

September 15, 2017

To: Undergraduate Education Committee

From: Steve Nowicki, Dean and Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education 

Subject: Programs That Enhance Curricular/Co-curricular Engagement:
Review and Critical Assessment

In the complex landscape of contemporary undergraduate education, the most important opportunity we have for improving student engagement and learning outcomes is to capitalize on the interface between what we traditionally think of as “classroom learning” and all of the other opportunities for “real-world learning” that exist outside of the classroom. One of Duke’s strengths is that it has been working intentionally and creatively for some time now to develop programs intended to strengthen this connection, especially in an interdisciplinary and international context. These programs operate in parallel with a rich academic curriculum that includes over 60 majors (across both Trinity and Pratt) and over 20 certificates, several of these requiring a co-curricular experience. At this point in Duke’s evolution, however, it is important to step back and ask how well these programs are achieving their intended goals, and how they may (or may not) contribute to our aspirations for a Duke undergraduate education.

To facilitate our discussion of this topic at our October meeting, below is a listing of Duke programs having the following relevant characteristics:

- Interdisciplinary
- Open to all students
- Link the curriculum with the co-curriculum
- May or may not offer academic credit

This list is not exhaustive but does cover most programs with the potential to engage any Duke undergraduate. In addition to a brief description, links are provided for each program, along with links to recent assessments if available.

The discussion we intend to have with you will focus on the following questions:

1. How do we best evaluate the influence these programs have on students’ overall academic and social development?
2. How can we help students choose among this disparate and, sometimes, overwhelming array of offerings and make thoughtful and relevant choices that will advance their career intentions?
3. Which students are underserved by these programs? Athletes? Low SES students? Engineers? Others?

Duke students are fortunate to have access to these wonderful opportunities, but as a rule, colleges and universities are far better at launching programs than retiring them. We look forward to your thoughts and advice on how to optimize the best of these programs and perhaps even 'sunset' those which may not be as effective or pertinent to the contemporary student experience.

□ [Focus](#) introduces first-semester/first year students to interdisciplinary learning and intellectual engagement both in and out of the traditional classroom. Students apply to themed programs ("clusters") and enroll in two of four interrelated seminars plus a weekly dinner discussion involving all students and faculty in the cluster. Cluster participants live together in the same residence hall and participate in group field trips, community service, research and peer mentoring. In the Fall 2017 semester, 350 students are enrolled in one of 13 different clusters (about 20% of the Class of 2021).

□ [Bass Connections](#) brings together faculty, graduate and undergraduate students to engage in real-world issues in vertically-integrated, interdisciplinary research teams. Students can choose from among many year-long project teams, semester-long courses, and summer programs. In 2017-2018, there are 49 project teams and 4 summer programs (Data+, Story+, Summer Neuroscience Program, and the Global Health Student Research Training program), with 411 undergraduates participating overall. The 2015-16 report is online here: <https://bassconnections.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/bass-connections-program-evaluation-report-2015-16.pdf>

□ [DukeEngage](#) provides one-time funding for undergraduates who wish to pursue an immersive (minimum of eight weeks) service experience by meeting a community need locally, across the U.S. or internationally. Students can apply to existing programs, many of which are led by Duke staff and faculty members, or they can propose their own DukeEngage project. DukeEngage remains the most common reason prospective students cite on their college application about why they want to attend Duke. About 425 students participate each summer. Various assessment reports are found at: <https://dukeengage.duke.edu/about-dukeengage/impact-assessment/>

□ [DukeImmerse](#) is a fully-integrated cluster of classes designed around a single theme. Each DukeImmerse is a 4-credit semester or a 2-credit summer term, with students enrolling in all courses of the program as their entire academic schedule for the semester; a cohort of 18 or fewer undergraduates enrolls in the set of courses. About three dozen students have enrolled each year. An exceptionally high percentage of students participating in DukeImmerse programs go on to complete a senior honors thesis in that area of study.

□ [The Rubenstein-Bing Athlete Civic Engagement \(ACE\) program](#), a collaboration between Duke and Stanford, is designed for Division I athletes whose practice or competition schedules make it difficult to participate in extended civic engagement activities such as DukeEngage. ACE provides one-time funding for 20 Duke and 20 Stanford student-athletes to participate in three-week,

immersive summer service experiences in one of four international group programs with diverse service themes including health outreach, education, environmental sustainability and conservation, social enterprise, and coaching.

□ The [Winter Forum](#) is an annual, three-day, co-curricular experience that brings together faculty, alumni, staff, and 100 undergraduates before the start of the spring semester to delve into an issue of global concern in an interactive, hands-on, retreat environment. Now in its tenth year, the Winter Forum has become a campus tradition and a way that many students get bootstrapped into follow-on engagement activities, such as further coursework in an area, independent studies, or honors theses. Each Winter Forum is assessed separately, based on the intended goals of that year's program. These assessments can be found as a link with each program's description here: <http://undergrad.duke.edu/winter-forum>

□ [Spring Breakthrough](#) consists of five-day seminars on wildly varying intellectual topics for about 100 first-year and sophomore students held during spring break. There are no pre-requisites, grades, credits or costs. The goal is to encourage students to engage with faculty in an intellectual interest just for the fun of it. Ninety-eight students participated in the inaugural program last spring.

□ [Duke Conversations](#) is a student-initiated program in which faculty members invite groups of students from all over campus to their homes for an informal dinner. The goal is to create a dynamic community characterized by vigorous discussion of current educational and global issues. Over 50 dinners were held and about 780 students participated in 2016-17.

□ The [Chautauqua Lecture Series](#) is a free dinner talk series that brings luminary Duke professors into East Campus residence halls for a lecture-conversation exclusively with first-year students, in which faculty discuss how they came to their research interests and how those interests connect to current political, social, scientific and environmental issues. Nine Chautauqua lectures are held in the fall semester each year, with about 170 students participating each year, some of those attending multiple lectures.

□ [Flunch](#) (Faculty + Lunch) encourages students to expand connections with professors outside of class by providing funds to allow them to invite faculty for individual or small group lunches on campus. What is distinctive about Flunch is that the student takes the initiative and can, through a simple online registration process, have the cost of the meal charged to the Office of Undergraduate Education instead of appearing on the student's own Duke Card account. In 2016-2017, about 2450 undergraduates engaged in at least one Flunch, a remarkably high number that has held steady for the last several years.

□ The [Baldwin Scholars](#) program is a women's leadership program that accepts 18 first-year students each fall, for a total enrollment of 72 at any given time. The four-year experience includes a retreat, two academic seminars, an opportunity to live together as a group on West Campus, an internship, and numerous informal activities such as lectures and dinners.

- [Penny Pilgram George Women's Leadership program](#) seeks to deepen women's understanding and practice of authentic leadership by providing learning opportunities and resources for undergraduate women at Duke. About 30 students participate each year.

- [Visions of Freedom](#) is a new student-initiated Living and Learning Community. This group of upperclassmen (some of whom were in the Focus program with the same name) have a passion for politics, philosophy, and economics and wanted to live in the same residence hall to create a space for intellectual conversations outside of the classroom. The 2016-2017 academic year was their first year for this living-learning community. A second living-learning community connected to the Kenan Ethics Institute was launched this fall. We are hoping to expand on these models with more living-learning communities in residential Duke Houses going forward.

- A host of [alternative break programs](#) are held during the traditional fall and spring break periods, in which students travel beyond Duke and Durham and participate in projects where they not only serve the community but learn about issues affecting communities with which they may not otherwise interact.

- [Pre-orientation programs](#) (pBuild, pWild, pWaves, pSearch, pArts, pChange) run for one or two weeks in advance of the start of new student orientation, providing opportunities for incoming students to engage and form bonds with other first-years having similar interests in advance of their first semester. These program has a participation fees, but these fees are waived for students receiving financial aid (through collaboration with the Karsh Office of Financial Support).