only roots itself in the Reformed Christian tradition, but consistently derives its sense of mission from its theology, will construe its task as a divine calling to broad-based participation in the life of the academic disciplines and the conscientious preparation of its students to pursue their callings in professions, cultural domains, and societal spheres that extend far beyond its walls. Working out the calling of the college will involve the creation of an academic community that is ordered by the rule of Christian life and informed by the hope of the gospel, a disciplined pursuit of knowledge in service of the Christian church and the human community at large, a steady commitment to tracing out the implications of the faith for the entire encyclopedia of knowledge, and the fitting of students with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions they will need if they are to take on the cultural tasks of the communities they are destined to serve.

But even that is not quite enough. To do justice to the full scope of Reformed Christian faith and practice, such a college must emphasize not only its cultural mandate in God's good creation but also the significance of the mission mandate in a fallen world. Its engagement with culture must be stamped by the good news of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It must help its students learn how to tell the Christian story, live in Christian expectation, wage Christian critique, offer hope and healing in Christ's name to the downtrodden, the outcast, and all those whose lives have been damaged by the sway of sin, and so point to the triune God in whose image all human beings are created and in whose offer of redemption humanity may share. By recognizing the propriety of the mission mandate in a fallen world, the college and the community it serves remind themselves of the tragic depth of human sin and the height of God's redemptive love in Christ, and thus protect themselves against the danger of losing their Christian identity within the mundane commitments to cultural involvement.

What, then, does it mean to be Reformed? The Reformed community strives after the lofty goal of retaining and representing the best of the Christian tradition, replete with orthodox and coherent doctrines of the Trinity and Christ, a vibrant conception of the authority of scripture in matters of faith and life, a high doctrine of creation, an honest estimation of the depth and scope of human sin, a broad view of redemption, and a deep appreciation of the value of everyday life

as a field of mutual service in response to a divine vocation. To be Reformed at Calvin College is to preserve, extend, and publish this interpretation of the Christian faith, to engage in the rigors and the rewards of the academic life as a Christian calling, and to prepare students for their respective vocations, ever mindful of the aching distance between the basic goodness of this fallen world for which God incarnate died and the surpassing splendor of the world which is to come and for which all Christians hope.

1.4 The Ideal of Liberal Arts Education

The description of the core requirements in Calvin's catalog appear under the heading "The Liberal Arts Core." Behind this brief title stands the long and complex history of liberal arts education, a history that begins in the classical period of western civilization, courses through the schools of the middle ages, and intertwines with the Reformed tradition in ways both intimate and, for our purposes, instructive.

Although the phrase "*artes liberales*" is first recorded in the writings of Cicero, the Roman orator, the tradition of liberal arts education has its origins in the emergence of democracy in ancient Athens. In a heady political culture no longer based on the fiat of a king or the will of the oligarchs, the public fortunes of the citizens of Athens were largely dictated by their powers of persuasive speech in the *agora*. Thus a market for instruction in the art of spoken rhetoric was created--and soon filled by such itinerant teachers as Hippias, Protagoras and Gorgias. Known as the Sophists, they were vilified in the Platonic dialogues for their willingness to equip their students with the skills of speech without regard for truth or ethical principle. In reaction to these vendors of words in the markets of power, Plato proposed to mobilize human speech in the interests of philosophical dialectic, which was not designed to manipulate the opinions of the masses for personal advantage, but to transcend the domain of opinion altogether in the direction of a genuine knowledge of the Good--a knowledge which would in turn serve as the moral foundation for the restoration of an Athens deeply troubled after its defeat in the Peloponnesian Wars. Plato's invitation to such critical sifting of received opinion under the watchful eye of reason, however, led to apparently endless disputation and a wholesale lack of stable results. The goal of sure knowledge--not to mention the application of such knowledge to politics--soon receded to infinity.

Between the quick pragmatic grasp for political power by the sophists and the endless pursuit of rationally grounded knowledge by the philosophers, a third option was marked out by Isocrates, a contemporary of Plato: the wedding of rhetorical skill to traditional wisdom. In his work, *Against the Sophists*, he faulted the sophists for their lack of moral principles; but in the *Antidosis* he also criticized the philosophers for their ineffectual abstractions. The true orator must be good--and effective. Students of Isocrates were shaped in character according to the wisdom of the age through exposure to canonical texts in the study of grammar. They were then taught to make that wisdom eloquent and persuasive through training in the art of rhetoric. Dialectic, as the method for discovering truth and testing opinion, played a subordinate role in their education.

The option of Isocrates was carried into the Roman world by Cicero and Quintilian, whose manuals on rhetoric became the founding texts of the liberal arts tradition in the west. That

tradition, however, was soon destined to be transformed. With the collapse of the Roman Empire and the disappearance of republican forms of governance, there was little need for the art of rhetoric as a tool of civic discourse. But with the rise of Christianity, liberal arts education was soon employed in the service of other goals. The clash between pagan classical culture and Christianity in the patristic period was reconciled by St. Augustine, himself an accomplished teacher of rhetoric prior to his dramatic conversion. Training in grammar, logic, and rhetoric was both good and necessary, Augustine held, for understanding the truth embedded in an authoritative scripture and assisting in the soul's ascent to a knowledge of God. Thus were the liberal arts made to serve the needs of biblical interpretation, the elaboration of Christian theology, and the private life of piety. They were eventually codified in the Middle Ages into seven subjects--the *trivium* (grammar, rhetoric, and logic), and the *quadrivium* (arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy). With the development of the great European universities in the twelfth century, the liberal arts were tied to broader social aims as preparation for more specialized studies in the faculties of law, medicine, and theology.

With the rise of the schools, however, also came the ascendance of scholasticism. The introduction of the philosophical texts of Aristotle into Europe during the twelfth century occasioned a new synthesis in the thirteenth of pagan philosophy and Christianity by leading lights of the Dominican order, most notably Albert the Great and Thomas Aquinas. As this synthesis established itself at the University of Paris and elsewhere, the curriculum leading to the study of theology was re-organized. Among the liberal arts, logic was given precedence over rhetoric, and the role of character formation in the study of grammar was de-emphasized. The liberal arts as a whole were preparatory to the study of philosophy, which was divided according to the broad Aristotelian distinctions between nature, morality, and metaphysics. Philosophy was in turn preparatory to the study of theology. And theology itself shifted from the symbolic biblical theology of the earlier centuries to a dialectical theology which aimed to convert the tenets of the Christian faith into a comprehensive system of propositions based on the plan of Aristotelian categories and distinctions. This new program in the schools came to be known as the *via antiqua*, and it unleashed a period of intense philosophical activity that eventually degenerated into overly subtle disputation with little connection to the life of Christian piety or the needs of the church and the world.

The scholastic subordination of rhetoric to logic and the orientation of liberal arts as a whole to the philosophical project of speculative knowledge soon elicited a strong reaction in the form of Renaissance humanism. The humanists of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries drew upon the old Roman civic ideal of liberal arts education, the rhetorical tradition of literary study geared to the demands of the active life and the development of the human personality. This grand movement, tied to the flourishing of civic culture in northern Italy and spurred by the re-discovery of the full texts of Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria* in 1416 and Cicero's *De oratore* in 1422, gave birth to a program of study known as the *studia humanitatis*. The schools of northern Italy became the center for this re-invention of liberal education, a new course of study that soon spread to the secular courts, urban centers, and eventually to the universities of Europe and England, finding its most striking advocate in the celebrated figure of Erasmus (1469-1536), the "Colossus of Rotterdam."

In the culture wars that ensued between the scholastics and humanists, the Protestant reformers without exception took the side of the humanists, recommending an education aimed at the cultivation of the language arts and the promotion of true piety. They had, after all, just elevated the authority of the biblical text over that of the institutional church. They saw in the humanist program of study the literary tools they needed to recover the teachings of the Bible, which were to provide leverage over an ecclesiastical tradition they were convinced had gone astray. In addition, humanities helped make the preaching and teaching of the fresh message of scripture persuasive among the people and the courts of Europe. In the Lutheran camp, Melancthon reasserted the priority of rhetoric over logic in the arts curriculum of Wittenberg. Calvin, trained as a humanist scholar in France, modeled the college at Geneva on the school in Strasbourg organized by Johannes Sturm, where a simple faith was to be combined with classical learning in order to produce a “wise and eloquent piety.” From Geneva this approach to liberal arts education spread throughout the Reformed countries on the continent, and to England through the work of John Colet and Roger Ascham. In New England, the colonial colleges were modeled on the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge, where they first drew their professorate. Harvard was fashioned after Emmanuel College of Cambridge University, a Puritan stronghold; William and Mary after Queen's College, Oxford.

Thus the colleges of seventeenth and eighteenth century America continued the rhetorical tradition of liberal arts education. As centers of instruction according to a classical curriculum, typically tied to a religious tradition, they endeavored to form and prepare their students for lives of civic service in the various professions. The emphasis was on teaching, the cultivation of aptitudes and character by moral guidance and by literary induction into the stream of canonical culture. Moreover, teaching was conducted on the regency rather than the professorial system: typically, one teacher would instruct an entire class of students in all subjects throughout their four-year stay. In many instances, the president of the college taught a capstone course in “moral philosophy” to all seniors, a course that was integrative and, in today’s terms, interdisciplinary. The curriculum was the same for all--one big core--with no electives and no majors. In Europe, as in the States, open-ended research was conducted largely outside the sphere of both the college and university. The development of the new experimental sciences of nature took place in learned societies; philosophers, for the most part, moved among the landed aristocracy.

This arrangement, however, was to change dramatically with the cultural ascendancy of the German research university in the nineteenth century, beginning with the founding of the University of Berlin in 1810 by Wilhelm von Humbolt. Placing the Enlightenment project of free inquiry--the generation of new knowledge untethered by religious dogma and unconnected to practical concerns--at the center of the university enterprise, the German model of higher education created an environment geared to the vigorous pursuit of specialized research and the training of future researchers. The classical curriculum was dismantled and divided according to the separate disciplines; the new disciplines of the natural sciences were brought on board and given equal footing; autonomous departments were created on the basis of this array disciplines; students could elect majors in specific disciplines. Hiring and promotion policies favored and fostered the research ethos. University faculty lived not to teach so much as to write.

In the course of the nineteenth century the German universities amassed a great deal of prestige--and a good number of American graduate students--on the basis of their impressive advances in

research accomplished under their auspices. By comparison, the older and more diffuse form of education at the liberal arts college began to look decidedly second rate, at best preparatory for university level work.

The German research model entered the American scene with the founding of Johns Hopkins University in 1876. Thomas Huxley delivered the main address at this momentous event. A zealous advocate of the ethos of free inquiry, Huxley argued in his well-known essay, "Science and Culture," that "liberal education" should be founded upon "an unhesitating faith that the free employment of reason, in accordance with scientific method, is the sole method of reaching truth." It is fair to say that the research model took American higher education by storm. Institution after institution fashioned itself after the German university in ethos and infrastructure. The old classical curriculum was broken down into its component disciplines, which in turn became several of the many options students could elect to pursue as major concentrations if they were so inclined. Departments were formed. Research was promoted. Religious ties were loosened. Graduate programs were expanded.

The dramatic change in the complexion of American higher education put the liberal arts colleges in a culturally awkward position. Andrew D. White, the first president of Cornell University, described them in 1865 as a "regime of petty sectarian colleges." William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, claimed in 1900 that such colleges would soon find their place as advanced preparatory schools for the universities. Three years later, Starr Jordan, president of Stanford University predicted that "the college will disappear"--the best of the colleges will become universities; the others will become secondary schools.

Jordan's prediction came true, for the most part, with the following modifications. During the first half of the twentieth century, not just the best of the colleges became universities; most of them did. They did so not by adding graduate programs and awarding advanced degrees, but by adopting the curriculum, infrastructure, and ethos of the research universities at their own station. Their curriculum was re-organized according to the separate disciplines; autonomous departments were created; and research was promoted even as the primary commitment to undergraduate teaching was maintained. Many colleges also sought to create an atmosphere of free inquiry, thus starting the engines of secularization, while at the same time maintaining nominal ties to a religious tradition or denomination. Thus most liberal arts colleges in America today are a curious hybrid: they contain the vestigial organs of the old classical curriculum, with its emphasis on teaching and instruction according to a common tradition; but those organs are now surrounded and encased by the newer vital systems of the modern research university, which were designed for specialized, open-ended research.

In the 1960s Calvin College participated in the internal replication of the research university model on the undergraduate level, advocating the "disciplinary view" of liberal arts education. It did not, however, at the same time suggest that inquiry within the disciplines should be loosened from its religious mooring. Far from it. All inquiry was to be conducted from a Christian perspective. But the disciplinary view was designed to make Calvin College safe for research--more like a university in structure, if not in commitment to the ideal of autonomous reason--thus forever changing the focus and feel and the institution. The statement on curriculum in which

this view was codified, *Christian Liberal Arts Education*, is still in force today. And it is to this document we now turn.

CHAPTER TWO: The Purpose of the Core Curriculum

Today Calvin College is a comprehensive institution of higher learning rooted in the liberal arts tradition. However, since the re-organization of Calvin's curriculum in the late 1960s according to the disciplinary model proposed in CLAE (*Christian Liberal Arts Education*) the purpose of liberal arts education carried in the core curriculum has been less than perfectly clear. There should be little mystery to this. For there are two agendas at work in CLAE. One ties into the classical ideal of liberal arts education as personal formation and preparation for involvement in civic life; the other hooks up with the more narrowly focused ideal of the modern research university, the training of knowledge workers for the fields of academe. In its broad statements of purpose for Christian education, CLAE clearly aligns itself with the former: the aim of Christian education, it claims, "is to train students to live the life of faith in contemporary society" (CLAE, p. 40). Yet, when we come to its specific interpretation of the liberal arts ideal, the emphasis swings in the direction of the disciplinary research agenda. After faulting the classical ideal of liberal education championed by William Harry Jellema for its "passivity," CLAE issues the following injunction: "We must ourselves develop the various disciplines; and...we must educate new generations for productive and creative work in the various disciplines" (CLAE, p. 46). A page later CLAE repeats the point, asserting that, "The primary focus of a Christian liberal arts education should be on teachers and students together engaging in the various scholarly disciplines" (CLAE, p. 47). The aims of the general education program at Calvin--later called the "Core Curriculum"--are then spelled out exclusively in terms of the separate disciplines and never move beyond their scope. Through a set of distribution requirements, students are to become acquainted with the *results* of the disciplines, the *methods* of the disciplines, and the variety of *approaches* within the disciplines (CLAE, pp. 61-62). While there is some speculation in CLAE as to how the disinterested study of the disciplines will prepare students to live the Christian life in contemporary society--say, through the acquisition of generic intellectual skills (CLAE, pp. 63-67)--the connection between the two remains tenuous, vague, and unconvincing. The one interdisciplinary course that was to serve as the flagship of integrative common learning in the new curriculum--Christian Perspectives on Learning--was no sooner proposed than it was converted into a distribution option in the contextual disciplines. The "Core Curriculum" was implemented minus its core.

2.1 The Ultimate Purpose of the Core Curriculum

Thus there emerges within CLAE a gap between the ultimate goal of Christian liberal arts education as preparing students for a life of service in contemporary society, and the proximate aim of general education as introducing students to the disinterested study of the disciplines (as if they were being prepared for a life of service in contemporary academia). We propose a stronger link, a more direct connection, between the ultimate goal of Christian education and the core curriculum by suggesting that the primary aim of core courses in the disciplines should not be a general introduction to the disciplines, but an introduction--from the vantage points of the disciplines--to the world in which our students are called to serve, taught in ways that foster both the commitment and the ability to serve. The *Expanded Statement of Mission* puts the point this

way: because “we are called to obey God as whole persons in every area of life... education should explicitly connect the way we think with the way we live” (ESM, p. 18). The chief aim of core courses in history, then, is not to present the discipline of history--its results, methods, and approaches--but to present the world in which students are called to participate as historical agents, to examine the formation of those ideas, themes, institutions, and practices that have shaped both their identities and the society they inhabit, to kindle a passion for the purposes of God in human culture, and to cultivate the habits of mind they must possess if they are to make good on that passion. Likewise, core courses in political science should not be designed as general introductions to the discipline of political science, but to the major political ideas, institutions, practices, issues, and tensions that students will grapple with as committed Christian citizens. Similar points could be made with respect to every discipline represented in the core.

It might seem that this proposal is more a matter of semantics than substance. The disciplines, after all, study the world, not themselves. To involve students in the study of the disciplines is thus already to involve them in the study of the world. We grant this point but still maintain that the disciplines can be engaged with different purposes in mind, and that a difference in purpose will make a difference in instruction. The line drawn from audience to objective will intersect the disciplines at different angles as audience and objective vary: if we are teaching our core courses to prospective majors with the intent of introducing them to our discipline, we will write the syllabus one way; if we are teaching students who will probably not pursue our discipline with the intent of providing them what they need for informed engagement in that aspect of life we trade in, then we will write the syllabus another way. If a core course in philosophy were simply an introduction to the discipline, then almost any topic that has engaged the minds of philosophers could go into the mix. If it weren't for the antecedent limitations of student interest and ability, a semester's introductory course in philosophy could be composed of causal theories of linguistic reference, the modal problem of trans-world identity, early modern theories of perceptual consciousness, and the fine points of Leibniz's monadology. But if the course were designed to help students identify and deal with the philosophical issues embedded in life as it now confronts us, it would more likely devote itself to such problems as moral and cognitive relativism, the relation between scientific theory and religious belief, the claims to truth in a self-consciously pluralistic society, the phenomena of certainty and doubt in the domain of faith, the evolutionary explanation of human behavior, sexual ethics, and the like. (It should go without saying that such a course, in being directed to contemporary issues, need not limit itself to contemporary texts. Some of the best resources for gaining perspectives on these issues may be found in texts that come to us from other ages and other cultures.)

The chief questions, then, to be asked in shaping the content of the core curriculum should be these: what are the basic domains of the practical world in which we live out our various callings; and what must we know, become, and be able to do if we are to pursue our callings in these domains effectively? The disciplines will surely have a great deal to contribute here, not by calling attention to themselves, but by directing a focused look at that aspect of the world they know best. As the *Expanded Statement of Mission* puts it: “The classroom is a context for looking outward, for equipping students with an understanding of the world in which they live and for bringing a redemptive message to that world” (ESM, p. 25). Core courses should be taught not as if they were the first course students might take in a major, but the last one they

take before they find their places in the world beyond Calvin's campus. They should serve as windows on the world, not the academy.

Such, we submit, is the purpose of the core curriculum as it relates to the overarching goal of a Calvin education, the goal of enabling Christians to live effectively in contemporary society. A major concentration or professional program should enable our students to live a life of Christian service in their chosen professions. The core should enable them to do so in the other and equally important domains of their calling--the family, the church, the nation, the marketplace, the various venues of the arts, and the like. It should provide them with a basic understanding of the history, structure, themes, issues, and interaction within and among these various realms of practical life. It should furnish them with biblically informed insights so that they may enter these realms as ambassadors of Christ, well-equipped to represent and advance the redemptive purposes of God's kingdom. Insofar as this education looks beyond the walls of the academy, beyond the "methods, results, and approaches" of the various disciplines, its focus is "external"--it prepares students to respond to their vocations in the broad, rich, and Reformed sense of that term.

2.2 The Proximate Purposes of the Core Curriculum

To capture the connection between core curriculum and the overarching educational mission of the college is to set before us a goal that lies far beyond four years of education at Calvin. But if the core is to serve that ultimate goal well, it must also perform certain crucial functions during those four years. For a well-designed core curriculum should further a number of structural purposes internal to a college program of study, lest it become nothing more than a loose and ungainly collection of disciplinary offerings bound only by the criterion of practical relevance. In addition to preparing students for a life of effective service, the core curriculum should help found, integrate, unify, order, and mark a Calvin education.

The proximate purposes of the core curriculum at Calvin College, then, are the following:

- 1) It should assure that certain proficiencies are in place in the early stages of academic work at Calvin, so that students are well-prepared to make progress in their subsequent studies. In this sense, the core curriculum will be *foundational*.
- 2) It should establish integrative frameworks for study at Calvin, so that the particular forms of knowledge acquired in the disciplines connect, mutually re-enforce, and illuminate each other. In this sense, the core curriculum will be *contextual*.
- 3) It should provide a common fund of intellectual experience, a common vocabulary for cross-disciplinary discussion, and thus create the conditions for an academic community that extends beyond the purview of the department, the major, or the program. In this sense, the core curriculum will be *central*.
- 4) It should provide intelligent sequencing in the order of core studies, so that important common themes and skills get developed throughout the four years of a Calvin education, with core courses building on each other according to students' level of expertise and intellectual maturity. In this sense, the core curriculum will be *continual*.
- 5) It should convey Calvin's Reformed identity, so that students, whatever their major or program, will have a significant exposure to a Reformed Christian understanding of reality and

their place within it, acquiring a sense for how their work in the world could count as a response to God's call to serve in his kingdom. In this sense, the core curriculum will be *confessional*.

Thus the questions of basic college proficiencies, contextualization, commonality, sequence, and confessional identity should be taken into account as chief desiderata in reviewing and revising the present core curriculum at Calvin. In most cases, these proximate purposes will not call for additional content in the core; rather, they will lend focus, definition, and a limit to its structure. They demand that decisions be made about what belongs to a true core of common courses and what belongs to the distribution requirements; what comes first in the order of study and what comes later; what should appear as a thematic component of many core courses and what should be consolidated in a single core course; and the like.

Whatever the particulars of these decisions turn out to be, the resulting structure of the core curriculum will most likely resemble a column rather than a simple foundation. To date, the core has been a series of distribution requirements that students "get out of the way" in the first two years of their academic work at Calvin. It serves as a kind of platform from which they launch their programs or major concentrations, leaving it far behind, a rapidly diminishing image in the rear view mirror of their career rocket. But if core is to serve its purposes--both ultimate and proximate--as envisioned in this statement, it must become more like a column that rises up through the center of a Calvin education, providing central structural support at each level, as it is implemented in common learning courses, object-oriented distribution requirements, and the educational programming of the student life division, and as its goals are deepened in the major concentration or professional program.

Since the adoption of CLAE, Calvin has been steadily fashioning itself after the image of the research university (*cum* professional school, since PECLAC). It should come as no surprise, then, that the college is now dealing with many of the educational problems that currently beset the larger universities: hyper-specialization, curricular fragmentation, departmental empire building, a lack of cross-disciplinary conversation and, to some degree, the loss of academic community. The tension between the ideals of the liberal arts college and those of the research university that Calvin now experiences is, nonetheless, one that we should cheerfully, if carefully, embrace. For there are many things on both sides of the divide that deserve our wholehearted support: on the one hand, the commitment to serious participation in the life of the disciplines, the promotion of cutting edge scholarship and Reformed witness in the professional guilds, and all the benefits that active research brings to the classroom by way of expertise and excitement; on the other hand, the commitment to a well-rounded and contextual education, the attention to the wholistic formation of students, and their preparation for a broad-based engagement of life that is guided by Christian commitment.

Nevertheless, in recent years the balance of the curriculum and organization of the college has tipped in the direction of the research ethos, with all the attendant problems mentioned above. However necessary CLAE was in its time, however appropriate it was to establish the disciplines, to make room for research, and to lend autonomy to the departments, it is now incumbent upon us to devote serious thought to the status of liberal arts education as it is carried in the core curriculum, to make it more than a sampling of various academic disciplines, so that

we can say with integrity that this part of the college--its core--has both engaged the world and prepared students for a life of effective Christian service within it.

In the following three sections, we divide the content of the core curriculum into the broad areas of knowledge, skills, and virtues. Under these headings we have given specific statements of the curricular and pedagogical objectives of the core. These statements flesh out in some detail what we have in mind when we speak of the ultimate purposes of core; and they provide the raw material that will be required if the core is to fulfill its proximate purposes as well. Some forms of knowledge are directly relevant to informed participation in the domains of practical life, some will also serve as integrative frameworks for college study; some skills listed are required for a life of effective service in society, some must also be in place as basic proficiencies for college level work; all of the virtues will do double duty, serving to build academic community and to shape character for a life of Christian discipleship in the world at large. The final decision on the place, weight, and role of these elements in the core curriculum is worked out in the Proposal for the Core Curriculum.

CHAPTER THREE: Core Knowledge

The *Expanded Statement of Mission* organizes its comments on the content to be conveyed in the core curriculum under the broadly Augustinian headings of knowing God, knowing the world, and knowing ourselves. Here we follow that arrangement, and articulate under sub-headings those specific forms of knowledge we wish to extend to all Calvin students. Please note: This is a list of topics to be covered in the core curriculum, not a list of core courses; moreover, it should not be assumed that each topic entry carries equal weight.

3.1 Knowledge of God

“At the heart of our programs lies the pursuit of knowledge of our triune God as revealed in scripture and creation, and as expressed through religious traditions in general and the Reformed Christian tradition in particular.”

An Expanded Statement of the Mission of Calvin College

3.1.1 The Christian Faith

CALVIN COLLEGE IS A CHRISTIAN COLLEGE. Its students should acquire in the core curriculum a mature and reflective knowledge of the triune God as revealed in the Bible and interpreted by the Christian tradition. They should develop a deeper understanding of the works and ways of God as disclosed in the biblical canon and presented in the great themes of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration of all things in Christ; as summarized in the ecumenical creeds; and as systematized in the discipline of theology. They should acquire an awareness of the global dimensions of the Christian religion, its vital and diverse cultural expressions, its movement through time and across the continents. Moreover, their own reading of holy scripture should be well-acquainted with the issues of biblical interpretation, their theological understandings tested in the intellectual climate of our day, so that they may responsibly articulate the central beliefs of the Christian faith to themselves and to others in this secular age, ready to serve as informed members and leaders of the Christian church.

3.1.2 The Reformed Tradition

Calvin College is a Reformed Christian college. Its core curriculum should serve as a primary carrier and passionate advocate of the Reformed interpretation of the Christian faith, making that interpretation compelling and engaging, inviting students to take on and grow into its wholistic understanding of the biblical themes of creation, fall, redemption, and restoration; its sense of the radical fallenness and the deep spiritual conflict that plays itself out in all domains of human culture; its insistence that God's sovereignty be honored in every area of human endeavor. Furthermore, in the core curriculum, Calvin's students should become thoroughly acquainted with the salient features of the Reformed tradition: its history and its heroes; its central texts; its cultural impulses; its relation to other communions within the Christian tradition; its strengths and its weaknesses; and finally, its expression in the Kuyperian tradition, which has, more than any other, served as a primary source in the formation of Calvin's present educational ethos. In possession of such knowledge, its graduates should find themselves equipped with a deepened understanding of what it means to follow Christ and his way of redemption in their respective callings. Calvin graduates who enter churches of the Reformed communion should also find themselves well-prepared to serve as informed parishioners in positions of leadership; those who enter other communions should have nonetheless an appreciation of the Reformed contribution to the church universal.

3.1.3 Other Religious Traditions

Calvin College prepares its graduates to pursue lives of Christian service in the contemporary world. This world contains other major religious traditions that inform the beliefs, practices, institutions, and cultures of many nations and billions of people. A distinctive feature of the Reformed tradition is the insight that religions are not the simple creation of human wishes, or mere reflections of dominant social relations; rather, they are an expression of the "*sensus divinitatis*" that God, in his common grace, has implanted in all his image bearers. Calvin students should be familiar with the basic tenets of other world religions as responses to God's self-disclosure in nature and in conscience, with the ways of life that they encourage, and with the points of contact they bear to Christianity. Students should be enabled and encouraged to evaluate the claims of these traditions in the light of God's revelation in the person of Jesus Christ, interact with members of these traditions with increased understanding, bear witness to the Christian faith effectively, and acquire deeper insight into the religious movements that have shaped and continue to shape the world in which they are called to live out the hope of the gospel.

3.2 Knowledge of the World

Along with the knowledge of God comes "an understanding of God's world and critical inquiry into its problems and potential. We need to understand the structure and integrity of nature, discern the cultural and social forces that shape our world, and address the needs and issues of contemporary life."

An Expanded Statement of the Mission of Calvin College

3.2.1 World Structure

At the core of the religions, philosophies, and ideologies of our age lie intuitions about the basic structure of the world and the purpose of human life within it. Whether reality is exhausted in the material world; whether the material world is but an appearance of a deeper and more lasting reality; whether reality is only a show of appearances in the mind, or, as Calvin put it, the “theater of God’s glory”; whether human beings are just complicated animals governed by the principles of pleasure and pain; whether they possess a special faculty that connects them to a rational order that should guide their action; whether they are created in the image of a personal God they are called to know, love, and serve; whether human life ends with physical death or finds its ultimate destiny beyond; whether our sense of right and wrong has any grounds beyond our desires and social conventions; whether history is the sad tale of decline from a golden age, or the heartening story of steady progress; whether evil is a natural part of human life, a passing inconvenience that can be eliminated with the right social program, or the intrusion of an abnormal state of affairs that only God can rectify; whether human reason has the innate power to decide all matters of truth, or stands in need of guidance and correction---such questions get sorted out in a basic view of the world and the purpose of our life within it, in a “world-and-life-view.” While Calvin students should be encouraged in the life of Christian piety and instructed in the doctrines of the Christian church as interpreted by the Reformed tradition, they should also come to see and appreciate how Christianity opens out to a comprehensive view of the world and human life--how Christian belief translates into a world-and-life-view. They should, moreover, gain a sense for how this view stacks up against its main competitors and alternatives in the marketplace of ideas. In their examination of the issues in the basic domains of practical life, they should learn to trace out the implications of a Christian world-and-life-view--how it bears on an understanding of such issues as work and leisure, friendship and sexuality, technology, cultural diversity, education, and politics.

3.2.2 Formal and Quantitative Structures

We inhabit a world rich in elegant and intricate formal structures. We move, moreover, in a civilization where the sciences of these structures have become a major cultural force. Much more than a narrow set of computational procedures and techniques, the mathematical disciplines have both opened up a significant aspect of our world and indelibly shaped it. Students at Calvin College should acquire an understanding of the range and basic types of formal and quantitative structures used in the representation of reality, and a generous perspective on their allied disciplines--their history, influence, the nature of their objects, their many fields of endeavor, and their manifold contemporary applications in such diverse areas as empirical research methods and public policy.

3.2.3 The Natural World

The natural world in its many dimensions forms the context and condition of existence we share with all fellow creatures--be they rocks, trees, animals, or fellow human beings. The sciences of the natural world have played a role in western culture the magnitude of which is difficult to overestimate: they have irrevocably shaped our understanding of ourselves and the world we inhabit; they have brought us deeper knowledge and greater control; and they have unleashed

forces in the natural environment we neither fully comprehend nor direct. Students at Calvin should have a knowledge of the fundamental orders, processes, and histories of the natural world; they should grow in their awareness of the complex inter-relationships of the delicate ecosystem. They should gain insight into the way the natural world has been organized and transformed by human culture and its manifold technologies. In addition, they should gain a sense for the history, development, and contingency of the natural sciences, the philosophical assumptions of the naturalistic worldview, the nature and limits of scientific knowledge, the kinds of ethical questions that beset scientific research, the formative role science and technology play in our society, and the issues involved at the intersection of science, technology, and Christian faith.

3.2.4 Human Society

Unique to human beings is the formation of domestic, social, economic, and political institutions by which human life is nurtured, human contact normed, the exchange of goods and services regulated, and the demands of justice sorted out. These institutions are both large scale and intimate, ranging from familial groupings to international organizations. Rightly constituted, they both condition and promote human flourishing. Ill-conceived, ill-formed, or ill-managed, they stifle the human spirit, perpetuate gross injustice and occasion terrible conflict. Students at Calvin College, who are being trained for a life of Christian service in contemporary society, should gain a basic understanding of the institutions and social practices that shape North American culture--their principal aims, their origins and development, their mutual interaction, their global contexts, and their differentiation along such lines as religion, race, class, and gender. In addition, Calvin graduates should understand the basic concepts, theories, and methods of the sciences which study these practices and institutions, so that they may serve as wise agents of transformation and reconciliation in a society sorely in need of God's peace.

3.2.5 The Arts

Humans are interpretive beings, and they embody their sense of life in a variety of cultural forms: books and buildings, dance and drama, triptychs and TV, poems and paintings, films and friezes, music and mosaics. These products and activities embody the convictions and practices which members of a culture share, providing them, both individually and corporately, with a sense of identity and purpose before God. By the imagination we engage these convictions and practices through the mediation of line and color, movement and image, shape and sound. Exposure to such works can be enlightening and ennobling, or misleading and degrading. Whether we turn to the arts as an antidote to boredom, or in the passionate quest for meaning, we are in either case shaped by them through the powerful agent of the imagination. Students at Calvin College should be led to a serious and sensitive engagement with works of art in a full range of media and cultural forms, in their own tradition as well as other traditions, in both their native tongue and their second language. They should learn how to be astute interpreters of such works of interpretation, enabled to gain insight from them, developing a sense for what is worthy and what is base, so that they may grow in their understanding of life as God has given it to be lived. As a result of such broad engagements with the arts, they should also come to a deeper understanding of members of other cultures with whom they share creation.

3.2.6 Historical Development

The varied movements within the world of culture, the forces of social change, the interaction between different societal domains, the effects--often unintended--of human actions, the power of past events over the present, the origins and development of ideas and institutions, the layers of continuity and discontinuity within a tradition--all belong to the domain of history and historical understanding. Students at Calvin should be well acquainted with the basic contours of western civilization in a global context and so come to possess a broad historical framework in which to situate and relate what they learn in other subjects. They should acquire an understanding of the particular forces that have shaped their world, the better to pursue their callings within it; and they should have some acquaintance with distant worlds, removed in time, in order to gain a critical perspective on their own. In addition, they should acquire some sophistication with regard to the rhetoric and particularity of historical narrative and become aware of the common uses and abuses of historical knowledge in the justification of claims in contemporary political disputes.

3.3 Knowledge of Ourselves

“We also need to know ourselves--our nature, gifts, and callings--as we engage this world.”

An Expanded Statement of the Mission of Calvin College

3.3.1 Our Identities

In coming to know God and the world which we inhabit, we come, at the same time, to know ourselves. For our identities, although based on individual differences, are largely shaped by our relationships. We are creatures made in the image of God; and as the divine life is transacted among three persons, so too our life is molded, lived out, and fulfilled in communities of persons. These communities are founded in and by God; they embrace the relationships we bear to our parents and siblings, to our neighbors, to our colleagues, to our fellow citizens, to all with whom we share God’s world. These relationships, in turn, are structured in history by such institutions as the family, the church, the state, and the market--institutions which mutually condition each other and jointly express deep intuitions about the purpose of human life and its good. In addition, these relationships, so structured, constitute the social meaning of our contingent differences--our gender, race, ethnicity, class, and the like. As a result of their work in the core curriculum, students should come to a deeper understanding of themselves as image bearers of God, fallen in Adam and redeemed in Christ; as members of the Christian church universal; as products of a particular kind of tradition, home, and family life; as participants in the great democratic experiment of North American politics; as players in a mercurial market economy; as persons whose experience and action in the world has been deeply shaped by science and technology and whose imaginations and ideals have been affected by the media to which they have been exposed. In coming to know themselves and the specific characteristics of their identity and situation, students will acquire a deeper understanding of the particular shape of God’s call to them and the proper contours of their response to it.

3.3.2 Our Bodies

Human existence is an embodied existence. With the body we engage the world--we move, speak, love, play, write, and build. Calvin graduates should know about the several systems of the human body, the guidelines for wellness and proper nutrition, the principles of training for strength, flexibility, and endurance, the role of body-image in the formation of self-concept, the sources and management of stress, the symptoms of our common maladies, and the effects of alcohol and other drugs, so that they may be responsible stewards of the bodies God has given them and make sensible choices in matters of diet, physical activity, and medical care.

3.3.3 Our Emotions

We are not only biological beings, but also affective ones, subject to widely varying, and sometimes deeply troubling, emotional states. Joy, sorrow, grief, love, desire, anger, fear, hate, contentment, and their cousins powerfully mold our lives and the lives of those around us. They inform our character and motivate our actions. They shape and are shaped by our relationships to others. They tell us--and sometimes surprise us--about what we believe and the things we value. At Calvin, students should gain some academically based insight into the emotions, their role in ethical formation and the spiritual life, their common disorders and their social and physiological bases, the guidelines for emotional health, and the assumptions of the major theories of human personality, so that they may come to understand their own feelings and behavior, and those of others, know how to deal with destructive emotions, and rightly sort out the issues of life in an age which tends to see all human problems as occasions for therapy.

3.3.4 Our Minds

Humans possess the wonderful capacity to know. Each waking moment they experience what Edmund Husserl called "the miracle of consciousness." Sensation, perception, memory, concept and language acquisition, and the manifold higher-order operations of the intellect are all components of human cognitive ability. Students at Calvin, learners all, should come to understand the nature and roles of these varied processes, their biological bases, the social conditions of their development, their variations, and their dysfunctions. Moreover, they should gain insight into how sin clouds the mind, expressing itself in systematic biases of human cognition, so that they might be more wary in their ways of knowing, more cautious in their claims to knowledge, and less credulous in their comportment with others.

3.3.5 Our Hearts

Human existence is not wholly contained within creation, but is gathered, directed, and ultimately related to the Creator, the governor and redeemer of all things. That gathering point of human existence is the heart, which we, as followers of Christ, offer to God as the summary of our life before him; that relationship is the domain of the spirit, which depends on God for its life. Because Calvin College is a Christian college, it has a deep and enduring investment in the spiritual well-being of its students and the community it serves through them. During their stay at Calvin, students should grow in their awareness of their deepest identities as members of a community called and covenanted by God; they should gain, as well, a deeper insight into the dynamics of the spiritual life--how the human spirit opens to the presence of God and why it so often closes down. They should also mature in a working knowledge of the spiritual disciplines,

so that they may benefit in their relationship to God from the cumulative wisdom of the Christian tradition in matters of spiritual growth.

3.3.6 Our Gifts and Callings

All human beings have received gifts from God in the form of talents, abilities, interests, passions, and opportunities. With these gifts comes the responsibility to use them in the service of the human community in ways that convey God's grace, truth, mercy, justice, and healing presence in Christ. For God did not give us these things that we might heap up fame and fortune for ourselves, but rather that we might play our unique part in a community of persons who depend on each other for what they need. In this way we participate in God's care for the world. Students at Calvin College should be given, in the course of the core curriculum, ample opportunity for discovering the gifts that God has bestowed upon them; they should become aware of how the sins of pride, envy, greed, and fear often twist and distort their self-perception, making it difficult to see clearly what God has fitted them for; they should also be provided with some guidance in the ways they might connect their gifts to human need in response to God's call to love their neighbors--for our calling is found, as Frederick Buechner once said, where our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet.

CHAPTER FOUR: Core Skills

The following is a list of skills all students should acquire in the core curriculum of Calvin College. Some of these skills are essential for progress in their studies at Calvin; all of them will be useful as they pursue their callings in the world; many of them will be reinforced and elaborated within the curriculum of a major concentration or professional program.

4.1 The Skills of Reasoning

4.1.1 The General Art of Reasoning

IN MANY WAYS THE ART OF REASONING lies at the heart of the intellectual endeavor. It is, however, daily threatened by an invasive market culture that thrives on the manipulation of impulse and image, sensation and association. Moreover, it finds little support in the popular or political argument of our day, which more frequently provides us with examples of informal fallacies than models of valid inference. While made aware of the limitations of fallen human reason in the discovery and communication of truth, Calvin students should nonetheless become accomplished in the art of reasoning. Through instruction, encouragement, correction, and constant practice, they should become adept at picking out the central thesis of an argument and assessing its supporting evidence according to relevant standards, at distinguishing between deductive, inductive, and hypothetical-deductive arguments--and knowing the rules of inference for each. They should be well aware of the tricky business of deriving causal claims from statistical correlations. They should be able to analyze matters, making subtle distinctions; they should be able to set matters in their larger contexts, making insightful connections. In addition, they should know not only how to assess the cogency of reasoning on the part of others, but also how to construct arguments for their own positions, testing them to see if they should be held,

and if so with what degree of confidence. With such skills, students can become active and qualified participants in the dialectic that leads to reflective knowledge.

4.1.2 Quantitative and Empirical Reasoning

Not all Calvin students will pursue disciplines or professions that require a high level of ability in mathematical analysis or the quantitative methods employed in empirical research. But they will all live in a society that has become, in the words of the AACU's *Integrity in the College Curriculum*, "bombarded by numbers." To operate in that society they must possess computational skills sufficient for the conduct of practical life. In addition to those basic skills, Calvin graduates should achieve a degree of sophistication in forms of quantitative and empirical reasoning that will enable them to understand and assess arguments given in the public square and the marketplace, arguments often and increasingly couched in numerical terms.

4.1.3 Cultural Discernment

One of the distinctive features of the Reformed tradition is its insistence that the deepest motives of the human heart are religious in nature and comprehensive in scope, and that our relation to God will therefore condition and direct the way we relate to our world, our neighbors, and ourselves. Moreover, the Reformed understanding of life in this regard holds that we cannot opt out of the religious relation. Whatever we love the most is in fact our god. If we do not serve the true God, we will serve an idol instead--and human life will be distorted as a result. Calvin graduates, schooled in this tradition, should become skilled at detecting the religious import of human life in its varied cultural expressions--its political manifestos, its art movements, its architecture, its technology, its markets, its myths and types, its blockbusters and bestsellers, its sit-coms and docu-dramas, its plays and poetry, its styles of worship, in what it preserves, what it forgets, and what it promotes at the moment. Further, Calvin graduates should be encouraged and trained to make use of such discernment in providing leadership for appropriate institutional and cultural change.

4.2 The Skills of Communication

4.2.1 The Rhetoric of the Written Word

Fundamental to success in academic endeavors at the collegiate level is the ability to write expository prose that is clear, concise, vivid, and convincing. Such ability is also of crucial moment in professional and personal life, indeed, wherever understanding is to be achieved through written communication. Calvin graduates should be accomplished in the rhetoric of the written word, able to produce jargon-free prose that is freshly fitted both to subject matter and intended audience, in a style that sometimes delights even as it informs and persuades.

4.2.2 The Rhetoric of the Spoken Word

In democratic and republican societies before the advent of print media, spoken rhetoric was the key to a successful career in the public world. Of the seven liberal arts, it was in fact most prized by those preparing for the active life. Although the role of the spoken word is now diminished

by the availability of the written word and the ubiquity of the image, it continues to be an important skill for educated people in positions of leadership. From the classroom lecture to the sermon, from the business presentation to the impromptu address given at the meeting of a neighborhood association, speech remains an irreplaceable medium of human communication. Students at Calvin should have training in the fundamentals of oral rhetoric, so that they may present their ideas and beliefs in the classroom, in the public square, in the church, in groups, and on the job in a manner both winsome and forceful.

4.2.3 The Rhetoric of the Image

Recent advances in digital technology--computers, scanners, cameras, desktop publishing, graphic programs, presentation software, webpages, and the like--have placed in our hands powerful means of communication by way of the image. Although all students at Calvin need not be trained as visual artists, they should become acquainted with the basic principles and techniques of visual communication, applying these principles to their own expression in a variety of media, from the organization of typographical elements on a page, to the visual representation of data and information, to the effective and succinct use of image and symbol.

4.2.4 The Discipline of Reading

With the accession of image-based media, the diminishing role of books as companions and consultants in life, and the frequent spoonfeeding of pre-digested ideas from textbooks in the schools, the discipline of reading among our incoming students has gone into steady decline. As one of our colleagues put it in a comment on the core curriculum, students often read their assignments with the same mental effort they devote to watching TV--the words wash over them, but leave little that is won only by the hard work of analysis. Calvin students should be challenged and taught how to read with care, precision, and a great deal of energy; how to detect the logical structure of prose intended to persuade; how to assimilate material embedded in prose intended to inform; how to identify and interpret tropes; how to spot an author's rhetorical strategies, shifts, and devices; and how to appreciate an author's use of genre conventions in the interest of conveying sense.

4.2.5 The Discipline of Listening

Listening is to the spoken word what reading is to the written word. Both should be active, not passive, operations of the mind. Listening with care and attention is a prerequisite to participation in productive dialogue, where the interlocutors speak to, and not past, each other. In the course of their studies at Calvin, students should be encouraged in the classroom to grow in the discipline of listening, so that they may not only express their ideas clearly, but do so in collaboration with others, and thus make human conversation generative of deeper insight and mutual understanding. Unlike reading, however, listening is not limited to the spoken word, but extends, by the bridge of pitch and rhythm, to music as well. Students should also have ample opportunity in Calvin's core curriculum to become more conversant and discerning in the special rhetoric of music, which has become, by means of the mass media, a powerful and pervasive agent in today's culture.

4.2.6 The Discipline of Seeing

If we have become a society bombarded by numbers, we have also been drenched by images--in plaster, print, video, and the cinema; on canvas, billboards, skateboards, T-shirts, letterheads, and the computer screen. A Calvin graduate should acquire an understanding of the ways in which images communicate, powerfully shaping our imaginations and self-understanding, the conventions that govern the use of images in different contexts, and the perceptions of life conveyed in the imagery that does so much of the work of instruction and persuasion in our media-saturated culture. They should come to learn that looking, too, is an art, and become alert, attentive, and discerning in their perception.

4.2.7 Competence in a Foreign Language

We share the world with members of several hundred distinct language groups. As members of that global community, Calvin graduates with a liberal arts degree should have a facility in at least one of those languages in addition to their own. A second language is a key that unlocks the door to the people, literature, history, outlook, and activities of another culture. Contact with another culture in its native language, in turn, represents an opportunity for a significant expansion of the self beyond the provincialities and limitations of its particular place and time. Although language instruction at Calvin will always involve more than the simple inculcation of linguistic techniques, its students should nonetheless receive thorough training in the skills of understanding, speaking, and writing in a foreign language, if that language is modern, or the skills of understanding and writing, if that language is ancient.

4.2.8 The Art of Cross-Cultural Communication

We live in a world of many cultures. The North American continent, home to most of our students, has itself become culturally complex as a result of European colonization, the institution of slavery, policies of forced migration, the cumulative effects of immigration, the growth of international economic systems, and development in the technologies of travel and communication. To live a life of effective service in contemporary society, Calvin students should become skilled at cross-cultural communication, at understanding and making themselves understood to those outside their tribe. For some, this skill will include a competence in a foreign language--although such competence alone does not guarantee success in cross-cultural communication. For others, cross-cultural communication will be conducted in their native tongue with those who share the same language but belong to a different culture. Both forms depend upon the ability to read subtle cues, to see how the world looks from the standpoint of a different community of interpretation and experience, to distinguish between the deep and enduring principles of human morality and their situation-specific applications, to discern and, where feasible, to adapt graciously to the cultural expectations of others.

4.3 Technological Skills

4.3.1 The Use of Information Technology

The computer has irreversibly shaped the ways in which we obtain, produce, retrieve, transfer, display, and analyze information. It is difficult to think of any area of life that has not been touched, for good or for ill, by the continuing revolution in information technology. Calvin students should become competent and confident users of available information technology, in full possession of the skills of word-processing, electronic communication, navigation in cyberspace, and of searching, filtering, and interpreting electronically available data.

4.4 Research Skills

4.4.1 The Art of Executing a Research Project

The conduct of research at the collegiate level demands skills of which many of our incoming students have only the foggiest notion. In the core curriculum, Calvin students should be thoroughly instructed in the art of academic research, both individual and collaborative: how to formulate a research plan; where to locate relevant sources; how to make use of new information technologies; how to distinguish between primary and secondary sources; how to evaluate secondary source material; how to do bibliographic research; how to collect and evaluate empirical data; how to make, track, and organize research notes; and how to present the results of such efforts as individuals or in groups according to the conventions of the relevant genre.

4.5 Physical Skills

4.5.1 The Exercise of the Body

For all the media attention given to physical fitness and appearance, many North Americans of middle age are amazingly out of shape. Aside from any aesthetic difficulties this may present to their fellows, or to themselves, this is cause for concern because physical health, besides being a good in itself, is a prerequisite for other activities we judge to be important--from taking care of the kids, to participating in the life of the church, to writing books. Obesity, high blood pressure, indigestion, fatigue, sore backs, and immobile joints all conspire to slow a person down, making it all the more difficult to “run the good race,” either literally or figuratively. While at Calvin, students should develop skills in several sports and leisure activities that will serve them well in their college years and for a lifetime, God willing, of health and fitness.

CHAPTER FIVE: Core Virtues

Moral formation has always been an important component of the tradition of liberal arts education. At Calvin, the liberal arts tradition is centered in the core curriculum, and radiates from there into the major concentrations, professional programs, and the educational programming of the Student Life Division. It seems fitting, then, that a statement on the moral aims of a Calvin education should be located in a document on the purposes of the core curriculum, even though the project of moral formation cannot be limited to core courses.

MANY STUDENTS ARRIVE ON CALVIN’S CAMPUS in a state of acute social anxiety, self-conscious about their appearance and personality, uneven in their intellectual preparation for college level work, in some cases damaged by conflicts in their families or unwise choices made in high

school. They come to Calvin eager for new experiences, new relationships, and for the credentials they need to fit into the professional world and thus secure a niche for themselves in a rapidly changing and confusing economic environment. Their concerns and aspirations are neither trivial nor insignificant. But the college hopes, in the course of the education it offers, to lift them above the tyranny of personal problems, beyond the clutches of the imperial self, into an expansive world that invites their best efforts on behalf of God's kingdom of truth, justice, and peace. It seeks to foster within them the committed heart of a servant as well as the critical eye of a prophet. It wants to equip them with the knowledge and skills required for a life of Christian service, and the inclination to live that life. In the following we attempt to name and describe traits that mark such a life. These are virtues we expect to be exercised in the Calvin community even as they are commended to a life in the world beyond its campus.

While a specification of the virtues we would want to foster in our students will have definite implications for the content of the core curriculum, it will also and especially be crucial for the pedagogies we employ in the teaching of core courses. Thus we venture, in this section, into questions of pedagogy. And with some justification. For core curriculum and core pedagogy together make up the whole of core education, and they should not be considered separately--an ideal curriculum wedded to inappropriate pedagogy will have little effect; solid pedagogy trapped in a bad curriculum will be, to a large degree, wasted effort.

Virtues are settled dispositions to feel and to act in certain ways. A compassionate person is inclined, as if by nature, to be moved by human suffering. A person in possession of the virtue of honesty has the disposition to tell the truth. Vices are also dispositions. A callous person, bearing within the breast a heart of stone, disregards the needs of others as a matter of habit. A person saddled with the vice of deceitfulness has the disposition to lie whenever lying seems convenient. A particular array of virtues and vices, taken together, makes up a person's character.

From its very inception in the Greco-Roman period, liberal arts education has sought not only to equip students with knowledge and skill, but also to shape their character on the basis of some shared conception of the good for human life. Isocrates, Quintilian, and Cicero were no sophists, for they were deeply concerned about the moral formation of their students even as they fitted them with the powers of rhetoric. When the program of liberal arts education was later appropriated by the Christian church, it was not divested of its moral import. But it was bought to a different understanding of the human condition and the moral project. In the Christian community, moral formation is not a matter simply of drawing out and directing the innate potentialities of human nature. For Christian doctrine teaches us that human nature has been deeply damaged by the power of sin, far beyond the repair of any human agency. To live aright, we stand in need of God's grace, God's forgiveness, and the enabling power of God's Spirit. The virtues we enjoy are not of our own making. They are the "fruits of the Spirit," the results of God's work with us (Galatians 5:22-23; Philippians 2:12-13). They are the family uniform of those who have died and risen with Christ (Colossians 3:1-4, 12-14).

This is not to say, however, that the acquisition of virtue is a wholly passive or mystical affair for the Christian. We are called to co-operate in this process of putting on the new person in Christ by shunning evil, by practicing the disciplines of prayer, confession, and fasting, by listening to

God's word and participating in the sacraments. We are instructed to correct and reprove each other, to set and to follow good examples. We are, in short, to "train ourselves in godliness" (I Timothy 4:7). Christian liberal arts education, then, if it is true to its educational ideal as well as its religious roots, will also attempt to foster within its students the virtues constitutive of a life well-lived, drawing its conception of the good life from the teachings of the Old and New Testaments, the example of Christ, the moral traditions of the church, and ethical reflection guided by the same.

Although CLAE (*Christian Liberal Arts Education*) was an attempt to spell out the meaning of the liberal arts ideal for a Christian college such as Calvin, it was curiously silent on such topics as the virtues and character formation. It is difficult to know how to account for this lacuna. Perhaps, at the time, that point was so well and pervasively understood that it seemed superfluous to make explicit comment on it. Perhaps it was assumed that character formation is the exclusive business of the church, or the Student Life Division. Perhaps Calvinist higher education to date has been overly intellectualistic, emphasizing the content of belief while ignoring the character of the believer. Perhaps it was thought that any attention to moral formation would play into the hands of the pietist wing of the Reformed community, giving an inward turn to the Christian impulse of a Calvin education.

Whatever the explanation may be, it is clearly time to retrieve this major component of the liberal arts ideal, attempt to articulate it for ourselves, and agree as a faculty upon its main contours. Most of us are the intellectual products of graduate programs in secular research universities, where education is ostensibly "value-free" and instruction attempts to maintain strict neutrality on the question of the good. We acquired a certain kind of knowledge; we acquired certain kinds of skills. What we would do with them, the kind of life we proposed to make with them, even how we acquired them, was our own business. Perhaps many of us have absorbed the ethos of neutrality in matters of education and therefore find it difficult to see what more teaching in the disciplines could possibly amount to. Perhaps we think that moral suasion is the business of RAs, not PhDs. But, of course, education has always amounted to more than the mere impartation of knowledge and skills. Even in the secular research university, certain virtues are being inculcated, a particular version of the good pursued, however implicit or unacknowledged. At a liberal arts college, we should be up front and intentional about the unavoidably formative effects of the educational process, and at a Christian college we are in an excellent position to do so.

Yet even though the virtues require our explicit attention, it is more likely that they are caught rather than taught--at least, if by teaching we mean the transfer of objective information and the like. There would be nothing quite so ridiculous, nothing that would elicit so much cynicism among our students, as a required course entitled "Virtue 101." Virtue, and its nurture in the souls of our students, then, will be primarily a matter of pedagogy. How are virtue and good character promoted in our teaching? Roughly: by exemplifying virtue in ways both admirable and worthy of imitation; and by inviting students to engage in those activities where virtue is both exercised and required for success. The virtue of courage, for instance, is inculcated not by teaching our students about the nature of courage but by inviting them to partake in those activities where courage is required. In the absence of a war, sports will usually do. It takes a lot of fortitude to dive into the fray of a soccer game, to slide into third base head first, to push

through exhaustion while running cross country, to go in for a layup amid a thicket of elbows and knees. Likewise, there are difficult questions to be tackled in the classroom that often call for a great deal of intellectual courage. We can model courage in an academic setting by taking those questions on; we can foster courage in an academic setting by asking our students to do the same. A pedagogy that shapes character as well as it informs the mind is a pedagogy that provides good examples of the virtues it seeks to impart and invites students to be active in learning so that they may acquire those virtues for themselves. Intellectual character, and its moral analogs, cannot be developed on the sidelines of the academic life. Students must be encouraged to become participants, to get wholly involved in the project of shared inquiry, if they are to develop the kinds of dispositions that will make for a life well-lived both within the academy and beyond its walls.

In the tradition of moral philosophy, the virtues are usually divided into the intellectual and the moral. This division should not give the impression, however, that they can be neatly separated in all respects. For the intellectual project, in reality, is a social endeavor. We chase after knowledge not in isolation, but in groups. If we do not exercise such moral virtues as charity, humility, honesty, and justice, we will obstruct the intellectual process of inquiry and impede the shared search for truth.

In the following list we name and describe those virtues we think play a special role in the life of the mind and the building of community, both at Calvin and in the world at large. The list is neither systematic nor exhaustive. It is, rather, exemplary, tailored to the mission of the college as an academic institution. Moreover, it does not seek to suggest, by describing the virtues under separate headings, that the virtues can be possessed in isolation from each other. Abstracted virtues quickly become vices: diligence becomes workaholism, honesty degenerates into brutality, and generosity slides into carelessness. The virtues must be mutually tempered and ultimately bound by the master virtue of love. As God's chosen people, we are enjoined by St. Paul to clothe ourselves with "compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience," but above all to clothe ourselves "with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony" (Colossians 3:12 and 14).

5.1 Diligence

The acquired habit of expending considerable energy in the steady pursuit of some goal, diligence is required wherever excellence is sought. It is the willingness to dig in for the long haul, to forego lesser goods in the present for the sake of greater goods in the future. It is grounded in the realization that "fine things are hard," and rooted in the hope that effort in the same direction over a long time will eventually yield results well worth the wait. It is the condition of real accomplishment in any field that requires more than luck and good fortune. In the academic life, it means not giving up on a difficult text when that text can't be understood the first time through; persevering with a problem until a solution is found; repeating the conjugation of a verb in a strange tongue until the proper endings become second nature. At Calvin, the academic workload should be gauged, pitched, and paced so that it is impossible for students to do well without exercising a great deal of this particular virtue. While no instructor should push students to the point of despair, no course at Calvin should be set up so that students can coast through it and still get decent marks. Calvin should be a place where students must get serious

about their intellectual work if they are not already, learn how to manage their time, plan ahead, turn off the TV, and study even when they don't feel like it. The acquisition of such habits of diligence will stand them in good stead in their callings, whether they remain in the academy or venture beyond its walls. In addition, members of the faculty at Calvin should set a good example of this virtue in the classroom, investing considerable amounts of fresh and visible energy in their pedagogical efforts.

5.2 Patience

The virtue of patience is an essential support for the practice of diligence. Unfortunately, patience, like diligence, is not encouraged in our society, whose commercial culture runs on the engines of instant gratification. Patience is the ability to absorb a great deal of life's trouble--including pain, fatigue, setbacks, delays, annoyances, and the like--without loss of self-control, without caving in or blowing up. Students, in whom the private vice of impatience has been cultivated as a public virtue in the marketplace, should be coached and encouraged at Calvin to wait for results that can only be had after a long and sometimes difficult period of effort. They should be weaned from unrealistic expectations of instant and effortless success in their academic endeavors. The tasks assigned to them should, because of their difficulty or magnitude, require patience. Members of the faculty should therefore avoid devising occasions of cheap and easy success for the sake of making students feel good about themselves or the classes they take. Self-esteem in matters academic should be based on the reality of accomplishment, not the empty gestures of affirmation by instructors who think of themselves as therapists. Moreover, in our teaching we should not be given to quick and easy solutions where there are none, but be willing to do in the classroom the kind of patient work we expect of our students in their studies, ready to absorb a great deal of trouble for the sake of solid achievement.

5.3 Honesty

Intellectual honesty is often equated with the conscientious avoidance of plagiarism. Although honesty in matters of the intellect certainly includes truth in citation, it goes much deeper: it means not dismissing data, evidence, or argument in order to hang on to our favorite theories, not covering our eyes and stopping our ears in order to remain in our mental, moral, social, or religious comfort zones. An intellectually honest position is one that has given careful consideration to counter-veiling evidence; one that has fully explored and fairly assessed opposing arguments; one that has seriously contemplated alternative explanations and is able to state them with precision. Intellectual honesty can be fostered in our students by holding them accountable in their work for a careful consideration of viewpoints in opposition to their own, by not letting them get through the college without struggling with data, evidence, arguments, and views that might challenge the notions with which they entered its gates. Likewise, as faculty members, we should not allow ourselves to dismiss and ignore objections to our own positions, but be willing to show how we have dealt with them or--if they are new to us--display a willingness to review matters in a new light.

5.4 Courage

As patience is to diligence, so courage is to honesty. It serves as an essential support. The intellectual landscape of our day is filled with formidable challenges, strange ideas, troubling issues, and unsettling questions. And the honest way though that landscape is not wide, straight, and smooth, but narrow, winding and rugged. Moreover, it is not always clear from the outset where the journey on that road will take us, what among our cherished belongings we will have to discard along the way, or how we will be changed as we make progress. Intellectual courage signifies the willingness to take risks, to take on the hard questions and follow the answers wherever they lead. It means relinquishing one's position when that position has been shown no longer to be tenable, as well as holding on to one's well-grounded convictions in the face of ridicule and hostility. Courage can be modeled in the classroom by asking the hard questions; changing one's mind when asked to do so by the evidence; and sticking to one's guns when conviction demands tenacity. Courage can be fostered by helping students to do the same. The college, moreover, can support this virtue by belying and advising its more adventurous faculty members as they search out new and difficult routes on the previously unexplored faces of their disciplines.

5.5 Charity

In moments of intellectual conflict, disagreement, and exchange of opposing standpoints, it is tempting to caricature an opponent's position in order to dismiss it, to create a straw person that can be easily knocked down, to impute errant motives so as to make a position--whatever its content--look morally suspect and untenable. In the academic arena, charity is a matter of giving other people the benefit of the doubt, of putting the best face on their positions, of assuming their sincerity as seekers after truth. More generally, it means speaking and writing with clarity, so as not to confound or confuse others, listening attentively enough to be able to summarize accurately what someone has said, arguing without acrimony, being ready to praise what is genuinely praiseworthy in an otherwise faulty presentation. Students should be encouraged to practice charity in their academic work, granting those with whom they disagree a sympathetic hearing, giving a charitable interpretation to positions they may find strange or offensive, and treating others with respect, ever on the lookout for what is good within. Likewise, we should demonstrate this virtue in class when we are challenged by our students; when we are representing positions with which we strongly disagree; when we are moderating student discussions or commenting on their work.

5.6 Creativity

Creativity is an excellence of the imagination. It is the springboard of the arts, suggesting new and arresting combinations of pitch and rhythm, of image and metaphor, of media and material, and new connections to the social context. But it is also the generative source of the sciences and the achievements of practical life. For scientific theories are not dictated by empirical data. They too are the products of the human imagination, even if they are subsequently tested and sorted out on the basis of empirical findings. Likewise, solutions to practical problems are not forced by circumstance, but invented by those whose minds freely range over a multitude of possibilities. Through their liberal arts education, students at Calvin should be encouraged to stretch their imaginations and find joy in the creative moment. For fresh expression in the arts, advances in the sciences, and new approaches to seemingly intractable problems of practical life

all depend on the ability of the human mind to move from the actual to the possible and the willingness to take risks in realizing the latter. Moreover, at Calvin, students should come to discover--perhaps to their surprise--that the Christian faith can serve as a vibrant source of creativity, not a limit upon it, suggesting insights and approaches that are novel, striking, and largely unexplored in our secular age. This can readily happen when faculty members provide the example, ever on the lookout for the untried potentials of their faith as it bears on the issues and problems presented in their disciplines.

5.7 Empathy

A deep and creative grasp of a subject requires empathy, an imaginative transposition of the whole self into the matters to be understood, a readiness to experience the world as others have experienced it. Whether it strives to comprehend a Greek tragedy, a medieval monastery, modernist architecture, or a secular ideology, the human mind comes to grasp more fully and more vividly what it can understand from an imaginative standpoint located at the productive center of the phenomenon in question. In our classroom instruction and exercises, with mature guidance and appropriate caution, students should be encouraged to move about in their imaginations, to inhabit locations that differ significantly from their own, standpoints from which the world not only looks different but feels different, so that they may be disposed to understand the works and words of those of different background and experience, those with a different temperament and sense of life, those of the opposite sex, those of a distant social stratum, those who have suffered what they have not, those who occupy a different historical world or subscribe to a different set of beliefs and attitudes--a Socrates, a Darwin, a Malcolm X or a Simone de Beauvoir; in short, so that they may come to acquire an understanding of their culturally distant neighbors that is thoroughly enlivened by the powers of empathy.

5.8 Humility

In our academic pursuits we should strive to achieve a just estimation of our powers as finite and fallen knowers and thus come to possess the virtue of intellectual humility. To possess such a virtue is not to despair of knowledge or the truth. Humility is not skepticism, but a realization that our faculties are limited and fallible, that all cultures have their blind spots, and that we should therefore remain open--even as we carry on with our convictions--to correction by fresh evidence, new argument, and more experience. Humility before a text is grounded in the expectation that we will have something to learn from it; humility before experience, in the realization that experience is vast and ever instructive; humility before other persons, in the recognition that they are complex, varied, and inventive, and therefore may have something unexpected to say that will change our minds. We can exemplify this virtue in the classroom by readily admitting our noetic limitations and openly displaying a commitment to our own "continuing education," whether that education is to be found in the great texts and works of a tradition or the remarks of our students. Students, likewise, should be encouraged in the classroom to keep themselves open and teachable, even on matters they believe they have already sorted out.

5.9 Stewardship

The world and all it contains has been entrusted by God to the care of the human race. We are to cultivate it, tend to it, learn from it, delight in it, develop its manifold potentials, and manage it in ways that benefit the entire human community and other living members of the bio-sphere. We are not to waste it, spoil it, or use it up for ourselves at the expense of others. Yet there are many forces in our culture that would prompt us to squander the time, talent, and resources that God has graciously placed at our disposal. We often treat our natural environment as if it were infinitely resilient; we sometimes spend our days as if we had all the time in the world; we discard our things as if there will always be more; we expend our energy on frivolous activities as if there will always be time for the important things later; we let our talents lie fallow as if there will always be someone else to take up the slack. The community at Calvin College should strive to set a good example in the wise management of time, talent, energy, and resources. Students at Calvin should become aware of the irreplaceable value of the gifts God has given them and the responsibilities attached to those gifts, and thus come to see themselves as stewards, not mere users, of the creation. Where appropriate, issues of stewardship should be addressed in our classrooms; where possible, students should be invited to participate in activities on and off campus that manifest care for God's creation--mending what is broken, cleaning what is soiled, nurturing the frail, conserving the scarce, saving the valuable.

5.10 Compassion

In a sermon on a passage from the book of Galatians, John Calvin once speculated that God could have created us as self-sufficient individuals, each inhabiting separate universes unto ourselves. That God did not do so, but made us creatures of needs that can be fulfilled only in human community, means that God intended his image bearers to live a life together in mutual love and service. Compassion motivates us to respond to the needs of others. It propels us beyond a self-centered and callous concern for our own interests into the lives of others, to promote their good and their welfare. It feels with those who suffer; it suffers with those who are in need. The social stratification of our society, the clean well-lit places of our suburban homes, and the entertainment bias of the media have isolated us, mostly members of the middle-class, from the suffering of others. The poor may be with us always, but we've done a pretty good job of hiding them. Life has been fairly sanitized, and we are insulated in many ways from the plight of our neighbors. Students at Calvin should find themselves, in their courses and their off-campus experiences, exposed to human suffering, invited into situations that normally elicit human compassion. They should be introduced, moreover, to lives that have been driven by compassion, to professionals who have not used their gifts and talents to shore up privilege for themselves, but have been quite intentional about directing their services and their resources to the benefit of those most in need of them. Likewise faculty members should reflect on whether their lives manifest compassion or whether the demands of success in their academic careers have narrowed their moral vision and blinded them in some respects to the needs of those around them.

5.11 Justice

Justice is often emblazoned on the banners of the political left, while freedom serves as the watchword of the right. We often get the impression that we must choose between defending individual freedom, and letting social outcomes fall where they may, or promoting the cause of

justice through the coercive power of the state, and leaving freedom by the wayside as a lesser good. Although there is an inescapable tension between these two ideals, they need not be posed as exclusive options. In order to protect the basic goods of human life, a community's commitment to justice will lead to legislation enforced by the sword of the state; but not all issues of equity can be handled in this way without violating basic freedoms. Thus even in a well-formed state there will be much to do in the name of justice. A personal commitment to justice is a commitment to use one's freedom to promote fairness in the way benefits and burdens are distributed in our society. Students at Calvin should learn about the principles of justice, the cases and causes of injustice in our society, both global and national; and they should be encouraged to form a commitment to the cause of justice, of doing what they can in personal, professional, and political life to insure fair treatment of all those who belong to the household of the human community. Likewise, a commitment to justice should be evident in the teaching we do at Calvin. It should govern the way we treat our students; it should have some bearing, where relevant, on the content of our courses; and it should list high among the concerns of the institution as evidenced by the speakers Calvin invites to its campus, the admissions and recruitment policies it pursues, the hospitality it extends to members of minority cultures and races, the service projects it sponsors, and the volunteer services it makes available.

5.12 Faith

Faith, as a virtue, is the auspicious combination of loyalty and trust. To be faithful to another person is to remain devoted to that person, to keep promises made to that person, to share in advancing that person's legitimate ends. As such, faith is a feature of good marriages and friendships. To have faith in another person is to trust in that person's good will and competence, as when one has faith in one's physician. It is a prerequisite for learning from others, and thus of advancing in knowledge. Christian faith is found wherever ultimate loyalty and trust is directed to God through Christ. In every case, such faith is a gift of God's grace. For, as fallen creatures, we are inclined to be more devoted to ourselves than to God, more interested in advancing our own power and prestige than the purposes of God's Kingdom; and we are inclined to place ultimate trust in ourselves, or one of the idols we have fashioned in God's stead. Christian faith comes when God in Christ makes it possible for us to repent of our sins, reach beyond ourselves, devote ourselves to Christ and his work of reconciliation, trust in him for our salvation, our guidance, and our care. But it also grows with exercise. As we experience God's goodness through faith, our faith is strengthened, preparing us for even greater demonstrations of God's goodness in our lives. Calvin should be a place where students find their faith nurtured, not only in chapel services and dorm Bible studies, but in the classrooms as well. In the core curriculum, students should find themselves reminded of the faith of those who have gone before them, in whose lives great things were accomplished through a childlike trust in God. The stories of God's people need to be told, and re-told. Students should also find evident faith in their professors, a faith that is deep, constant, and directive of their work in the classroom, their approach to the disciplines, their relationships to students and colleagues, and their bearing in the face of adversity.

5.13 Hope

Hope is the confidence we have in the realization of a future good we desire, either through our own efforts or the efforts of others on our behalf. As such, hope keeps us going in life. It's the spark that ignites our motivations. Without it we despair; in its absence we close up shop. On the other hand, it is possible for us to hope too much--to expect to bring about a good for ourselves that we cannot possibly obtain through our own efforts, as when a student might hope to ace an exam without so much as the slightest preparation. Such is presumption. To hope in ourselves for our ultimate good and happiness is human presumption *par excellence*, a product of our pride. In the end, we must admit our incapacities, and hope in God rather than ourselves. This kind of hope--Christian hope--requires faith, a complete trust in God's competence and good will, which has been demonstrated to us in the incarnation, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. If we turn away from God, we will find ourselves sliding back and forth between presumption and despair. Only faith in God keeps us from presuming too much on our own behalf or despairing of the good we rightly desire for ourselves and others--eternal life in a world renewed in right relationships, in an everlasting city of justice and delight. Students at Calvin should find themselves enveloped in a community of hope that is both girded and guided by Christian faith. They should come to realize that the entire project of Christian education is premised on hope that is in turn based on trust in God's faithfulness to his people. They should come to see themselves as participants in the grand plan of redemption already vouchsafed in Christ, able to know real joy in their lives because of the hope that is within them. They should, moreover, learn to have a proper confidence in the gifts and abilities God has given them, recognizing that it is possible for them, with God's help, to make a genuine difference in this world. Equally, they should become acquainted with their own limitations, and thus learn not to presume beyond their abilities. Here the classroom can be of great assistance, providing feedback on students' efforts, assessing both strengths and weakness, abilities and limitations, so that they might serve well as "secondary agents" of transformation and renewal--secondary to the primary agency of God, for whom all things are possible.

5.14 Wisdom

Wisdom in practical life is a matter of pursuing ends proper to human life and making right judgments in the use of means in pursuit of those ends. It means, in effect, understanding how to live well and how the world works, so that the means we select are in fact conducive to our true ends. The wise build their houses upon the rock, because they know that sand is an unstable foundation. The foolish make traps into which they themselves fall--an unintended consequence. Those who possess wisdom have a keen sense for the ordering and point of God's creation--they have broken the color code of the world's huge skein of wire; they know where the lines of causation and motivation begin, where they intersect, and where they end; they understand what it takes to get good results; and they realize that the good for human life is ultimately located in a right relationship with God. The foolish, on the other hand, stumble about in creation as if in a darkened room. They look for happiness in the wrong places. They get their wires crossed. They fail to achieve the right mix of measures, and find it hard to strike a balance in life; their actions are often inappropriate, ill-timed, ineffectual, or irrelevant. They frequently make things worse by trying to make them better, and wonder why. Although wisdom generally displays itself most vividly in an individual life, it is not an individual invention. Wisdom is developed over time in a tradition and carried in a community. It is communicated in proverbs, occasional advice, and apprenticeships; it is conveyed in the established patterns of a shared life. The

tradition of Christian wisdom, which begins in a deep reverence for God, should be well-represented at Calvin College. Students should find themselves being instructed in its ways in the classroom, the chapel, the dorm, on the athletic fields, throughout the halls, and in our offices. In addition, they should receive sound advice about Christian strategies for dealing with the ethical challenges they are likely to encounter in their personal and professional lives. At Calvin, a Christian college, they should find much evidence of the kind of wisdom that is more precious than silver, and learn to look for it as if it were gold.

CHAPTER SIX: The Core Curriculum of Calvin College

6.1 Preface

IN THE CORE CURRICULUM ASSESSMENT PROJECT OF 1997, 33 Calvin sophomores were asked to write guided essays in which they identified two important social issues and then indicated how a Christian might respond to them. These essays were evaluated by faculty members, who later interviewed the students. In the interviews, the students were asked if a Calvin College education displayed any particular faith perspective or worldview. One third of the students said they weren't aware of any such thing at Calvin; a little over one half said they thought there was one, but couldn't say what it was; the remaining 15% said there was one, could use some of the language in which that perspective is typically expressed, but, in the words of the assessment report, "none were able to give a complete or thorough account of the Reformed perspective of Calvin College" (*Report on a Pilot Project: Year Two of the Core Assessment Component of the Assessment Program of Calvin College, 1997*).

6.1.1 Findings of the Assessment Project

The findings of the assessment project corroborated one of the suspicions that prompted Calvin in the fall of 1996 to initiate a thorough and comprehensive review of its core curriculum--the suspicion that, for all its public self-representation as a Reformed Christian comprehensive institution of higher learning, Calvin may be doing a less than wholly effective job in communicating its central vision to its own students.

6.1.1.1 Fragmentation

Surely part of the reason for the sobering results of the core assessment project resides in the fragmented state of the present core curriculum. The founding document of the current core, *Christian Liberal Arts Education*, indicated that the Christian Perspectives on Learning course was to serve as the entry course for all Calvin students, orienting them to the vision and project of the college. But no sooner was the core implemented in the late 1960s than CPOL was converted into an option in the contextual disciplines. Thus the core came on line without a center. Today CPOL captures only half of our students and is often taught by first-year and term faculty members who are themselves newcomers to Calvin and its tradition. The rest of the courses in the present core curriculum are to function, according to CLAE, as introductions to particular disciplines. The full presentation of the Reformed perspective that informs the college is not their primary objective. It should come as no great surprise, then, that for many of our students the animating idea of the college--its sources, motives, content, and implications--has

become somewhat vague and indistinct, difficult to articulate, a hazy ring around their academic consciousness, ever present but ill-defined.

The problem of fragmentation afflicts not only the college's ability to convey its central vision to its own students. It is pervasive, and in many areas prevents the college from delivering a true core of common learning, a shared body of knowledge and skills deemed essential for all its graduates. So many uncoordinated options in the fulfillment of core requirements are now presented to our students--often for pragmatic reasons--that it is in fact difficult to maintain that the current core curriculum guarantees much at all by way of common learning. Take the core requirements in history for example. Students may take either History 101 or 102 for core as first or second year students. But if they manage to avoid or evade history in their first two years, they can fulfill core by taking any 200 or 300 level history course. So a student could fulfill core by taking an ancient world history course, a modern western civilization course, or a course in the History and Society of West Africa since 1800. In their theological studies at Calvin, students may fulfill core by taking Religion 103 and 201. But they may substitute any 200 level Biblical studies course for 103; and they may substitute any 200 level systematic or historical theology course--or 301 or 332--for 201. The result: students may satisfy core by taking Biblical Literature and Theology (103) and Basic Christian Theology (201); but they may also satisfy core with one course in Old Testament wisdom literature and one course in Eschatology. Similar tales can be told about many other areas of the present core as well, where options abound or where cognate courses have come to count for core but contain very little, if any, perspectival content.

One might think that fragmentation is at least not a problem where the same core course is taken by many students in multiple sections. But here, as elsewhere, appearances can be deceiving. In certain categories of the core it is not unusual for various sections of same course to share little by way of content. Individual faculty members are left to invent their own courses with little guidance from their departments, and virtually no guidance from the college. As a result, a common course title in the core does not guarantee a significant amount of common course content or even common course objectives.

6.1.1.2 Lack of Sequencing

Such fragmentation of the core curriculum through the proliferation of course options and course content has implications for the degree to which we, the faculty, can coordinate our efforts in the core education of our students. Courses in a major area of concentration are usually adjusted to each other for content, coverage, and level. Those who teach intermediate courses in a particular discipline can presuppose the knowledge and skills acquired in the introductory courses, while those who teach advanced courses can in turn presuppose the knowledge and skills conveyed in the intermediate courses. As a result, students make progress in their chosen disciplines. Such a thing rarely happens in the core. There we can assume little, if anything, by way of common learning at any level of instruction. For that reason we cannot build upon a foundation of knowledge and thus move ahead with our students in our core courses, pursuing beyond the introductory level themes and issues that are shared and central to the college. Moreover, the core curriculum as it now stands provides for no integration of its various thematic strands

toward the conclusion of a student's career at Calvin. Typically, a Calvin student's education trails off in evermore specialized studies.

6.1.1.3 Complexity

The loss of common learning due to the pervasive fragmentation of the core curriculum is compounded by the local complexities that have come to inhabit various corners of it. Consider the social science requirements. Normally students are required to take one course in either sociology or psychology, and one course in either economics or political science. But students in communication disorders take only one social science, either Psychology 151 or Psychology 204. Students in the nursing program will take both psychology and sociology but not economics or political science. Students in the social work program will take four instead of two social science courses--one from each social science discipline. Students in the med tech program can take any two of the four social science courses. Students in the occupational therapy program will take either economics or political science and both psychology and sociology, while students in architecture must take economics, and can substitute a course in political science, sociology, or psychology for a course in history or natural science. In many cases, the core curriculum has come to be treated by professional and pre-professional programs as a flexible fund of cognates, freely adaptable to specific requirements of career preparation. As a result, the core has at least as many incarnations as there are professional programs at Calvin. No wonder our Registrar claims that there are today only two or three people on campus who fully understand the core. Advising errors abound; and dispensations for desperate seniors must be granted all too frequently.

6.1.1.4 Lack of Oversight

The fragmentation and complexification of the core curriculum, its lack of sequencing as well, reflect a lack of coordination between the hundreds of courses that count for core now scattered across the semester offerings of some 25 academic departments. Our professional programs and disciplinary majors are thoughtfully constructed and regularly scrutinized by the departments. They are typically composed of courses attuned to each other for content so that there will be no serious gaps or overlaps in the more specialized education of our students. The core curriculum, on the other hand, receives no such attention from any particular department or all-college committee. After its birth some thirty years ago, it was left largely to fend for itself on our campus. Pushed and pulled in different directions at different times, mobilized for different purposes when its own purpose was unclear, it grew to become ungainly. In its present state, rarely does its left hand know what its right is doing--and with no legal guardian, it is bound to become only more dissolute in its behavior.

6.1.1.5 Significant Gaps in Knowledge and Skills

In the classical liberal arts curriculum, the first level of study was composed of the "trivium"--grammar, logic, and rhetoric. The intent of grammatical studies was not simply to acquaint students with the mechanics of their own language, but to shape their character through exposure to the canonical texts and narratives of their culture. Logic was to enable them to construct and evaluate knowledge claims. Rhetoric was to make them effective in their own society. In short,

liberal arts education aimed to make its students virtuous, intelligent, and effective. Genuine liberal arts education in any age will remain faithful to that original threefold purpose; but its content will vary from culture to culture. What counts as canonical, what passes for instruction in logic and right method, and what it takes by way of knowledge and skills to be effective in society--all change as society itself changes.

Our own society has changed in the last thirty years in ways that have led many faculty members to the conviction that the present core no longer does an adequate job in preparing our students for effective lives of service in contemporary society. The growth of information technology, the multiplication of communication media, the cultural diversification of North America, and the increasing inter-dependence of nations around the globe--to name a few of the more dramatic changes--call for new skills and forms of knowledge that are largely unaddressed in the current core.

6.1.1.6 Lack of Clarity in Purpose

Christian Liberal Arts Education did a great service to the college in the mid-1960s by setting the stage for the rigorous pursuit of disciplinary knowledge and bolstering departmental autonomy. Much of what is good and strong about the college today is due, in part, to the impetus of that founding curricular document. In its ambition to highlight the disciplines as the basic units of collegiate education, however, CLAE gave less thought to the unique role and potential of the liberal arts core curriculum. Having established the disciplines, it assigned to core the ancillary role of providing introductions to the disciplines. Why students should be given an introductory tour of the disciplines--most of which they do not intend to pursue--is not explained in CLAE. Liberal arts education is not narrow, not limited to professional preparation, but well-rounded. That seems to be the basic idea. But well-rounded to what end? Beyond stating that the disciplinary tour will serve to broaden a student's horizon, CLAE has little to say. Many members of the faculty have indicated that the purpose of the core curriculum is less than clear, and that it is thus unclear exactly what their core courses are supposed to accomplish. That lack of clarity filters down to the students as well, who, unsure of the rationale behind the core curriculum, often speak of getting core courses "out of the way"--as if they were obstacles to their real education.

6.1.2 Proposal for a Revised Core Curriculum

FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE THE CENTRAL VISION OF THE COLLEGE, fragmentation, complexity, lack of dependable sequencing, lack of oversight, gaps in certain skills and forms of knowledge now required of a liberally educated person in our society, lack of clarity in purpose--these are the several weaknesses of the current core that prompted the college to initiate a comprehensive review and--where advised--revision of its curriculum. The Proposal for a Revised Core Curriculum is designed to solve these problems without--it is hoped--creating new ones just as troublesome as the old. It seeks to create a core curriculum at Calvin College that is rigorous, balanced, coherent, and thoroughly Reformed in its orientation; a core that grounds its students in the Christian tradition, acquaints them with the various strands of their cultural heritage, enables them to reflect critically upon the many bids for their belief, and prepares them for informed and effective service in the world that God has set before them.

6.1.2.1 Gaining Clarity on the Purpose of Core

Part of the mandate of the Core Revision Committee was to review and restate the purpose of the core curriculum at Calvin College. The committee devoted itself to that task between the fall of 1996 and the fall of 1997. The new Statement of Purpose for the Core Curriculum was passed unanimously by the Faculty Senate last November. That detailed statement--some 40 pages long--makes a distinction between the ultimate and proximate purposes of the core curriculum. The ultimate purpose of the core curriculum, like to the ultimate purpose of a Calvin education generally, is to prepare students for lives of informed and effective Christian service in contemporary society. In pursuing that goal, the core enters into a kind of partnership with the disciplinary majors and professional programs: while the latter typically prepare students for lives of effective service within a particular career, the core seeks to prepare students for responsible involvement across the basic domains of life, domains in which they will all participate irrespective of their particular jobs. In short, the core prepares students to respond to their callings, where the scope of their callings is understood to embrace the non-professional as well as the professional dimensions of their lives. Thus the ultimate purpose of core refers beyond the disciplines, beyond the academy, to the world. The proximate purposes of the core, on the other hand, pertain to its intra-curricular functions: in relation to the rest of a student's studies, the core is to be foundational, contextual, central, continual, and confessional.

In addition to identifying the purposes of the core curriculum, the Statement of Purpose maps out three broad areas of core instruction: knowledge, skills, and virtues. It proceeds to enumerate categories within these domains, specifying the content and objectives of each. In so doing, the Statement provides specific guidance for the design, development, and assessment of core courses as well as the entire core curriculum.

The Proposal for a Revised Core Curriculum is based upon the new Statement of Purpose. It seeks to create a core curriculum that is balanced and coherent, that both covers the content and realizes the objectives specified in the Statement.

Consider one of the curricular differences in the proposed core made by the shift from the "disciplinary orientation" of CLAE to the "world orientation" of the Statement of Purpose. In the present core students are asked to select between several social scientific disciplines: one course from either psychology or sociology; one course from either political science or economics. The proposed core reformulates the distribution requirement in terms of three object levels: persons, institutions, and global horizons. Students are asked to take one course that examines the person from a social scientific point of view, one course that focuses on societal institutions, and one course that addresses either a region of the world outside North America or common global conditions that are drawing the regions of the world into relations of increasing inter-dependence and exchange. Here the distribution requirements are not defined by the disciplines, but by object domains which a range of disciplines can serve to illuminate.

The re-orientation called for by the Statement of Purpose has implications not only for the structure within which core courses are offered, but also for the kinds of courses that can be offered for core credit. The overall aim of the present core, as articulated by CLAE, is to

introduce students to the academic disciplines. Thus the current core curriculum is largely filled with “Introduction to...” courses. The primary aim of the new core is not to introduce students to the disciplines, but to provide them with insights into the world they inhabit by utilizing the resources of the disciplines. This means that basic core offerings need not be limited to introductory surveys of a given discipline. Core courses from the Sociology Department, for instance, need not be limited to multiple sections of Introduction to Sociology, but may also include--if the department so chooses--courses on the sociology of the family, the sociology of religion, or the sociology of race and ethnicity. Contributions from the Psychology Department need not be limited to multiple sections of the Introduction to Psychology, but may also include--if the department so chooses--courses on the psychology of human development, or the psychology of sex and gender. As long as a core course meets the general objectives of the category under which it is offered, it need not commit itself to a textbook tour of a particular discipline. Thus the proposed core makes room for variety and innovation in the core curriculum, while at the same time safeguarding its integrity by holding all core courses accountable to the relevant goals articulated in the Statement of Purpose.

6.1.2.2 Introducing the Central Vision of Calvin College

The proposal for a revised core provides all first-year students with an early and vivid introduction to the central intellectual project of Calvin College. Rather than offering a Christian Perspectives on Learning course as an option in the contextual disciplines, the revised core calls for an interim course --”Developing a Christian Mind”--designed and reserved for first-year students. This course is to serve as an invitation to academic work at Calvin College by acquainting students with the nature, tradition, and aims of a Reformed Christian liberal arts education, sketching out the contours of a Christian worldview, and examining, in some depth, the bearing of that worldview on some salient issue or cultural phenomenon of contemporary concern. Like CPOL, the Developing a Christian Mind interim course will contain a number of common readings that map out and explore the shape of Christian belief and its worldview implications; unlike CPOL, it will allow faculty members to propose their own versions of this course, choosing specific topics and applications according to their areas of interest and expertise. This revision will provide for a broader base of informed all-college participation, as the specific topics addressed in the DCM course are not restricted to those that fall most naturally under the headings of religion and philosophy; at the same time, it will make for greater investment on the part of students, as they may choose sections of this course according to their areas of interest. This course also addresses two other concerns: first, it reserves an array of quality interim courses for first-year students, who are often left to pick among the remains of the interim offerings after the second, third, and fourth year students have already registered; second, it will help foster academic community by providing first-year students with a common fund of intellectual experience.

6.1.2.3 Creating a Body of Common Learning

A well-designed core must balance the curricular need for common learning with the human need for creativity and choice. Common learning achieved by a maximally large roster of common courses with regimented syllabi is likely to lead only to alienation on the part of faculty members called to teach core courses and resentment on the part of the students who have to take

them. The Educational Policy Committee seeks to strike the mean here by recommending a small number of common courses together with a complement of core course categories unified by common themes and objectives. The categories allow for significant choice, but avoid fragmentation by specifying certain goals that courses in the category must achieve. Faculty members, departments, and divisions most closely associated with these categories--where the real expertise lies--will be called upon during the implementation phase of the new core curriculum to work out the common elements of the core categories in more detail, perhaps specifying common concepts, methods, topics, or readings.

Examples of this attempt at balancing common learning and distribution can be found in the proposed history and theology core offerings--areas highlighted earlier for their fragmentation. The core proposal encourages work in both the ancient and modern periods of history and at both the introductory and intermediate levels. The current core requires one course in history--either a survey of ancient/medieval history or a survey of modern history. A second course in history is optional, and could be in the same period as the first survey course. The core category covering the intermediate courses in history--"Global and Historical Studies"--does not belong to any one department, but may include historically oriented courses from a variety of disciplines and departments (the history of art, the history of science, the history of theater, for example), thus ensuring broad all-college participation in the historical education of the Calvin student.

In theology, the core proposal guarantees work in Biblical and systematic theology at both the introductory and intermediate levels. The current core requires a biblical theology course at the introductory level and a systematic theology course at the intermediate level. The new core proposal offers both biblical theology and systematic theology at the introductory level, requiring the student to take an intermediate course in theology in the field not covered by the introductory course. Which plan the student elects is left as a matter of advising. Some students enter Calvin with a good deal of Bible knowledge, but not much by way of instruction in Christian doctrine and theology. They would benefit from a basic course in theology and later a more focused course in Biblical literature. Other students have had a significant exposure to Christian doctrine, and could benefit from a fresh approach to the Biblical text as a whole. Still other students come to Calvin with little background in either category; general courses at the intermediate level would be available to them. All courses in the intermediate core categories for theology will share common themes, aims, and elements, even as they focus on different topics--thus ensuring common learning while allowing for significant choice.

Other categories of core courses--not tied to the "criss-cross" model described above--specify common themes, aims, and objectives while allowing for diversity of content and application. All courses that serve in the "Societal Structures in North America" category, for instance, are to acquaint students with the methods of the social sciences, with the role societal institutions play in shaping the character and quality of human life in North America, and with the meaning of such normative requirements as justice, freedom, and stewardship. Courses in this category are then free to focus on particular social, economic, or political institutions and practices as long as they fulfill the overall objectives of the category under which they are being offered. Such categories are unified not so much by discipline as by object domain, and thus allow for disciplinary contributions on the part of a number social science departments.

There is at least one other feature of the revised core that will make for a greater measure of common learning. The revised core calls for common readings in a first-year course for all Calvin students. These readings--which will include a monograph written by the Dean of the Chapel in consultation with members of the faculty and the Core Curriculum Committee--can then serve as common reference points in subsequent instruction in core courses. To these basic readings others may be added during the implementation phase as departments and divisions decide on common readings within certain categories of core courses. For instance, the History Department might recommend a common history text that can be used for background readings in all historical courses offered under the "Global and Historical Studies" rubric. The Religion and Theology Department might name a common text in church history for use as background reading in all its intermediate systematic theology courses. Once these common texts are named--constituting a "Calvin Bookshelf"--faculty members at large can make reference to them in their own courses as the occasion arises. (It should be noted here that the Calvin Bookshelf need not be limited to books, as certain works of art may also be recommended.)

6.1.2.4 Reducing the Complexity of the Core

The Proposal for a Revised Core Curriculum provides a new specification of core reductions for Professional Programs--reductions that safeguard the "non-negotiable" part of the core and at the same time make it possible for professional programs to graduate their students in four years. The reduction plan is simple and workable, and should prevent the over-complexification of core that results when each program freely tailors the entire structure of core in order to suit its own cognate requirements.

6.1.2.5 Sequencing Core Offerings

The core proposal provides for significant intermediate study and for integrative work toward the conclusion of a student's college career. Again, because the aim of the current core is to introduce students to the disciplines, core courses tend to recede in the background as students make progress in their majors or professional programs. Thus, with few exceptions, a student's studies tend to trail off in evermore specialized concerns. Such categories as Global and Historical Studies are designed to provide a range of core courses that go beyond the Survey and the Introduction, that allow students to dig into a particular field of study. The "Integrative Studies" category is designed to promote reflection on the central themes of a Calvin education at a higher level by requiring an upper level course in which students consider again the meaning and implications of such ideas as the wholistic interpretation of the doctrines of creation, fall, redemption and restoration, the idea of vocation, the ethical challenges they are likely to face in their professions and in their lives generally, the deep issues of some particular domain of life-practice. Again, this category invites participation of a number of departments and disciplines. It may, in many cases, include capstone courses in professional programs and the disciplines; it may also include such courses as Christianity and Culture, Medical Ethics, Philosophy of Law, Aesthetics, and the like.

6.1.2.6 Coordinating the Core

To address the problem of “drift” in the core, the Proposal for a Revised Core Curriculum recommends the formation of a standing faculty committee charged with implementation, development, oversight, and adjustment of the core curriculum at Calvin College. This committee, like the Teacher Education Committee, reports to the Educational Policy Committee. See “Core Governance“ below for a description of the mandate and composition of this committee.

6.1.2.7 Addressing New Educational Needs

The core proposal prepares students--by way of knowledge and skills--for effective participation in a society that has, over the past thirty years, changed dramatically in at least these four respects: the spectacular growth of information technology; the ascendance of the image as a means of communication; the internal cultural diversification of North American society; and the increasing global interdependence of nations, cultures and economies.

In the current core, instruction in information technology is handled in the fourth hour lab attached to sections of Written Rhetoric. This lab has become somewhat of a logistical nightmare for the English Department; and the content of the lab is circumscribed by the aims of the Written Rhetoric course. The proposal relocates instruction in information technology to a course offered by the Computer Science Department, to be taught with the advice and co-operation of the English Department, the Hekman Library, the Engineering Department, and the Center for Information Technology. In this course students will receive instruction in computer hardware and software concepts, a number of computer applications, database and web-based research strategies, plus the site-specific resources of the Hekman Library. They will also be alerted to the ethical principles that apply to the use of information technology. In this one-hour course, allowances will be made for the spread in computer competencies among our entering students by taking a modular approach to lab assignments and creating opportunities for peer-mentoring.

The power and presence of the image as an agent of communication has long been overlooked by the academy, an institution whose career has been intimately connected to the traditions of the printed and spoken word. The explosion in the use of the image in our culture, brought about by the new technologies of the camera, cinema, television, computer, internet, and scientific visualization, has created a situation where this dimension of human culture and communication can no longer be ignored or treated as irrelevant to liberal arts education. Accordingly the core proposal has created a category entitled “Rhetoric in Culture” which contains courses in both oral and visual rhetoric.

The Cross-Cultural Engagement requirement seeks to enhance skills in cross-cultural communication and understanding. Piggy-backing on many existing off-campus and academically based service-learning courses, it requires that all Calvin students, at some point in their college education, spend significant time in face-to-face contact with members of a different culture. Similarly, the Global and Historical Studies requirement covers courses that introduce students to the culture, history, and traditions of nations or regions outside of North America--or to shared global conditions that are now drawing the regions of the world into contact with each other. This category invites participation from a variety of departments, and

may include courses on regional economies, regional politics, international politics, regional histories, world regional geography, cultural anthropology, the global environment, and the like.

6.1.2.8 Providing Occasions for Interdepartmental Cooperation

With the creation of a number of trans-disciplinary course categories and a standing core committee charged to develop the core curriculum, the revised core will foster a greater degree of all-college participation in the project of core education. It will encourage bridge-building among departments on the basis of shared and related categories of core instruction, thus creating communities of disciplines and stimulating cross-disciplinary conversation, course linkage, innovation, and cooperation.

6.1.2.9 Providing the Academic Anchor for First-Year Programming

The proposed core makes a substantial contribution toward fulfilling one of the key objectives from the list of objectives of the First Year Program adopted by Faculty Senate in the spring of 1996, namely, to “become familiar with the central affirmations of the Reformed Christian confession, understand how these affirmations can inform a worldview, and experience this confessional perspective in and outside the classroom.” It does so by creating a first year interim course for all Calvin students where a monograph by the Dean of the Chapel that lays out Calvin’s Reformed identity will serve as a common text and central discussion piece.. In addition, the Educational Policy Committee has referred the issue of first-year programming to the Academic Development Committee for specific recommendations.

6.1.3 The Central Goal

WHEN THE FACULTY SENATE ADOPTED THE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE for the Core Curriculum in November of 1997, it embraced an ambitious set of goals for liberal arts education at Calvin that cannot be met by a small or minimal core. Is the proposed core too large? Let us assume that a core curriculum is too large when it a) prevents students in some programs or majors from graduating in four years, and/or b) it reduces--beyond some reasonable threshold--the number of free electives in which students can explore their interests unrestrained by programmatic requirements. With respect to the first point: initial feasibility studies showed that the proposed core is compatible with four-year graduation in all professional programs. Furthermore, the proposed core provides students pursuing disciplinary majors with an ample number of spare semester hours--in most cases enough for a double major. The proposed core allows for a good deal of “double-dipping”--where the same course can count for core and a major or professional program. Thus the core overlaps most majors and programs to a significant degree, reducing its “actual” size. In addition, some of the new elements of the proposed core incorporate courses that many students are already taking--capstone courses, off-campus interims and programs, and the like. With respect to the second point: the proposed core does not regiment a student’s program with a large number of common courses; many of the intermediate core requirement (e.g., Global and Historical Studies) can be filled by a wide variety of courses offered by a number of different departments. These core requirements can be legitimately thought of as “guided electives.”

Beyond the quantitative issues, important as they may be, there lies the issue concerning the quality of liberal arts education at Calvin College. In an age that demands greater and greater degrees of specialization, technical education, and narrowly focused career preparation, perhaps Calvin should be willing to stand out and to reassert in no uncertain terms that it is seeking--as a comprehensive Christian institution in the liberal arts tradition--to prepare students for a broad and faithful engagement with the world at large, not just a successful career in one of the professions. Such an education involves serious--not passing--consideration of the basic contexts in which we live out our lives, be they historical, socio-political, cultural, metaphysical, or natural; it involves a deep knowledge of our traditions, the acquisition of a broad range of skills, and the cultivation of dispositions to respond to the needs and challenges of our age with insight, courage, and compassion. To prepare students for lives of informed and effective Christian service in contemporary society is the central goal of Calvin's educational mission. The core, by organizing the resources of the departments and disciplines around this mission, should be thought of as the all-college major, a major that is foundational, central, contextual, continual, and confessional.

6.2 The Core Curriculum

The course listings and category descriptions below are recommended to the faculty on the following two assumptions: that the semester hour designations reflect current practice, not the final determinations made by the departments and the Core Curriculum Committee during the implementation period; that not all courses offered in a particular category will cover all of the objectives listed for the category, but rather that all courses will strive to capture most of the objectives.

6.2.1 Core Gateway

6.2.1.1 Prelude (1) and Developing a Christian Mind (3)

Description: sequence of a) a one-credit, seven-week, first-year fall course—Prelude—with multiple sections, devoted to a hospitable intellectual introduction to new students; and b) a three-credit, first-year interim course—Developing a Christian Mind (DCM)—with multiple sections, devoted to the delineation of a Christian worldview and its implications for issues of contemporary relevance.

Objectives: to provide students with a) hospitable learning environment within which to explore learning, listening, discerning, obedience, hospitality, and awareness through a Reformed Christian perspective in the company of other new members of the Calvin College learning community; and b) an early and vivid introduction to the central intellectual project of Calvin College--the development of a Christian mind and a broad, faith-based engagement with the ambient culture; to introduce students to basic readings in a Reformed Christian worldview from both the past and the present; to explore, in some depth, the bearing of the Christian faith on some issue under current public debate; to introduce students to the nature, tradition, and aims of Reformed Christian liberal arts education; to foster academic community by providing a common fund of intellectual experience for all first-year students.

No HS exemptions; all first-time college students (FTIAC) and all transfer students with 12 semester hours or less of transfer credit will be required to complete Prelude. Some regular

semester sections of both the Prelude and the DCM course will be offered for transfer students and students taking required courses during interim.

6.2.2 Core Competencies

6.2.2.1 Foundations of Information Technology (1)

Description: a first-year introduction to the computer and to college-level research skills, making full but discriminating use of current electronic information technology with a discussion of the cultural impact of computer technology and the ethical responsibilities of its users.

Objectives: to introduce students to the basic concepts of computer hardware and software; to familiarize students with the potentials of the computer as a “universal appliance,” capable of storing, locating, transferring, manipulating, analyzing, and presenting information; to establish a viewpoint from which students can make ethically responsible judgments regarding the appropriate use of information technology.

Exemption via test; transfer credit accepted.

6.2.2.2 Written Rhetoric (3)

Description: a first-year course in college-level composition which introduces students to the resources of the Hekman Library and addresses the larger issues of writing: rhetorical structure, social context, ethics, worldview, and interpretation; this course serves as the foundation for the college writing program.

Objectives: to develop and enhance the student’s ability to write solid expository prose at the collegiate level, with special attention to the process of revision through multiple drafts; to develop the skills of reasoning and analysis, reading and discernment; to guide students through the requisite steps in executing a research project; to acquaint students with the resources of the Hekman Library and various discipline-specific research strategies; to familiarize students with criteria for the critical evaluation of information sources; to develop skill in the judicious use of technology in research and writing; to make students aware of the complex transactions involved in the writing and reading of texts; to deepen students’ understanding of their own voice and the forms available for its expression; to anticipate and revisit themes central to the first-year interim course, *Developing a Christian Mind*.

Exemption via test; transfer credit accepted.

6.2.2.3 Rhetoric in Culture (2-3)

Description: a category of core courses devoted to the practice of oral and visual rhetoric in contemporary culture which also address the larger issues within these modes of communication: rhetorical structure, social context, ethics, worldview, and interpretation.

Objectives: to enhance students’ ability to communicate in a chosen field of rhetoric; to develop skills in cultural discernment and analysis; to cultivate the ability to listen and/or see and respond with understanding and informed judgment; to develop skill in the judicious use of technology in oral and visual communication; to promote understanding of the effect of technology on communication; to promote insight into the complex transactions involved in the acts of communication and reception.

Exemption via test; transfer credit accepted.

6.2.2.4 Foreign Language (3-16)

Description: a category of core courses in which a student's skills in a foreign language are developed to a degree equivalent to a fourth semester college proficiency; normally this means the completion of a 123 or 202 foreign language course.

Objectives: to equip students with the basic skills of understanding, writing, and speaking a modern foreign language (or reading and writing an ancient language); to help students understand the cultural importance of language in the formation and expression of human identity on both the individual and social levels; to make use of a foreign language as a point of access to the history, people, experience and traditions of the host culture; to develop students' skill in cross-cultural communication.

HS exemption for 4 years of any one foreign language; exemption for all students whose native language is not English; transfer credit accepted.

6.2.2.5 Health and Fitness (3)

Description: a category of core courses designed to enhance the physical skills and knowledge requisite for living healthy lives.

Objectives: to gain and develop skills in sports and leisure activities that will lead to active lives of health and physical fitness; to convey knowledge of principles of health, training, and nutrition as a basis for informed decisions on matters of diet, conduct, habits, and activities conducive to health and physical fitness.

Exemptions: students participating in inter-collegiate sports for one or more seasons may be exempt from the core category most appropriately aligned with the specific sport activity.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3 Core Studies

6.2.3.1 Biblical Foundations, I or II (3)

Description: Students must take one introductory or intermediate course in Biblical Foundations. BF I: An introduction to the Bible, studied within its literary, historical, and cultural settings in order to understand its central theological themes and teachings, which serve as a foundation for Christian faith and life. Intended for first or second year students. BF II: A careful and detailed study of a key division of Biblical literature at the intermediate level in which the central issues of canon, authority, and interpretation are also investigated. Students who take the Theological Foundations I course should fulfill this requirement by taking an intermediate course from BF II.

Objectives: to open up the complexity, depth, richness, and unity of the Biblical text as the Word of God, the rule of Christian faith and life; to acquaint students with the principal themes of Biblical theology; to introduce students to the main elements of informed Biblical interpretation: cultural setting, literary genre, intended audience, location in salvation history, and the like; to familiarize students with the ways the Bible is read and used in the life of faith and the tradition of the church.

Transfer credit accepted for one of the two religion requirements.

6.2.3.2 Theological Foundations, I or II (3)

Description: Students must take one introductory or intermediate course in theological foundations. TF I: A study of basic Christian theology, understood as the central teachings of the Christian church drawn from reflection on the sense and import of the Biblical text. Here basic doctrines are studied in the context of the historical development of Christian thought, with particular attention to the Reformed tradition. Intended for first or second year students. TF II: A careful investigation of a key Christian doctrine or theme at the intermediate level in which the central issues of the nature, task, method, and purpose of Christian theology are also addressed. Students who take the Biblical Foundations I course should fulfill this requirement by taking an intermediate course from TF II.

Objectives: to deepen students' understanding of the triune God, the person of Christ, and the work of the Holy Spirit in the world; to deepen students' understanding of the basic doctrines of the Christian church--their historical origins and theoretical coherence; to acquaint students with the Reformed strain of theological reflection--its themes, emphases, and implications; to enhance students' skills of analytical reading, theological reflection, and informed expression in matters of faith.

Transfer credit accepted for one of the two requirements in religion.

6.2.3.3 History of the West and the World, I or II (4)

Description: Students must take one of the following two courses. HWW I: Beginning with the emergence of the major societies in the river valleys of ancient Eurasia, this course traces the development of the world's chief historical and religious traditions down to the European exploration and colonization of the Americas circa 1500. Primary source readings from various cultures are emphasized, with a common secondary text providing an overview. Intended for first or second-year students. HWW II: Beginning circa 1500, this course traces the rise of Western societies to prominence in the context of other world cultures in the emerging modern world. Primary source readings from various cultures are emphasized, with a common secondary text providing an overview. Intended for first or second-year students.

Objectives: to familiarize students with the development of Western civilization within a global context; to provide a framework of historical knowledge which will serve as a basis for assimilating and understanding the historical import of subsequent studies at the intermediate and advanced levels; to deepen students' understanding of the contexts, forces, and traditions that have shaped and continue to shape the world they inhabit; to provide temporally and culturally distant vantage points from which the contemporary world may be viewed and assessed.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3.4 Philosophical Foundations (3)

Description: a consideration of perennial questions pertaining to the existence of God, the basic makeup of the world, the nature, origin, and destiny of human life, the source and status of moral judgments, the basis of justified beliefs, the structure of human knowledge, and the relation between religious faith and human reason. Intended for first or second-year students.

Objectives: to introduce students to the realm of basic philosophical questions about God, the world, and human nature; to gain some familiarity with the basic types of responses to these questions--their historical origins, their development over time, and their relation to the Christian faith; to develop a sense for the key contours of a Christian worldview and its bearing on an account of the structure of the world and the point of human life; to develop the skills of close textual analysis, critical reflection, careful reasoning, cultural discernment, and expository writing.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3.5 Mathematics (3)

Description: an introduction to the nature and variety of formal and quantitative structures, to mathematical models and their applications, and to the role mathematics has played in shaping science, culture, and society.

Objectives: to deepen students' understanding of the nature of formal mathematical structures and their range of applications; to understand how mathematics serves as a common tool and unifying language for a broad array of scientific disciplines; to gain some insight into the role and influence of mathematics in shaping our understanding of reality; to enhance skills in mathematical reasoning.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3.6 The Natural World (8)

Description: a category of core studies covering courses designed to acquaint students with the fundamental entities, structures and systems of the natural world and the nature of the sciences that study them.

Objectives: to examine the behavior of physical and living systems through the methods of the experimental and observational sciences; to gain an appreciation of the wisdom of God through exposure to the vast, complex, and elegant systems of the natural world; to understand the project, methods, and cultural impact of the natural sciences; to develop skill in the judicious use of technology in the natural sciences; to prepare students for informed participation in a society that has been deeply shaped by science and technology; to trace the implications of scientific theory for our understanding of the world and our place within it; to consider the findings of natural science from the perspective of Christian faith.

Students may fulfill the Natural World requirement by taking one 4 hour lab course in physical science and one 4 hour lab course in life science; or, any two natural science lab courses (totaling 8 hours) that are major-sequence courses in Biology, Chemistry, Geology, or Physics.

High school exemptions and transfer credits are accepted, but every student must take at least one lab science course at Calvin.

A high school exemption is available for satisfactory completion in grades 10-12 of three appropriate full-year courses in the natural science disciplines. Students completing a full year of chemistry and a full year of physics are exempted from a physical science course; students with two full years of biology are exempted from a life-science course.

6.2.3.7 Literature (3)

Description: a category of core studies covering courses designed for intensive engagement with works of any literature.

Objectives: to develop the discipline of reading with attention, imagination, and precision; to enhance writing skills beyond the level achieved in the first-year written rhetoric course; to deepen knowledge of literature in its historical development and cultural context; to engage in the critical analysis of literature with both breadth and depth; to understand how literary works both capture and shape our sense of human life and the world we inhabit; to discern, confront, consider and assess visions of life that permeate literary texts, and thus to gain in wisdom and understanding.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3.8 Arts (3)

Description: a category of core studies covering courses designed for intensive engagement with music, visual art, film, theater, and the like, attending to both the productive and receptive aspects of the medium selected.

Objectives: to develop the skills of observing and listening to the arts with understanding and discernment; to develop skills in visual and/or aural communication; to deepen knowledge of artistic traditions and their social contexts; to understand how the arts disclose, inform, and affect our sense of life and the world we inhabit; to learn of the human condition from the arts--in its promise and its brokenness, its sufferings and its reasons for hope--and thus to grow in insight and wisdom.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3.9 Persons in Community (3)

Description: a category of core studies covering courses that introduce students to the various components of human identity and behavior within their immediate social contexts, and to the nature of social scientific methods as they apply to the study of persons.

Objectives: to acquaint students with the biological, affective, cognitive, and social components of human development and identity; to understand the relation of these components to human behavior; or, to study the effect of such factors as race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and social class on human self-understanding, behavior, and relations; to gain some understanding of the experimental and observational methods of the social sciences as they bear on these issues; to apprehend the complexity of human beings as image bearers of God, existing in communities of persons, subject both to the distortions of sin and the healing power of grace.

A student may not present two courses from the same department for core credit in Persons in Community and Societal Structures in North America.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3.10 Societal Structures in North America (3)

Description: a category of core studies covering courses that address the broad social, economic, and political institutions of North American society, as well as the basic concepts, theories, and methods of the sciences that study these institutions.

Objectives: to provide students with some insight into the origin, structure, promise, effects, and limitations of the basic social institutions of North American society; to understand the central concepts and theories of the social sciences; to gain some familiarity with the use of research methods in the social sciences; to examine the effects of technology on society; to understand the meaning and requirements of such norms as justice, freedom, and stewardship; to introduce students to the traditions of Christian reflection on social life.

A student may not present two courses from the same department for core credit in Persons in Community and Societal Structures in North America.

Transfer credit accepted.

6.2.3.11 Global and Historical Studies (3)

Description: a category of core studies covering courses that deal with issues and developments extending beyond the confines of the modern North Atlantic world. Included in this category are courses that focus either on 1) the historical development of some premodern civilization, region, or culture; or on 2) issues of global diversity and interdependence, including the traditions, history, culture, and current status of regions and cultures outside the North Atlantic world, with an emphasis on the common global conditions, practices, and forces that are working to foster the increasing interrelatedness of peoples and nations, and the means and methods of global cross-cultural understanding and communication.

Objectives: to deepen students' awareness and understanding of the larger global and historical contexts of contemporary life; to provide students with temporally and culturally distant vantage points from which to assess the North American society and their own lives as members of that society; to complement studies of pre-modern history and culture with studies in the modern period, or vice versa; to enhance students' facility in understanding and communication in a global context.

Transfer credit accepted.

Prerequisite: HWW I or HWW II and one course in Persons in Community or Societal Structures in North America.

6.2.3.12 Cross-Cultural Engagement (0-1)

Description: a core requirement that can be met by any course of at least one credit hour in which students interact directly with members of a different culture over a significant period of time. Courses fulfilling this requirement may also satisfy other core requirements.

Objectives: to gain skills in cross-cultural communication; to understand how the world might look from the standpoint of another community of interpretation and experience; to learn how to discern and, where appropriate, adapt to the cultural expectations of the other; to learn how to distinguish between the enduring principles of human morality and their situation-specific adaptations; to witness other cultural embodiments of faith, and thus to reflect on the substance and definition of one's own faith by comparison.

Prerequisite: one course in either Persons in Community or Societal Structures in North America.

Exemptions by petition: students for whom a Calvin education is itself a cross-cultural experience; students who have significant prior experience with a foreign culture.

6.2.4 Core Capstone

6.2.4.1 Integrative Studies (3)

Description: a category covering upper level courses that seek to draw students into critical reflection upon the deepest assumptions, commitments, and issues in some domain of human inquiry, belief, or practice. Courses in this category would include those dedicated to an examination of ethical and religious issues in the professions; to inquiries into the nature and grounds of scientific or religious belief; to an exploration and critique of ultimate accounts of human culture and society; or, at the most general level, to an inquiry into the relationship between Christian faith and cultural stance. Intended for third or fourth year students.

Objectives: to provide an opportunity for students to examine the sense, direction, and contexts of some domain of life-practice, be it health care, communication, the arts, law, business, religion, scientific investigation, or the like; to gain skills in decision making under constraint; to re-visit, at a more advanced level, the contours of a Christian worldview and their implications, thus integrating at a higher level the themes and concerns introduced in the first-year interim course.

No transfer credit.

Prerequisite: DCM, Philosophical Foundations, Biblical Foundations I or Theological Foundations I.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Core Governance

7.1 Core Curriculum Committee Mandate

<http://www.calvin.edu/admin/comm/core/mandate.htm>

CHAPTER EIGHT: Professional Program Requirements and the Core Curriculum

The Educational Policy Committee (EPC) recognizes (as did the *ad hoc* Core Curriculum Committee) that the size of the proposed core makes it difficult for students in some programs to complete their studies in four years. However EPC remains convinced that it is desirable to make it possible for well-prepared students to do that. Therefore EPC grants the practical necessity of reducing the core requirements for students in some professional programs. This is not a new idea. Currently, many professional programs have a reduced core and others, most notably Education, have modified core requirements so as to have “core” courses that serve both program and core purposes (e.g., Mathematics 221).

The *ad hoc* Core Curriculum Committee proposed a specific approach to determining what reductions to core could be allowed in professional programs. That approach is very similar to that of the PECLAC document which defines current practice. On this approach, the core requirements are divided into two groups – the non-negotiable requirements and the requirements that are proposed for possible reduction. Representatives of various professional programs have raised questions both about this general approach and about the specific reductions suggested in the proposal. The objections to this approach center on its procrustean nature.

The Educational Policy Committee, after consulting with several representatives of various professional programs, proposes a different approach to determining the core reduction that we think is more consistent with the nature of the new core. The newly adopted core curriculum is not organized around courses but rather around a statement of purposes. The core categories that form the requirements of the new core were chosen in an attempt to ensure that all these purposes are met. For example, the category “Persons in Community” is included because it contributes to several of the core purposes (e.g., VII, Knowledge of Human Society) and not because we think that every student should “be introduced to” the social sciences. Most of the core purposes are addressed by more than one category and each category addresses several of the purposes. The categories then are only a means for ensuring the purposes of the core are met. The *ad hoc* committee could have drawn the category lines in very different places and could have added or subtracted categories and still have met its goal of addressing the purposes of the core.

This way of thinking about the core requirements encourages us to think not of particular categories first of all but rather of the goals and objectives of the core. Therefore, in understanding how to evaluate a proposal for a reduced core, we should not ask simply about which categories are omitted, but rather about how the proposed reduced core addresses the core purposes. On this way of looking at core, there might be many different ways of reducing the core requirements and these reductions might look quite different from program to program. For example, the category “Rhetoric in Culture” was included in the new core because it was thought to address in an important way several of the core purposes. But it certainly is possible that in some professional program, these core purposes are addressed in a significant way by courses within the program. Then we might have no principled objection to allowing that program to omit the category.

EPC therefore proposes the following approach towards determining core reductions. First, we give guidelines concerning the maximum number of allowable reductions (in terms of number of categories). But within these guidelines, EPC proposes that each professional program be asked to propose a core reduction package. These proposals would then be judged by the standing Core Curriculum Committee on the basis of how closely the package (program and core) addresses the core purposes.

8.1 Recommendation A (Reduction Maxima)

1. The categories “Developing a Christian Mind” and “Integrative Studies” must be a part of every core program proposed to the Core Curriculum Committee.
2. No program shall be allowed to eliminate or reduce more than five categories.
3. No program shall be allowed to eliminate or reduce more than four of the categories in the Core Studies group.
4. No program shall be allowed to eliminate or reduce more than two of the categories in the Core Competencies group.

8.2 Recommendation B (Reduction Guidelines)

A professional program may propose (to the Core Curriculum Committee) that graduates of the program be required to take a modified set of core requirements. Such a proposal needs approval by EPC and the Faculty Senate. The following guidelines will be used to evaluate such a proposal.

1. Recognizing that all core purposes will not be fully met with a reduced core, the fundamental criteria shall be balance among the various purposes of the core and the inclusion of as many categories as possible.
2. The proposal may not reduce core requirements more than the maxima specified in Recommendation A.
3. If elimination of a category is proposed, an argument must be made that the core purposes addressed by that category are addressed by other requirements of the core and program.

APPENDIX A: Guidelines for Core Course Development

Nineteen categories of courses are found within the four levels of the core curriculum (Core Gateway: 1 category; Core Competencies: 5 categories; Core Studies: 10 categories; and Core Capstone: 1 category). Some of these categories are designed to allow a number of differing courses from a variety of disciplines to fulfill the requirement; other categories have their requirement reflected in a single course or discipline. But each of these categories is to be understood in relationship to its purpose or purposes for imparting knowledge and/or ensuring skills. The central purposes for each category are spelled out earlier in this document. Core courses should also promote moral formation. Although specific virtues are not listed for each category, each core course should demonstrate its promotion of the virtues through pedagogical and other means.

If this core proposal is approved, the College will develop the new curriculum during the 1999-2000 academic year. Departments must bring a proposal to the Core Curriculum Committee for each course they wish to fulfill a category requirement. (Current course candidates listed elsewhere in this document are for illustrative purposes only.) Subsequently, core courses will be regularly evaluated according to a cycle of review established by the Core Curriculum Committee. Proposals should include the following:

Title of the course

Catalog Description (include suggested course number and semester hours)

Expanded Course Description

Outline of the course

Place in the curriculum/Rationale:

Description of the course content relative to the purposes of the core curriculum: knowledge and skills (and, if applicable, virtues)

Description of the pedagogical approaches to be used relative, in particular, to the purposes of the core curriculum identified as virtues

Relationship, if any, of the course to department major, minor, or cognates

Resource Allocation

Faculty

Library resources

The proposal should indicate which purpose(s) in the core, particularly *knowledge* and *skill*, the course is intended to fulfill and provide appropriate rationale. The committee will also pay careful attention to the description of pedagogical implications, recalling this sentence from the Statement of Purpose for the Core Curriculum: “While a specification of virtues we would want to foster in our students will have definite implications for the content of the core curriculum, it will also and especially be crucial for the pedagogies we employ in the teaching of core courses.” Reference must be made to the course’s dual purpose, if appropriate, in serving the department’s major or program. Additional guidelines the committee will use are as follows.

The Core Curriculum Revision Committee has suggested no limit to the number of courses that can be listed as meeting the requirements of a given category; however, practical issues (e.g., present staffing patterns) will guide the initial round of review. Also, for the purposes of advising and degree audit, the list of courses should be neither excessively large nor subject to frequent change.

A course that is included in a core category may also be used to fulfill a major or program requirement. In this way, the impact of the core is less imposing to students and the purposes of the core will be better integrated into some upper-level courses.

If a course is used by a student to meet a given core category, that course cannot be used by the same student to meet a different core category (with the exception of the cross-cultural engagement requirement). Although it is possible that a given course could theoretically fulfill the goals of two different categories, in practice this will not be permitted for any particular student so as to ensure sufficient breadth in student core programs.

Although many existing courses, with moderate revision, will be able to gain approval as meeting core category requirements, proposals for new courses are welcome, particularly when the sponsoring department demonstrates there will be no net increase in staffing.

When evaluating whether each course proposed for a given category meets the stated purposes relating to forms of knowledge and skill development, the committee will consult the table below. The listing of a specific purpose or purposes indicates the *centrality* of these aims for the given category, and proposed courses must reflect the purpose or purposes accordingly. As expected, a proposed course may include other purposes beyond those listed. Also, when more than one purpose is stated for a category that includes a variety of courses, not every course is expected to meet all of the stated purposes (e.g., all courses in the category of the Arts will not include the *discipline of listening* as a central purpose).

Upper level courses (e.g., *Global and Historical Studies*, *Biblical or Theological Foundations*) will address their stated purposes with greater depth; it follows that these three categories will generally include among their purposes *The Art of Executing a Research Project*. In contrast, lower level courses most often have the skills of *written rhetoric* and the *discipline of reading* among their central purposes. The similarity of purposes between the *Core Gateway* and the *Core Capstone* levels is intended; differences will be reflected in the level at which these purposes are addressed at the later stage of college study.

Finally, all categories will contribute to the purposes of developing knowledge of *The Christian Faith* and *the Reformed Tradition*, as well as enhancing skills of *Cultural Discernment*. Likewise, the development of reasoning and writing skills are implicit throughout the entire curriculum, the latter made explicit in the Writing Program of the college.

The following table states first the core course or category, then the core knowledge and skills to be conveyed in that course or category.

Course/Category	Core Knowledge	Core Skills
6.2.1.1 Prelude and Developing a _Christian Mind	The Christian Faith The Reformed Tradition Our Hearts Our Gifts and Callings	Cultural Discernment The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Rhetoric of the Image The Discipline of Reading The Discipline of Seeing
6.2.2.1 Foundations of Information _Technology		The Use of Information Technology
6.2.2.2 Written Rhetoric		The General Art of Reasoning The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Discipline of Reading The Art of Executing a Research Project
6.2.2.3 Rhetoric in Culture		The General Art of Reasoning Rhetoric of the Spoken Word Rhetoric of the Image The Discipline of Listening The Discipline of Seeing
6.2.2.4 Foreign Language	Human Society Historical Development	The Discipline of Reading The Discipline of Listening Competence in a Foreign Language The Art of Cross-Cultural Communication
6.2.2.5 Health and Fitness	Our Bodies	The Exercise of the Body
6.2.3.1 Biblical Foundations I 6.2.3.2 Theological Foundations I	The Christian Faith The Reformed Tradition Historical Development	The General Art of Reasoning The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Discipline of Reading
6.2.3.1 Biblical Foundations II 6.2.3.2 Theological Foundations II	The Christian Faith The Reformed Tradition Historical Development	The General Art of Reasoning Cultural Discernment The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Art of Executing a Research Project
6.2.3.3 History of the West and the World	Other Religious Traditions Human Society Historical Development	The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Discipline of Reading
6.2.3.4 Philosophical Foundations	The Reformed Tradition World Structures	The General Art of Reasoning Cultural Discernment The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Discipline of Reading

6.2.3.5 Mathematics	World Structure Quantitative Structures	Quantitative and Empirical Reasoning
6.2.3.6 The Natural World	World Structures The Natural World	The General Art of Reasoning Quantitative and Empirical Reasoning The Discipline of Seeing
6.2.3.7 Literature	World Structures Human Society The Arts Historical Development	The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Discipline of Reading
6.2.3.8 The Arts	Human Society The Arts Historical Development	The Rhetoric of the Image The Discipline of Listening The Discipline of Seeing
6.2.3.9 Persons in Community	Human Society Our Identities Our Emotions Our Minds	Quantitative and Empirical Reasoning The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Discipline of Reading
6.2.3.10 Societal Structures in North America	Human Society Historical Development Our Identities	Quantitative and Empirical Reasoning The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Discipline of Reading
6.2.3.11 Global and Historical _Studies	The Natural World Human Society Historical Development	Quantitative and Empirical Reasoning The Art of Cross-Cultural Communication The Art of Executing a Research Project
6.2.3.12 Cross-Cultural Engagement	Human Society Our Identities	The Discipline of Listening The Art of Cross-Cultural Communication
6.2.4.1 Integrative Studies	Christian Faith The Reformed Tradition World Structures Our Minds Our Hearts Our Gifts and Callings	Cultural Discernment The Rhetoric of the Written Word The Rhetoric of the Spoken Word

The following table states first the core purpose, then the categories contributing to that purpose.

CORE KNOWLEDGE	
Knowledge of God	Categories
3.1.1 The Christian Faith	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Biblical Foundations I Theological Foundations I Biblical Foundations II Theological Foundations II Integrative Studies
3.1.2 The Reformed Tradition	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Philosophical Foundations Biblical Foundations I Theological Foundations I Biblical Foundations II Theological Foundations II Integrative Studies
3.1.3 Other Religious Traditions	History of the West and of the World Global and Historical Studies
Knowledge of the World	
3.2.1 World Structures	Philosophical Foundations Mathematics The Natural World Literature Integrative Studies
3.2.2 Formal and Quantitative Structures	Mathematics
3.2.3 The Natural World	The Natural World Global and Historical Studies
3.2.4 Human Society	Foreign Language History of the West and the World Persons in Community Societal Structures in North America Literature The Arts Global and Historical Studies Cross-Cultural Engagement
3.2.5 The Arts	Literature The Arts

3.2.6 Historical Development	Foreign Language History of the West and the World Biblical Foundations Theological Foundations Societal Structures in North America Literature The Arts Global and Historical Studies
Knowledge of Ourselves	
3.3.1 Our Identities	Persons in Community Societal Structures in North America Cross-Cultural Engagement
3.3.2 Our Bodies	Health and Fitness
3.3.3 Our Emotions	Persons in Community
3.3.4 Our Minds	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Persons in Community Integrative Studies
3.3.5 Our Hearts	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Integrative Studies
3.3.6 Our Gifts and Callings	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Integrative Studies
CORE SKILLS	
Skills of Reasoning	
4.1.1 The General Art of Reasoning	Written Rhetoric Rhetoric in Culture Philosophical Foundations The Natural World
4.1.2 Quantitative and Empirical Reasoning	Persons in Community Societal Structures in North America Mathematics The Natural World Global and Historical Studies
4.1.3 Cultural Discernment	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Rhetoric in Culture Philosophical Foundations Biblical Foundations II Theological Foundations II Integrative Studies
Skills of Communication	
4.2.1 The Rhetoric of the Written Word	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Written Rhetoric History of the West and the World Philosophical Foundations Persons in Community

	Societal Structures in North America Literature Integrative Studies
4.2.2 The Rhetoric of the Spoken Word	Rhetoric in Culture Integrative Studies
4.2.3 The Rhetoric of the Image	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Rhetoric in Culture The Arts
4.2.4 The Discipline of Reading	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind Written Rhetoric Foreign Language History of the West and the World Philosophical Foundations Biblical Foundations/Theological Foundations I Persons in Community Societal Structures in North America Literature
4.2.5 The Discipline of Listening	Rhetoric in Culture Foreign Language The Arts Cross-Cultural Engagement
4.2.6 The Discipline of Seeing	Prelude and Developing a Christian Mind The Natural World The Arts
4.2.7 Competence in a Foreign Language	Foreign Language
4.2.8 The Art of Cross-Cultural Communication	Foreign Language Cross-Cultural Engagement
Technological Skills	
4.3.1 The Use of Information Technology	Foundations of Information Technology
Research Skills	
4.4.1 The Art of Executing a Research Project	Written Rhetoric Foundations of Information Technology Global and Historical Studies Biblical Foundations II Theological Foundations II Integrative Studies
Physical Skills	
4.5.1 The Exercise of the Body	Health and Fitness

APPENDIX B: Assessment Plan

The assessment plan for Calvin College, approved by the faculty in April of 1994, provided the following challenge:

As we strive to meet these [stated mission of Calvin] goals, Calvin needs an assessment plan that will place all assessment of student learning in a larger context and ensure that we are evaluating the right things at the right time. Although such a plan will help us fulfill our obligation to the North Central Association, Calvin ultimately needs to assess its effectiveness on student learning in order to provide direction for the future. Stated another way, simply recording that Calvin promotes “sound scholarship, earnest effort, and an obligation to use one’s talents fully in response to a divine calling” is insufficient. Rather, we must seek to ensure that what we are accomplishing in the education of Calvin students conforms to what we say we want to accomplish. Even though it is true that the achievement of some of our goals is difficult to assess and the achievement of other goals cannot be assessed, we must make every attempt to assess achievement of goals where it is possible.

The assessment plan focused on *educational* effectiveness, differentiating it from administrative effectiveness, financial management, or strategic operations. The plan also identified what needs to be measured, namely cognitive factors (knowledge and skills) as well as noncognitive factors such as attitudes, values, and the like. Finally, the plan suggested that assessment should occur in three areas: the core curriculum, programs and majors, and other aspects of the Calvin experience which have an impact on students’ education.

In addressing the core curriculum, the plan identified the four, broad goals for the core curriculum as found in the Expanded Statement of Mission: knowledge, competencies, awareness, and commitments. These five objectives were offered:

Graduates will be able to:

- articulate the biblical principles underlying the Christian tradition and also the central features of the Reformed tradition in which this college stands;
- demonstrate the competencies and knowledge that are basic to the life of a college educated person;
- express their beliefs clearly and succinctly in oral and written forms;
- discern whether their own and others’ interactions and behaviors correspond with their identities as image-bearers of God;
- value interactions and behaviors in keeping with a life of Christian citizenship in the world.

The plan suggested that core curriculum assessment be completed as a four-year pilot project. We are now in the fourth year of that pilot project, and we have learned something about the effectiveness of the current core curriculum (giving rise, in part, to this proposal for revision). We have also learned much about implementing a variety of methods for assessing the core.

It is premature, however, to expect a new core assessment plan as companion to this core curriculum proposal. Certainly, this proposal and the previously approved *Statement of Purpose for the Core Curriculum of Calvin College* provide a foundation for an assessment plan. The Statement of Purpose turns the four goals and five objectives, listed above, into fifteen areas of core knowledge, fourteen areas of core skills, and fourteen areas of core virtues. The proposed curriculum structure, with its two curricular bookends, *Developing a Christian Mind* and *Integrative Studies*, provides logical sites for potential assessment activity. But the curricular plan requires approval before an assessment plan is developed.

Anticipating approval, the academic year 1999-2000 will require the Assessment Committee to bring, first to the Core Curriculum Committee and ultimately to Faculty Senate, a plan for assessing this new core curriculum. In this way, an assessment approach suitable for the new curriculum will be implemented when the new curriculum begins in the fall of 2000.