The second and equally stimulating “blue sky” conversation among students (graduate and undergraduate), faculty (Pratt, Arts & Sciences, and Nicholas) and administrators took off from both the draft case statement and the summary of last week’s meeting. Several ideas were reinforced and new emphases added. This summary of the discussion will supplement the case statement\(^1\) and the document produced after the May 25\(^{th}\) meeting.

The **undergraduate focus of the conversation**. Like the discussion on May 25, this one was undergraduate-centric. This may be a function of the persons assembled around the table and/or the more compelling need to address issues of undergraduate education in the Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP). The verdict is still out on this question. The students asked that a third conversation be held, with students only (graduate, professional, and undergraduate), and the hope is that this will happen next week.

**What skills, attributes, and experiences do we need to facilitate for the world of the future?** On May 25\(^{th}\), the attributes mentioned as being crucial for the future were leadership, entrepreneurialism, innovation, and openness. Other (sometimes related) qualities were added on May 30\(^{th}\): among them, creativity, versatility, risk-taking, judgment, perspective, reflection, introspection. Because we do not know exactly what the future holds, our students need to acquire the skills that might not even be apparent now—thus, we need to foster “learning how to learn.” In consideration of how to do this, we need to keep in mind what is actually core and what is a mere “bell and whistle.”

The word “balance” was brought into the conversation in different ways from its typical use when referring to Duke undergraduates: instead of a balance between curricular and co-curricular (as in “work hard, play hard”), the suggestion was made that our students need to slow down, to stop engaging in a frenzy of co-curricular activities, and instead to balance the mastery of a subject with the willingness to entertain the new; the analytic with the synthetic; their sense of personal importance with their place in the larger world(s); thinking with doing; respect with judgment; working by oneself with working in teams.

Learning how to work with and learn from diverse peoples—diversity defined in socio-economic, intellectual, national terms, among others—is a critical component of the educational experience. This is more than a question of mere “interaction”; rather, it is a matter of encountering ideas that cause us to rethink our own (a quality similar to that of “openness,” mentioned by the May 25\(^{th}\) group), which can lead to a change of ideas or a reaffirmation of them. What aspects of Duke encourage such meaningful encounters and what are the obstacles that the University (or society) puts in their path? Can such encounters be imposed from the top down, for example through housing

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\(^1\) The case statement, draft #4, remains a useful corollary to this document as to the summary of the May 25\(^{th}\) “blue sky” conversation and should be reviewed in tandem with them.
policies? How does one balance the need for comfort with the necessity for encountering
different people and ideas? Can living and learning with others different from ourselves
(in the classroom and out) be both stimulating/enlarging and safe?

**Revisiting the meaning and content of “the liberal arts.”** The characteristics of
a liberal arts education are important but they are not necessarily the same
characteristics that defined the term in earlier ages. Team work, for example, was not
hitherto considered to play an integral role, nor what we call “experiential” learning. What
are the defining characteristics of a “liberal” education in the 21st century? What is the
role for the past—and for books themselves—in this education? What is the role for
direct experience (in its many forms)? What aspects of education are timeless and what
dated? Where should our emphases lie?

**What changes do we need for the curriculum/a? Rethinking the majors.**
Stepping back from, and reevaluating, the majors is a good idea at this juncture. Are
there outdated elements and new elements we should be considering? How can we
make the majors more “relevant” in the best sense? If we can define what our students
need in order to be prepared for their futures as citizens and workers (and family
members), how would we go about developing these qualities and abilities in the
classroom? It is important for us to articulate these desired outcomes in such a way that
each department can relate to the overall rubric and adapt itself accordingly.

**What salient issues about teamwork inform pedagogy?** How can the faculty
incorporate collaboration in their syllabi and pedagogy? This includes finding a way to
allow students to team with others in research projects instead of slotting them handily
into the faculty member’s ongoing research interests. What is the balance between
traditional and experiential education? In Pratt, for example, the professional accrediting
body (ABET) dictates certain aspects of the engineering education that limit the amount
of experiential experiences; yet Pratt students want to do, to build. How to resolve this
dilemma?

**Do structural elements impede change?** Do we encourage a “local”
perspective by the way we feature sports or Greek life, or even by the way that
international graduate students often remain in their laboratory silos? (Do we over-
compartmentalize graduate students from undergraduates?) Have we made the most of
internationalization? Could interdisciplinarity be better fostered if departmental structures
were more fluid? How can we take the focus away from the customary (and often self-
serving) and turn our structures “inside out”?