



November 21, 2016

To: The Faculty and Staff
From: Barry Pearson, Provost

Dear Colleagues:

Are we educating for the 21st-century economy? And if not, should we care?

In my last *Notes*, I discussed the use of “intended major” in context of the 21st century. In these notes, with contributions from our associate provost, Peggy De Cooke, I planned to write about general education to turn our attention to the broader issue of preparing students for success beyond college.

I admit, however, that the election results upended my effort. Originally, my goal was to ask the question: Can a general education program that prepares students for success within the academy educate them for success in the 21st-century global economy? Now, I think, and have for some time, that the more pressing question is how do we prepare students to simply sustain life?

As a side note, please don’t attempt to diagram my leap from presidential election to general education through to post-election mourning. It isn’t a pretty path and they don’t really connect.

In the conventional conversation about general education reform, I think most of us get preoccupied with a dialogue that starts like this: “What has to change? The model? The delivery? The content? One? Both? All?” It’s a back and forth that plays out like two friends discussing a breakup: “Is it me? No, no, it’s not you. Trust me. It’s him.”

Simply put, some argue that the current models don’t instill in students that they should expect to acquire new knowledge and learn new skills for a lifetime. Without this awareness, graduates entering the economy will not remain viable.

The argument is valid, but it may be out of sequence when considered before a more fundamental question. What if we simply need to address viability? Not just economic, but planetary viability?

Our nagging preoccupation about traditional models seems to assume that, if only everyone simply has a job, the ripple effect will be enough to sustain us in other ways. Rather, as an exercise, consider for a moment the following: Are we living in a time that requires us to center learning on preventing extinction?

My consideration of this question was prompted after hearing about [the idea of the Anthropocene](#) on October 21 at a panel discussion, “Ruined Cities—reconsidering economic development through the Anthropocene,” moderated by Professor Lisa Jean Moore. This was part of a two-day symposium, [Art, Politics, and Cities in Transition](#). Lisa Jean was also nice enough to have a quick follow-up conversation.

I’ll leave the Anthropocene debate to learned scholars, but the notion that humankind’s mark on the earth is now measurable and irreversible prompted me to think about the role of education in light of this idea. If it’s true, what is our responsibility in reaction to and within the Anthropocene—a time during which “humankind has caused mass extinctions of plant and animal species, polluted the oceans and altered the atmosphere,

among other lasting impacts”?

Do we have a responsibility, for instance, to challenge the aspirations of our students so humanistic values guide their considerations of future scientific and technological advances? As importantly, do we have an obligation to promote ethical reasoning within a larger frame of consequences? If new college graduates can affect the trajectory of the current epoch, what experience do we need to ensure for each of them? How might our prioritizing of content shift?

It feels like a curriculum centered on Hamlet’s soliloquy, “To be, or not to be...” Or, said differently: To live well and, yet, not at all?

Perhaps it’s in these considerations that we might harness a common sense of purpose for rethinking general education. Such a purpose around which we can unite is often the most difficult first step in this work.

Finals Countdown at the Library

The Library will be open **24 hours a day, five days a week** from November 28 through December 16, and will hold its annual series of relaxing “Finals Countdown” events on December 5–9. This year’s “de-stressing” events—**open to students, faculty, and staff**—will include cheese tasting with the Purchase Cheese Club, therapy dogs, coloring, gentle yoga, button making, tea and cookies, and a performance by student musicians. Watch your email for full details, and come by to relax before the end of the semester!

“Paul Taylor: Creative Domain” to Screen at the PAC

The Performing Art Center’s [2016–17 season](#), which is well underway, continues its commitment to create greater opportunities for the campus community to “peek behind the curtain” and interact with the professional artists that grace the PAC stages. On **December 1 at 7 p.m.**, the PAC will screen [Paul Taylor: Creative Domain](#), a documentary that offers a rare glimpse into the world-famous choreographer’s working process. The filmmakers invite us into the studio as Taylor works with his dancers on the creation of *Three Dubious Memories*. The screening will be followed by a live performance of the piece by the Paul Taylor Dance Company, plus a Q&A with the dancers. For more information, visit the PAC [online](#).

Upcoming Events: November–December

For the most current information on upcoming public events, please refer to the [featured public events](#), [campus calendar](#), [Neuberger Museum calendar](#), or [Performing Arts Center calendar](#). (Events and details may be added, changed, or deleted after an issue of *Notes* is prepared.)

Exhibitions on view:

Passage Gallery:

– [A Gringa’s Prayer](#) (through December 1)

Richard and Dolly Maass Gallery:

– [MFA Group Exhibition](#) (December 1–12)

Neuberger Museum of Art:

– [Ray Spillenger: Rediscovery of a Black Mountain Painter](#) (through December 23)

– [Post No Bills: Public Walls as Studio and Source](#) (through December 23)

– [Inside Out: The People’s Art Project](#) (through December 23)

– [Destination: Latin America](#) (through January 22, 2017)

– [POP! Prints From the Permanent Collection](#) (Oct. 30, 2016–Feb. 19, 2017)

Neuberger Museum of Art at SPACE | 42:

– [Deborah Kass: Day After Day](#) (through May 28, 2017)

THANKSGIVING RECESS: No classes

Wed.–Sun., Nov. 23–27

Residence halls close at 9 a.m. on Nov. 23 and reopen at 2 p.m. on Nov. 27.

[Camerata: The “Other” Four Seasons](#)

Wed., Nov. 30, 12:30 p.m.

Neuberger Museum

Learning In 3-D: Faculty Colloquium #2

Wed., Nov. 30, 4:30 p.m.

Admissions Building, Buffer

[Purchase Jazz Orchestra](#)

Thurs., Dec. 1, 7 p.m.

Music Building, Choral Hall

[Purchase New Music](#)

Thurs., Dec. 1, 8 p.m.

Music Building, Recital Hall

[Purchase Repertory Theatre: Seven Guitars](#)

Fri., Dec. 2, 7:30 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 3, 1:30 p.m.

Thurs., Dec. 8, 7:30 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 10, 7:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Center

[Purchase Repertory Theatre: A Lie of the Mind](#)

Sat., Dec. 3, 7:30 p.m.

Wed., Dec. 7, 7:30 p.m.

Fri., Dec. 9, 7:30 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 10, 1:30 p.m.

Performing Arts Center

[Orpheus Chamber Orchestra](#)

Sun., Dec. 4, 3 p.m.

Performing Arts Center

[New Media Lecture: Leah Buechley](#)

Wed., Dec. 7, 6:30 p.m.

Neuberger Museum Study

[Purchase Latin Jazz Orchestra](#)

Wed., Dec. 7, 8 p.m.

Music Building, Choral Hall

[Purchase Opera: Amahl and the Night Visitors](#)

Fri., Dec. 9, 7 p.m.

Sat., Dec. 10, 1 p.m.

Performing Arts Center

[Purchase Dance Company Fall Concert](#)

Fri., Dec. 9, 7:15 p.m. artist talk, 8 p.m. concert

Sat., Dec. 10, 2 p.m. & 8 p.m.

Sun., Dec. 11, 3 p.m.

Performing Arts Center

[Purchase Symphony Orchestra and Chorus](#)

Sun., Dec. 11, 5 p.m.

Performing Arts Center

[Visiting Artist Lecture: Ann Agee \(MFA\)](#)

Wed., Dec. 14, 4:30 p.m.

Visual Arts Building, Room 1016

[The Hip Hop Nutcracker](#)

Thurs., Dec. 15, 8 p.m.

Performing Arts Center

Last Day of Classes

Fri., Dec. 16

[Rob Mathes](#)

Fri. & Sat., Dec. 16–17, 8 p.m.

Performing Arts Center