Keynote Address
David Potts: “Content Contests on a Level Liberal Arts Playing Field.”

Since the written text of the address will be distributed in its entirety, this document will offer only a brief summary.

Potts focused on the 1828 *Yale Reports* and its primary author, Jeremiah Day. Locating the *Reports* in a time of change and uncertainty for American higher education, a period when the 50-some American colleges and universities had a “meager toehold” in the new republic, with many facing uncertain survival. With critics pressing at issues of pedagogy and questioning the classical curriculum, Yale, like institutions today, was under pressure to reexamine its mission and to look at “practical” reforms.

Day’s document focuses on providing students “the furniture of mind” and the “mental discipline” for liberal education; it’s the latter that especially occupied Day (and Potts) and led to an emphasis on *probabilities*: the subjects, courses, and teaching modes most likely to promote critical thinking. Response to the *Yale Reports* and reforms, according to Potts, were positive in the press; Yale’s enrollment rose, and there was an increasing sense in higher education that critical thinking was a means of creating leadership. The *Yale Reports* were especially influential in highlighting “process” over “content,” a trend that continues in today’s liberal arts environment. And while Potts agreed with the aim to “look more” at critical thinking, he also asked whether it is possible to join “content” and “process” more closely and to avoid the growing trend toward unweighted lists.

Questions following the address focused first on the relationship between the Yale document and European discussions on higher education. Potts asserted that Day thought Americans could learn from Europe, but the American emphasis was more fully on undergraduates and liberal learning rather than specialization. Another question focused on whether “mental discipline” was seen as an end in itself. Potts responded that the word “values” does not appear in the report but that a “moral philosophy” course, taught by the president to seniors, addressed the issue. Finally, a questioner asked about the place of politics in the *Yale Reports*. Potts sensed some concerns about emerging Jacksonian democracy but otherwise found Day’s work mostly preoccupied with the larger need for mental discipline.
Session 1: Historical Background on the Liberal Arts
Friday morning

[Recorder’s note: This is an attempt to extract the broad themes and lines of argument in the discussion; it is not chronologically faithful to the discussion but does attempt to represent without bias the essential shape of the points made. JO RAL]

Session 1 began with a broadly historical approach to the liberal arts, drawing primarily from David Potts’s keynote address of Thursday night focusing on the Yale Reports of 1828. Potts’s address and much of the first session focused on Jeremiah Day’s call for “mental discipline” in the report and interrogated its illumination of modern notions of “critical thinking.”

Most of the discussion turned to the purpose and aims of liberal education—and their connection to considerations of “content”—as suggested by the Yale Reports. Potts described Day’s report as “difficult” and often disappointing, with relatively little to say about “the true, the good, and the beautiful”; Day was a mathematician, not a philosopher. The Reports cannot easily be classified in Kimball’s categories of “orator” or “philosopher” orientation. Yet Potts and others noted continuities between the Yale Reports and current developments in higher education, notably the AAC&U “Greater Expectations” project. Potts described the Reports as specifying a curriculum consisting of one-quarter each of mathematics, Greek, and Latin; the remainder quarter was “everything else.” The various contributors to the Reports thus justify his own field in terms of “highest probability to discipline the mind.” Yet Day, according to Potts, suggested that “large questions” are essential to the kind of critical thinking he wanted to develop.

The focus on the Yale Reports led to the highlighting of several issues, primarily the interplay of “content” and “process.” Tim Fuller asked whether the emphasis on “mental discipline” contributed to our current situation of little agreement about what is true and beautiful. Diana Schaub made a similar point about Day’s report as the “beginning of the end,” granting too much ground in terms of central content in liberal arts education to that which is “calculated” to achieve an end. David Anderson argued that the question of identifying a basic content for the curriculum is a dead issue for the faculty; the key question has shifted to “can we agree on basic aims?” Philip Hall generally agreed that “the content debate is over” but insisted that we must “agree about content at some level, or we can't go anywhere.” John Frazee stated that a specific list is impossible but “a methodology of probabilities” in designing a curriculum is “the space we have to occupy.”

Some disagreement turned on Day’s emphasizing disciplines that were the “best calculation for disciplining the mind,” a formulation Potts characterized as saving the plan from “letting anything into the curriculum.” Thus comic books, which some participants would on principle rule out of the curriculum, might be acceptable in themselves but would be seen as less likely to be useful than more traditional forms of content. Donal O’Shea asked “who’s doing the calculation” of that probability? Anderson asked “what do we mean by ‘content’?” Anderson wondered if the point was about experiencing certain texts or studying certain disciplines or “more like competencies, learning how to think critically.” Fuller, however, worried about separating content and critical thinking skills; for instance, he argued, the problem of the relation between western and other viewpoints must be part of a content, must be connected to a world
view. Anderson and Shinn agreed that it would be possible to teach critical thinking with a subject matter like comic books, but that raises the issue of “who polices the line?” That issue led to a critique of current disciplines, which, according to Allan “have a critical method that they define and monitor but have no motivation to bring that mode of critical thinking into contact with others.” Patricia Cook and others maintained that “content and aims must be connected.” John Churchill pointed out that critical skills “might be seen as necessary but not sufficient” for three different reasons: they should be aimed toward something higher; they presuppose some substrate of content upon which they build; or they run parallel to achieving another course, e.g., gaining content.

A substantial line of the discussion looked at the limits of “critical thinking”—a term Day never uses. Larry Shinn argued that critical thinking is important but not “sufficient” for liberal education; Shinn and others tied critical thinking to the “Enlightenment project” of analytical thinking, losing a focus on education as about “head, heart, and hands” (in Shinn’s and Berea’s terms). But Allan and others objected that Enlightenment thinking is broader than that, the separation of intellect being a recent development. Critical thinking, Shinn and others argued, often leads to focus on the individual rather than the community. Shinn wondered if Day attempted to get at a “more holistic way” of looking at things than modern proponents of “critical thinking,” working, that is, toward an integration of imagination, theological conversation, application, etc. Fuller and others worried that “critical skills” today often denote a “suspicion of nearly everything.” Anderson proposed that the term “critical knowing” better represent the ideals we seek in realizing Day’s emphasis on “mental discipline.” Robert Holyer pointed out that Day’s list of abilities include several attributes—such as “elevating and controlling the imagination”—that appear to go beyond modern ideas of “critical thinking.” Virginia Wray saw Day’s concern as trying to keep the imagination “realistic.”

Others lines of the first discussion suggested aspects of arguments that would occupy the remaining sessions, principally the tensions of educating the individual, in general terms, for the discipline of the mind, as opposed to educating for the common good, as a means of transforming society. Potts indirectly suggested that the split, at least for Day, wasn’t so clear, claiming that he would have been “surprised that we think this method wouldn't lead to value systems,” given the presupposition of his time that the Christian faith was the best value system. The discussion also touched in various ways on the question of whether Day’s report—and the emphasis on critical thinking or “mental discipline”—suffers from a “cultural myopia.”
Session 2: Defining the Liberal Arts
Friday morning

George Allan opened the session, noting that now that we've discussed "history," it will be okay to use concrete examples from our own curricula. We should avoid, however, the bad form of "show and tell," and be sure that the generalizing principles are clear. The session divisions are fairly arbitrary. Now we want to consider claims that we can specify a content that is essential to the liberal arts. It is interesting, he continued, that "critical thinking" seems to be taken as a process that is essential. We should remember our long-range question: what can we say about this to our friends and colleagues in education?

Patricia Cook began discussion with a proposal: What would define the canon would be anything that the founders read and were influenced by—anything that they used to base the republic upon. Examples would include classical sources like Cicero, Don Quixote, and Epicurus. Robert Holyer replied that this begs the question of the purpose of liberal education. If its purpose is to produce citizens, then this is not an unreasonable proposal. Cook replied that on her view, the purpose is "understanding your inheritance." Holyer replied again, asking whether this can be understood simply by reading it, or, by contrast, by also looking at some other tradition? Marty Eisenberg asked how one could recognize the implications of what they hadn't seen, like that? John Ramsay asked, if Cook's proposal would mean that, for example, one should read Phillis Wheatley because Thomas Jefferson had used her poetry to bolster racist justifications of slavery? Donal O'Shea raised an objection to Cook's first remark: He could imagine good education on the model of "what the founders used," as long as all instructors agreed about it. However, the point of education is to engage students. It is important that students understand our intellectual world today, and one can't always go back to one's roots, or one will not get past them. Personal engagement, with a teacher or another student, on the plane of ideas—that is important. Cook replied that we're already children of our times, products of present culture. It is important to read older materials to remove ourselves from our temporal parochialisms.

John Frazee asked whether we weren't in fact jumping to the topics demarcated for sessions three and four, to which Allan replied that yes, we had.

Frazee then tried to turn discussion toward a definition of the liberal arts. He offered a criterion for such a definition: this definition has to be one that could be used with a skeptical audience. Typically, he noted, our definitions are partial, metaphorical, and use code words that we don't have to define. Tim Fuller added that the readings that Allan had prepared in advance of this session—Fuller cited the selection from Leo Strauss in particular—provide some standards. And before we understand how a skeptical audience would receive it, we must first understand how we receive such a definition. Robert Holyer observed that the liberal arts tradition is a long one that has gone through significant changes. Is our task therefore confessional? Are we supposed to reach an agreement? David Anderson suggested that we should seek a definition that focuses on what a liberal arts education produces, not its content, along the lines of "Liberal education produces graduates with the ability to do X." Recall the example of the psychologist and sociologist who couldn't communicate with each other—the liberal arts gives one the meta-ability to rise above and cross disciplines. Marty Eisenberg asked whether what we're after is best described as an ability, or perhaps as an inclination. The book, Intellectual Character, for
instance, takes the example of walking through an art gallery. One outcome of a liberal arts education might be that a person will choose to do such things even when one "doesn't have to." Anderson replied that Denison graduates aren't prepared to do anything in particular. What, then, is it that we do? Is our work attached to a knowledge-base? No. It is not an education directed toward a particular purpose, but is rather directed at not being directed toward a particular purpose. Fuller disagreed, noting that skills cannot be learned without being attached to some body of learning. Skills-talk masks the fact that some actual body of knowledge is being studied. Anderson replied that the point is that it doesn't matter what that content is; Fuller retorted that Strauss argues that it does matter.

Frazee asked whether there is a qualitative difference between a philosophy or Classics major at a small liberal arts college and, say, the University of Michigan? A set of experiences that are not necessarily curricular are important—size matters. Our institutions are inherently inefficient. If we can't distinguish what we do from large institutions, then they are a more efficient way to do it. John Churchill drew a distinction between "what the liberal arts is" and "what the liberal arts does," and suggested that we consider non-teleological accounts. If we presuppose that liberal arts is teleological at the outset, then the question we need to ask is "what is the end of the liberal arts?" The answer is "some form of human flourishing." We'll disagree about what constitutes human flourishing—this leads to an endless conversation about ends. Maybe what we need is some sort of happy pluralism, that is not just a mélange of objects. Maybe we could feel OK about the continuity of conversation, rather than feeling bad that we can't agree on an end.

Larry Shinn pointed out that the AAC&U's Greater Expectations report is trying to do what we're trying to do. One of the reasons that we don't seem to be able to define liberal arts education is that there are a number of simultaneous tensions—which one are we focusing on? These tensions include content (cf. the Strauss and Hutchins readings) v. process (cf. the 1829 Yale reports, Dewey), arts v. capacities, education for its own sake v. education for something else, education for personal edification v. education for citizenship, and a class issue, the elite v. everybody (in 1828, only 1% went to college, today 75% do). This class issue seems to be the central tension. The AAC&U defines 3 aims of "practical liberal education": (1) an empowered learner, (2) an informed learner—content does matter, and (3) a responsible learner—an ethics of action, honesty, and integrity. It issued a 1984 document on liberal learning, urging we develop students who can make consequential judgments about complex problems and matters. This represents a fundamental challenge: should every school try to accomplish this, or only liberal arts colleges. O'Shea pointed out that the Greater Expectations document is yet another attempt to stake a claim on what liberal arts colleges do.

Cook asked what is a simple way of articulating the value of a liberal arts education? When I try to defend it, she continued, I compare it to psychotherapy. If you don't know who you are and have misleading beliefs and prejudices, you won't really know what you're doing. You need to know not only your parents and grandparents, but also your intellectual tradition—which shows you which of your beliefs are parochial. A psychotherapeutic self-knowledge comes—in a big way—from the liberal arts. Hall cited Jacques Barzon, for whom the proper aim of education is the proper aim of a person: to become human. What does it mean to become human? To apprehend how we perceive the physical world, that we are social animals, to express creativity
and art. That's a powerful notion, and it can get people started on a lifetime trajectory of "becoming human." There isn't any one canon that says "this is how it has to be done," rather, there are an infinite number of ways. Shinn remarked that this shifts the emphasis from the individual to the community. Hall cited Tocqueville's argument that Americans are too individualistic. We need to see that we have responsibilities to each other. Fuller remarked that the distinction between the "elite" and the "masses" is not good. The term "masses" suggests that it is those who "need" liberal arts education; and elites have many mass-like characteristics. Diana Schaub agreed with Cook, that the question is how we should live. But, she continued, cultural inheritance is overemphasized. Cook's view is closer to Oakeshott's (from the readings), but mine is closer to Strauss. The great books are the teachers, not "what you should know." We'll have to be the judges. The content is not the books themselves, but the questions. Allan reiterated, these questions come down to what we understand "being human" is all about.

Shinn returned to the question of class: 75% of high school graduates in America go to college. Are we talking about that group, or about those who are more inclined to be "students of the mind"? Charles Schroeder (at the University of Missouri) has argued that for many of these new students, their orientation to learning is quite different. At Berea, we can see that the lower group doesn't do as well as liberal arts colleges. Basic shifts have to be made, if we've democratized who's sitting in the classroom. Anderson reminded us that we can draw a distinction between liberal education and education at liberal arts colleges. One can obtain a liberal education at Michigan State, etc. These two overlap, but are different. There is an important residential component, for example. Schaub asked why we should separate liberal education from liberal arts colleges—shouldn't these be brought together? Anderson replied that they ought not necessarily be together, though there ought to be a family resemblance between the intellectual components, or we've got a problem. If we want a definition of the liberal arts for America, it can't be what happens at liberal arts colleges, or it will be small, interesting, and irrelevant. Holyer asked Anderson whether we need a coherent understanding of the practice of liberal education? Perhaps liberal arts colleges in fact do it better than, say, the University of Minnesota. Anderson agreed, but noted that it is not a different intellectual model of the course of study between these two schools. The difference is not at a conceptual level. Allan observed that this answer is evolving: from redefining liberal education so that it's not irrelevant, to looking at the substance underneath it.

Frazee noted that this is the danger of looking at content in the absence of process. There is a huge difference (and in kind, not just in scale) between the intellectual demands made on a student in a class of 50 and a class of 10. Developing independence of mind requires a small classroom. You won't get it in a 200-person "liberal arts requirement" course. Hall observed that our conversation is now focusing on the differences among kinds of institutions; the question is rightly "What is liberal education?", not "How is it best promulgated?" To return to our readings, Whitehead's model is perhaps best: the liberal arts consists of literary, scientific and technical components. Shinn reiterated that our discussions are paralleling that of Greater Expectations. (The Annapolis Group refused to sign on to it, because it seems to define liberal arts colleges out of existence.) He agreed with Anderson that the question is what we think liberal education is with respect to students. Two examples illustrate the point: a graduate of the University of Pennsylvania can be very "liberally educated," while an Oberlin graduate can be very narrow minded. The school alone, as an input, cannot be the basis of our definition, if our
definition is in terms of what kind of actor we aim to produce. Churchill noted that this goes back to the Yale reports' notion of "best calculated." The question is to transpose the liberal arts from a curriculum to an institutional type. As a question of probabilities, it can endure your counterexamples. Fuller added that it seems premature to begin discussing issues of size if we haven't yet answered the question of what liberal education is about. Different answers shape our attitude to the question of size: for some, it will be central, for others, it may be an option.

Holyer then asked, how are we to define liberal education? In terms of practical aims? In terms of how a notion of liberal education translates into institutional arrangements? Can we shift the question from content to institutional arrangements? You may not need to read Hamlet, but you do need a course in literature. Allan then asked what constitutes an institutional example of something non-liberal arts? If a class has more than 60 students, is it no longer a liberal arts course, because the students aren't active? Hall replied that some large universities can be fine examples of liberal arts education, and the purported counterexamples are not. The University of Pennsylvania is a liberal arts place. One could make the argument that liberal arts colleges are more likely to produce a "liberally educated" student, but some students will do better in a larger place. It seems that in small colleges, we do what Whitehead is talking about better. Ramsay remarked that this synoptic view that transcends a disciplinary focus is not the case at Carleton—graduation there emphasizes the majors: How can we help seniors pull things together? What would be part of that synoptic view? What courses should a student take outside of the major? Anderson recommended a capstone course that is interdisciplinary. Most courses are within a single discipline, and class size is not a good criterion. The key is the intellectual scope of the course of study. Frazee observed that we've returned to probabilities. In a class of 200, there are always 5 to 10 students who are willing to talk. Ramsay asked about the possibilities for a capstone course about the limitations of the disciplines. Eisenberg offered one example: the junior seminars at Truman State University. Holyer added that reading and writing are also critical.

Shinn attempted to review and summarize discussion to this point: We've identified two poles, process (size matters), but also content (a class of 250 is OK, if not as good). There are a number of state institutions that are liberal arts colleges, The New College of Florida and Evergreen State in Washington, for example. Multiple approaches are necessary for liberal arts education. The disciplinary focus of faculty mirrors that of research universities, and is counter to our purpose. In the unofficial hierarchies, interdisciplinary programs are lower than departments. Liberal arts colleges have work to do to be better at being non-disciplinized. Ellen Meese added that a number of research universities, like Stanford, have started graduate programs in the humanities, knowing that highly-blinkered Ph.D.s would be teaching at undergraduate institutions. We risk becoming marginalized if we push the interdisciplinary—the humanities are becoming more pre-professional training. For O'Shea, it's clear when a faculty member is not on board with the ideas of liberal education. Whether something constitutes liberal education or not does not follow the disciplines. He wants to hire someone who loves their discipline, but cares about students, because if one doesn't care about the field, one loses something. Fuller agreed that there is nothing intrinsically wrong with disciplinary knowledge, adding that this leads us to the issue of general education—is it different from interdisciplinary education? David Potts noted that we've got a lot of variables here, asking that we tighten the focus, and do the opposite of what AAC&U did. They began with demographics and an
orientation toward social justice. Suppose we started with a "best case:" well-prepared and motivated students, faculty who are willing to step beyond their expertise, in a small liberal arts college (which could be under any governmental regime, not just a democratic one)—with all these conditions, what would our ideas
Friday's Wrap-Up Session: A case study: Brooklyn College
Friday evening

http://www.brooklyn.cuny.edu/apiindex.htm (Click on "Core Curriculum" in the left hand column to see the list of courses.)

After dinner on Friday, the group looked at web pages for the Brooklyn College core sequence, asking the question, "Is Brooklyn College accomplishing what we've said one should try to do?"

Philip Hall, who recommended that we look at this site, explained that a number of years ago he had visited Brooklyn College to investigate their core curriculum as a model for other schools. This is a literal core sequence, not a distribution requirement—all students take the same courses. It was begun in 1981 (the Dean at the time was a classicist), and consists of 10 credits of interrelated courses. They are:

- Core Studies 1 - The Classical Origins of Western Culture [Greek and Latin masterpieces]
- Core Studies 2 - Introduction to Art; Introduction to Music
- Core Studies 3 - People, Power, and Politics [a social sciences course, in which sociologists and political scientists collaborate, emphasizing questions of power in contemporary America]
- Core Studies 4 - The Shaping of the Modern World [European and American civilization since 1700]
- Core Studies 5 - Introduction to Mathematical Reasoning and Computer Science
- Core Studies 6 - Landmarks of Literature [English, American, European and non-Western fiction, drama, and poetry]
- Core Studies 7 - Science in Modern Life I [two half-credit courses: physics and chemistry]
- Core Studies 8 - Science in Modern Life II [two half-credit courses: biology and geology]
- Core Studies 9 - Comparative Studies in African, Asian, Latin American, and Pacific Cultures [a team-taught course, interrelating two areas of the world]
- Core Studies 10 - Knowledge, Existence, and Values [an introduction to philosophy]

Courses numbered 1 through 5 constitute the "first tier," and should be completed before courses 6-10. All ten courses should be completed in the first three years. In addition to the list of courses and course descriptions, we also looked at a number of sample syllabi that were available on the web.

A number of questions and observations about the Brooklyn College core were noted. For David Anderson, this program seemed exemplary, as long as they don't claim that "this is all there is." Many of the courses offered through the Brooklyn core are "virtual classes" with web-based work in lieu of a class meeting—how does this mode of engagement impact our discussions about class size? Robert Holyer wondered whether there is too much for a student to absorb in this program. (Marty Eisenberg added that this is a good question for any course.) He continued to note that some of the websites on the Core Studies 4 course modeled what can be called "active lecturing." Larry Shinn added that virtual learning does work for some courses. Anderson then asked whether, even if we don't agree about what the liberal arts is, or what its essential content may be, we would agree that this core sequence is an instance of it? Shinn replied that in this sequence, a disciplinary focus has overcome a more collaborative, integrative approach. Scientists at Berea have changed introductory science instruction, going to an integrative approach, because under the other system students weren't learning enough. Hall
agreed, noting that most students only study one science. Biology majors, for instance, rarely know much physics.

Eisenberg pointed out that, in approaching these courses, the group wanted to look at reading lists and texts before looking at the courses' objectives. That says, he noted, something important about us and how we conceive this project. Our inclination seems to be determine any "essential content" by specifying texts, rather than questions or objectives. Donal O'Shea noted that this biology course, for example, seems rather patronizing, what we could call "Biology for Dummies." Not all of the courses in these sequence seem to be of equal quality. John Ottenhoff agreed, wondering whether this is a good thing. It shows us the danger of using reading lists or anything else to judge these courses.

Discussion of the Brooklyn College core website lead to a number of reflections about our own subject position. O'Shea observed that we are blind about our own institutions, that we don't really understand what works or why. We consider it a good that most of our campuses are residential, for example, but we haven't been very intentional about it. He added that he thinks such a core is good, but not necessarily better than a smorgasbord approach. Philip Hall replied that at Brooklyn College, students and faculty know that they all have this in common. Otherwise, students might or might not have a coherent experience, by accident or by design—whether it works or not, is, by and large, an accident. Shinn noted a tension between the autonomy of the instructor and a common syllabus with common texts. Eisenberg asked whether we can ask students who have completed this sequence, "what is liberal education?" How would they answer this question?

Tim Fuller pointed out a possible implication of this line of discussion: this may point to an as-yet undiscovered key to how learning takes place. What this seems to do is to make more explicit the step-by-step process of a well-designed course sequence. The danger of it is that people would think the basis of liberal learning is the transmission of information. For example, a typical goal we all espouse is that our students will be good writers. How many institutions try to assess how well students do? John Ramsay concluded with the observation that in all of our institutions, we presume that our education is of enduring value. This question of assessment is more complicated than looking at changes from first year to senior, but one, five, 10 years beyond graduation. He cited a study of Stanford graduates that suggests that by 10 years after college, for many an intellectual life apart from work had seemed to disappear (H. Katchadourian and J. Boli, *Cream of the Crop: The Impact of Elite Education in the Decade After College* (Basic Books, 1994), esp. pp. 272-282).
Session 4: Anti-canonical Alternatives
Saturday morning

George Allan introduced the session as focusing on more inclusive alternatives to the basics of liberal education, away from more “elitist” frameworks; he set out one concern that “liberal education,” as in the Greater Expectations program, might become synonymous with any kind of education. For the most part, however, the discussion centered on the issue of how to talk about liberal arts—especially whether one can talk about the liberal arts as an object of study independent of teachers, students, institutions, and whether it is possible to separate content from process.

The session began with a brief review of Friday night’s examination of the online version of Brooklyn College’s core program. David Potts and others expressed some concern with the “hand-holding” quality of what the group examined, its seemingly strong guidance of student learning. The discussion quickly turned to the problems that accrue to online education, especially the substitution of a “virtual” session for a traditional classroom meeting in one of the courses. Patricia Cook, however, said that she worried more about the content and level of questions than the online aspects of the course. John Churchill and Larry Shinn focused on the issues of “content and process” and more specifically on the “magic of the classroom”; Shinn argued that the value of the technology hinges on the “transformations” that occur with students in the class. Tim Fuller cautioned that the technology isn’t neutral and stated that the processes with which we are occupied determine the content we convey. Looking more at these processes, argued Fuller, might call into question some of the democratization of higher education. Philip Hall argued that technology as in the Brooklyn site should be seen as supplementing, not abandoning the traditional classroom; most impressive about technology, he said, was the time on task it enabled and its utility for involving students with their work and with each other.

The discussion shifted to the broad question of how to define and contextualize the liberal arts. Robert Holyer, for instance, asked why we tend to focus on the course rather than highlighting the connections between courses. David Anderson argued that the liberal arts are areas of knowledge, things students study, and levels of preparation and methods of teaching are separate issues. Patricia Cook agreed, arguing that the teacher is not the essence of the process of becoming liberally educated—a monk with a stack of books could become liberally educated. John Frazee, however, saw the continuing shift between content and process as problematic: we jump back and forth between pedagogy and content, he argued, in part because we haven’t set any benchmark for what we want to accomplish. Shinn cast the issue in terms of “learning strategies”—we want students to achieve what we might call “liberal learning,” which is about content, modes of thinking, about students accomplishing something. Anderson agreed, but asked how “liberal learning” is different from “higher learning,” how the claims made for liberal education are “special and different.” Diana Schaub replied that “some learning doesn’t free you.” George Allan cautioned that the problem with a word like “learning” is that it is both a process and a noun.

Later in the discussion, William Spellman argued that the process begins in articulating what students should accomplish—lifelong interest beyond the ephemeral, introduction to and appreciation of different modes of inquiry, awareness of human ignorance, a sense of humility,
thinking independently, acting communally—and then turns to the issue of which content best
gets them there. Anderson agreed, arguing that a curriculum could gain approval without
specifying texts; one could stipulate that the texts ultimately chosen for such a curriculum would
need to come from different disciplines, different eras, and different cultures.

The definitional struggle continued, turning primarily toward issues of individual versus
corporate influences; in Virginia Wray’s terms, much of our talk is about changing the
individual, but the aim should be corporate as well. Fuller phrased it as the pursuit of wisdom
being about “learning how to live one’s life,” something that “can’t be reduced to a blueprint or
checklist.” Holyer argued that the liberal arts are an “entire context, the total environment in
which things are taught; a total package.” John Ramsay emphasized faculty and students
choosing together engaging and challenging materials. Shinn emphasized “liberation from
ignorance, narrow perspectives, solipsism, false distinctions.” Allan objected, however, that
liberation must be toward something as well as away from. Holyer observed that the
transformative experience happens in a great number of ways, but organizing a curriculum
around them isn’t possible.

Anderson and others observed that the conversation had shifted from “essential content” in the
liberal arts to “essential attributes.” But Shinn argued that these things can’t be separated:
“content for what?” Shinn argued that one can’t separate teacher from learner or text from
learner: “it’s not just get inducted into the club of great minds” but cultivating ways of thinking.
Hall maintained that the issue centers on the way thinking human beings deal with the central
challenges of human life—the formal way thinking human beings have discovered how to deal
with the environment, each other, and themselves over time. David Potts proposed a more
concrete representation of the definition: the argumentative essay as a central artifact of liberal
education. Potts amended this to include lab reports, and Churchill added expository,
exploratory, creative, and synthetic essays. All of these, Holyer interjected, have historical
frameworks and grounding. Building on this, Cook argued that liberal education needs to be
“logocentric” and rooted in the rational tradition; she cautioned that service learning and similar
recent developments move away from a grounding in logos.

Two remaining issues centered on the question of texts—what makes them useful and what
constitutes them—and on the place of emotion in liberal arts encounters with texts. Shinn cited
an example from Carnegie Mellon, a text that commingles texts from Plato and Aristotle with
video of a man in extreme pain begging for death, a means of asking what constitutes a
meaningful life. Does service learning here change the nature of that central liberal arts text? he
asked. Allan argued that the “text” is Plato and Aristotle while the video is part of the world
context into which the text is placed; the text, he argues, helps students make sense of the world.
Cook cautioned about the problem of students simply “emoting,” and urged the need for
philosophical undergirding. Holyer, however, argued that if we’re interested in students reading
texts and making something of them, we need to take their emotional responses and help them
follow them through. Hall, in agreement, cited Rorty on the need for “romance,” “a delight in
works of art and literature—and of philosophy and science—that make people think there is
more to this life than they ever imagined.”
David Anderson opened discussion by noting "something that has troubled me since this morning," the category of elite v. non-elite. We need to have, he suggested, some statement or position on how this factors into the social context in which it appears in America. A naive position would maintain that there is no essential connection between objects of study in the liberal arts and elite culture or status. (There is a historical connection, but elite status need not be a factor in determining who can study the liberal arts.) The "elite" can be defined as someone who has had access from the beginning to the education of elite culture. I would stubbornly insist that we should not consider a student's elite status, assuming that the liberal arts are available to everyone when well taught. Donal O'Shea noted that while the democratizing impulse of the Greater Expectations document is well meaning, if we push it, there isn't really much substance in its proposals. Larry Shinn added that he senses something else lurking here—elitism around the table, in several forms, for example in insisting on narrower, 19th century definitions of the liberal arts that emphasize great texts. His experience (growing up as a farmboy) doesn't fit this model. When he first read Plato in college, he didn't and couldn't understand Plato, but later began to understand him. Elite institutions often consider themselves better than everyone else, and it's easy to identify that kind of learning with privilege. Tim Fuller replied that the question is not about opportunity (all should have it), but about choosing to accept or embrace what a liberal education offers. Some will not choose it. It is difficult, and must be more than learning skills. It's essential character cannot be conceived in sociological terms. Diana Schaub agreed, that a liberal education is rare and precious. Only a few will choose it. Those who do choose it won't necessarily be from advantaged backgrounds—this might help us find the natural aristocrats. She then quoted a passage from W. E. B. Du Bois:

I sit with Shakespeare and he winces not. Across the color line I move arm in arm with Balzac and Dumas, where smiling men and welcoming women glide in gilded halls. From out the caves of evening that swing between the strong-limbed earth and the tracery of the stars, I summon Aristotle and Aurelius and what soul I will, and they come all graciously with no scorn nor condescension. So, wed with Truth, I dwell above the Veil. Is this the life you grudge us, O knightly America? Is this the life you long to change into the dull red hideousness of Georgia? Are you so afraid lest peering from this high Pisgah, between Philistine and Amalekite, we sight the Promised Land? [The Souls of Black Folk, chapter 6 "Of the Training of Black Men," last paragraph.]

There is a risk, Schaub continued, that we make that kind of experience less likely, as we welcome more and more students. For Shinn, this is possibly a fundamental disagreement among us. Education is always a communal act, with a text, in our thoughts, in encounters with a mentor. There is an academic sense of "elitism," too: professionals often set themselves apart from learners who might not want, or be able, to get to a "breakthrough." That barrier is a problem. If learning isn't to be used to improve the world, then it isn't having an impact. Schaub replied that yes, she and Shinn do fundamentally disagree on where focus should be laid. While Shinn is correct, that noble aspiration is incredibly hard to instantiate. A Ph.D. does not give one moral superiority—professors aren't wiser than anyone else, nor are they pastors or ministers. We should be very suspicious when a professor says to a student "I'll make you a better person." As Stanley Fish put it in a recent Chronicle of Higher Education, "Save the world on your own
time." She is suspicious of curricula that presume a moral superiority. While she would hope that people who have done the liberal arts are better spiritually or morally, she couldn't demonstrate that case. Anderson noted that he hopes that a liberal arts graduate won't have an attitude of moral superiority because of that kind of education.

John Churchill noted a distinction between sainthood and moral seriousness. One can produce moral clarity without moral goodness. Fuller concurred, citing Strauss, from the readings, on teachers who are not great minds (p. 21). Just as faculty are not necessarily great minds, those who have written great works are not necessarily great or good people. For Shinn, these concerns bring to mind questions of moral philosophy—does liberal education encompass moral and spiritual values? This question influenced his choice to come to Berea; the worst of our tradition can lead to intellectual arrogance, moral superiority. Shinn has also learned much from the time he spent in Asia: particularly, the importance and primacy of community.

Robert Holyer asked whether our disagreement is that the point of liberal education is intellectual cultivation, but that such cultivation won't necessarily make students into better citizens, better people, or better Christians? Shinn replied that if an education doesn't lead to changed behavior, then we're not leading an examined life. We are educating the whole person, so that through reflection we can sharpen and subdue emotions. O'Shea noted that one is learning human constructions, but we are each also reconstructing them ourselves. Holyer then proposed that, given the definition he had offered earlier [that liberal education aims at intellectual cultivation, which can include thinking about moral issues—for Shinn this definition is not sufficient], service learning, and other similar practices can help accomplish that aim. Anderson offered a codicil to Holyer's definition: intellectual cultivation must lead one to be aware of or sensitive to moral issues. He characterized the disagreement between himself and Shinn as on the issue of how far institutions should go programmatically in prescribing the means to that end. Ellen Mease offered an example, the case study of hate speech in Martha Nussbaum's Cultivating Humanity. Shinn asked, can we afford not to address these issues? In 1984, Berea was very paternal. The residence halls utilized a system of fines for rule violations, and this system undercut the college's goal of fostering independent thinking in liberal education. We face a tension here between academic affairs and student affairs: whether residence halls should impose a particular curriculum of their own, or provide a thoughtful structure that supports the college's curriculum. Life in the residence hall either supports the liberal arts, or it gets in the way. George Allan observed that we are using these terms "moral" and "good" here to talk about attitudes, ways of living, not a set of assertions, dogmas, beliefs. Dormitories can serve as places where that attitude is fostered. Holyer noted his sympathy with Shinn's position, but worries that it has left entirely the "study of the liberal arts" and moved to co-curricular considerations, to which Shinn replied that "our colleges are the implicit curricula".

Philip Hall agreed that we can't pretend that the setting in which the curriculum is delivered is irrelevant—not even for the curriculum itself—and so these issues are relevant.

Patricia Cook worried that we are in danger of creating a place where the predicament of contemporary problems is played out in dormitories. Colleges should rather seek to insulate themselves from fashionable thoughts—that we need a place away from contemporary culture, lest student life be a mere product of popular culture. To which Marty Eisenberg replied that there is only one curriculum on campus—and if your college is residential, the curriculum is the
total package—and so we need to think about some of those issues. Curriculum and co-
curriculum are not two separate things. Cook continued that the relevant aspects of college life 
are good coffee shops for conversation, good libraries, and quiet places to study. The rest is 
incidental. O'Shea remarked that he admires Berea's new scheme for integrating residential life 
and the academic curriculum. But typically, he finds that the residence life people are into 
"wellness," whereas he would prefer an unsafe, unbalanced space. Fuller agreed, noting that he 
would prefer less disparity between the formal intellectual life and informal life that surrounds 
it—a college's intellectual life should leaven the social life. But with Cook, he continued that the 
view that learning must be connected to contemporary issues (politics, etc.) detracts from a 
notion of self-discovery, from the life of the mind, pursuit of wisdom, and a contemplative or 
meditative aspect of learning that might not be technologically accessible. What, then, he asked, 
is the totality we seek? If it's lodged in intellectual life, and that life is lodged in idea that 
learning is intrinsically good, then some connections can undermine the centrality of intellectual 
life. Anderson agreed that he, too, liked the Berea residence hall model. But he also noted that 
we're not talking uniquely about liberal arts education—residence hall issue are pertinent for 
dental schools, and other professional education. George Allan remarked that the question here 
would be whether one can learn how to be liberally educated in those situations, or if one has to 
learn it elsewhere. To which Hoyler asked whether that has been true about everything we've 
talked about: these texts can be used in non-liberal forms of education, etc. That it can be used 
elsewhere doesn't mean that it's not an important part of a liberal education. Eisenberg observed 
that we need to look broadly at the picture. Frazee noted that in order to give ourselves the best 
chance to achieve our as yet unspecified liberal arts outcomes in our students, we should want to 
use as much time as possible. We should want to house them in an intentional way.

At this point, Churchill offered a taxonomy of three voices that can be heard in the room: one 
Platonist and two non-Platonist voices. The Platonist is one proceeding from the confidence that 
there is an organic tie between the development of intellectual capacities and appreciation of the 
good. The morally confident non-Platonist is sure that there is no connection between 
knowledge and the good, but is concerned nevertheless that liberal arts colleges, by doing their 
job, could produce monsters like Hannibal Lector. The morally dubious non-Platonist is in favor 
of the cultivation of virtues, but is worried that we don't know what is good for humans, and that 
therefore a college's institutional authority is more likely to screw things up than it is to help. 
Ramsay raised a "Deweyan challenge," (cf. p. 59 of the readings): do our versions of liberal 
education enable or disenable students from engaging in the kind of discourse that is the mark of 
deliberative democracy, mutual conversation and consultation with others who have not had that 
kind of liberal education? Shinn replied that if we focus on the student, we should all agree that 
our goal is for that student to become a reflective being. But toward what ends? The individual's 
own, or ends shared with others? And where ultimately, he asked further, does that intellect get 
sharpened? These intellectual skills are being developed in dormitories and elsewhere on the 
campus. This is what Astin calls the "implicit curriculum." John Ottenhoff offered the 
observation that one division we hear here is epistemological. Are these texts "just there?" Is 
knowledge a construction of a community, or is it independent? Allan replied that if knowledge 
is a social construct, it is a creation of a culture. If virtue is a part of that knowledge, something 
that must be learned, then his concern is we can't go into dorms and assume that students will 
have the resources available to work out a good solution, that is, a solution marked by the 
character of virtue we're talking about. Tradition must be the undergirding for understanding
human life, and we need to bring the resources of tradition, or "civilized knowledge," to the students. Where does it come from? Sui generis, or in the classroom? Ottenhoff noted in reply that we must recognize how that tradition happens—it is interpreted, constructed, and conveyed by humans in a certain place with a certain ideology, it doesn't just occur. If this conversation will be meaningful for American higher education, we have to do more with postmodernist perspectives on knowledge and tradition than merely saying "Yuck." Anderson tried to bring these two strands of conversation together, observing that of course, residential lib arts colleges should pay attention to dorms. He hopes that our students will be better educated, less feckless, more morally aware and more morally complicated as a result of their education—including their dormitory life. He doesn't want an ideologist in the classroom, or in residential life. Our students should have to confront and struggle with ideas, but ideologies should not be inflicted upon them. Fuller added that we are all members of a community and a tradition. He continued to observe that Max Weber's distinction between giving lectures and making speeches is constantly being eroded, but must be maintained as an ideal. Students know when they're being propagandized. And the chance to fail is part of what makes success real in a liberal arts education. Ramsay added that the concept of indoctrination is important for liberal education, because we define ourselves against it. But if our students know it when they are being propagandized, then our fears are groundless. If liberal education is liberating, then trying to produce some particular outcome is counter to our goals.
Session 6: Students, Professors, Administrators of the Liberal Arts
Saturday afternoon

George Allan began the final session with the observation that our differences are being clarified, and that threads are being woven, however loosely. Tim Fuller then asked, "Could we come to an agreement that there is an essential content?" Allan continued that if, for example, we were giving instructions to a curriculum committee, what instructions would we give? Patricia Cook began a response by noting that there cannot be a generic liberal arts curriculum or template, because institutions have differing characters—size, history, and culture all matter for the character of an institution. David Anderson then offered a proposal for a definition of liberal arts' essential content:

The essential content of the liberal arts is a course of study that introduces students to the major areas of human knowing and their methods of inquiry through a study of texts and other materials from differing historical periods and global cultures that raise questions of enduring values. These questions foster in students the ability to deliberate both internally and with others about these questions (including the ability to write argumentative or exploratory prose and enter into dialogue with others).

To complement this proposal Diana Schaub read another selection from W. E. B. Du Bois:

The hundred hills of Atlanta are not all crowned with factories. On one, toward the west, the setting sun throws three buildings in bold relief against the sky. The beauty of the group lies in its simple unity: —a broad lawn of green rising from the red street and mingled roses and peaches; north and south, two plain and stately halls, and in the midst, half hidden in ivy, a larger building, boldly graceful, sparingly decorated, and with one low spire. It is a restful group,—one never looks for more; it is all here, all intelligible. There I live, and there I hear from day to day the low hum of restful life. In winter's twilight, when the red sun glows, I can see the dark figures pass between the halls to the music of the night-bell. In the morning, when the sun is golden, the clang of the day-bell brings the hurry and laughter of three hundred young hearts from hall and street, and from the busy city below,—children all dark and heavy-haired,—to join their clear young voices in the music of the morning sacrifice. In a half-dozen class-rooms they gather then,—here to follow the love-song of Dido, here to listen to the tale of Troy divine; there to wander among the stars, there to wander among men and nations,—and elsewhere other well-worn ways of knowing this queer world. Nothing new, no time-saving devices,—simply old time-glorified methods of delving for Truth, and searching out the hidden beauties of life, and learning the good of living. The riddle of existence is the college curriculum that was laid before the Pharaohs, that was taught in the groves by Plato, that formed the trivium and quadrivium, and is to-day laid before the freedmen's sons by Atlanta University. and this course of study will not change; its methods will grow more deft and effectual, its content richer by toil of scholar and sight of seer; but the true college will ever have one goal,—not to earn meat, but to know the end and aim of that life which meat nourishes. [The Souls of Black Folk, chapter 5 "Of the Wings of Atalanta," roughly in the middle of the chapter.]

Schaub noted that this does not imply a closed canon. Robert Holyer asked if the sciences were excluded in this vision? No, Schaub replied, noting where Du Bois mentions that they "wander
among the stars" and "other well-worn ways"—which seem to encompass the sciences. She added that she read the entire passage because Du Bois begins with the campus—architecture, students' living arrangements, etc. Holyer replied by wondering if we could ask a science faculty job candidate to explain how the discipline fits within this model? Philip Hall noted that he is looking for the "doing" part in both Anderson's and Du Bois's descriptions of the liberal arts. Marty Eisenberg observed that we will still have to construct meanings from the texts and from combinations of texts—John Ottenhoff's point from the last session. Tim Fuller added that these lists (Anderson's and Du Bois') don't go down to details; we can always ask "did you mean to include x or y?" That is good, otherwise we'd have an encyclopedia. (This is precisely one of the frustrations with the Greater Expectations document.) What Du Bois is trying to do, Fuller continued, is not a definition or mission statement, but rather to evoke in us what it's like to have had the experience. If we can agree that that is adequate, then filling in the details of particulars at specific colleges is a second project. John Frazee noted that his problem with this passage from Du Bois—which is lovely—is that the end of a liberal education is to be able to read that passage and understand and appreciate it. He would prefer something in between this evocative description and the "operational definition" being developed by Charlie Blaich and others at the Center, that would get us in the front end.

Allan pointed out that Eva Brann, among others, is worried about fields and disciplines getting in the way of the liberal arts—the disciplines tend to fragment knowledge. Both Anderson's and Du Bois's statements are amenable to disciplines. A core curriculum is typically "pre-disciplinary," so what is the place of the disciplines? Should they be a part of a college education at the first? And how does one transition to them? Larry Shinn noted that this passage from Du Bois speaks to the heart, it appeals to emotional, as well as intellectual, experiences that we've had. But the question is, how should we construct a curriculum along those lines? We cannot escape the disciplines in this day and age. We need to understand what it is that teaching the liberal arts leads students toward. (Here he cited Diana Schaub's essay in section six of the readings packet.) Donal O'Shea added that Du Bois' vision is eminently "saleable". Students and parents want something more—awe inspiring—or their kids. Hall replied that while Du Bois' passage justifies the liberal arts, but does it describe them? Fuller observed that this passage is meant to be a summation of Du Bois' experience in a classroom. It cites lots of classical literature, which transcended a certain class or socio-economic group. But there's no doubt that modern science needs to be a part of a liberal arts curriculum. And parents want to know that we believe in this stuff ourselves. Anderson then proposed that the group should begin with his proposed definition and then include DuBois' passage afterwards as an illustration. It is important to look at the disciplinary foregrounding of the liberal arts, but a core curriculum doesn't have to be organized in terms of disciplines. It is easy to imagine, for example, a third year course on water, and a fourth year course on the infinite—topics that would be very interdisciplinary. Allan added that, for Whitehead, a discipline is defined by a method, and a method is a simplification, an abstraction. First one must be excited by the issues—and a discipline can't do that—so that one will willingly undertake the rigor of disciplinary training.

Cook offered the following proposal: "A liberally educated person has some sense of the purpose of life. If a student can begin to give an answer to that question, then we would have a good test of whether a person had powers of discernment, reflection, and a sense of direction." Hall then
asked whether, on this criterion, a simple recitation of the Catholic catechism would be an adequate answer. Ramsay asked whether, in consideration of larger questions such as Cook's, if the ability to answer this kind of question is our aim, does Anderson's proposal get us there? Holyer remarked that we seems now to be talking about essential purposes. Anderson objected that his proposal was not about purposes, but rather about content. He then offered a revised version of his proposed statement:

The essential content of the liberal arts is a course of study that introduces students to the major areas of human knowing and their methods of inquiry through a study of texts and other materials from differing historical periods and global cultures that raise questions of enduring values. *The pedagogy fosters* in students the ability to deliberate both internally and with others about these questions (including the ability to write argumentative or exploratory prose and enter into dialogue with others). [Changes to the statement are noted in italics.]

Anderson added that this version concedes the point that there is a pedagogy associated with it. That might be part of the study, not the aim. Churchill responded that this does not constitute a concession. Recall language from the Yale reports, that David Potts discussed in his keynote address: The reports speak of the methods "best calculated to" achieve certain aims. If our aim is some image of a liberally educated person (qua human flourishing), then Anderson's list seems pretty good, as a method. A liberally educated person knows some things; cares about some things, and can do some things, which involve critically appreciating texts, evaluating arguments, etc. Whether one can give an account of the meaning of life at commencement is a more worrisome proposition. Rather one might say in response to Cook's question that, "I don't know enough about x and I haven't yet read y; give me 30 years and ask me again." Cook noted that she would consider that a sublime answer. And Churchill continued that if the graduate then added "And I'll live in my parents' basement until I figure it out," then we would have a problem. So, Holyer remarked, liberal education seems to lead to skepticism about the big issues. Churchill replied that rather it leads one to cope with uncertainty and ambiguity, and yet still act. Anderson continued that it isn't essential for one to have read Plato, but if one doesn't know what philosophy is, one isn't liberally educated. One doesn't have to have read *Hamlet*, but if one can't talk about literary texts, one isn't liberally educated.

A series of negotiations about the specific phrasing of Anderson's proposal followed. Allan observed that he is beginning to think that this core should start with examples—biographies or autobiographies. He would not want to start with the disciplines. And that bothers him about Anderson's proposal. (Anderson suggested that the second and third parts of the proposal could be reversed, to shift the emphasis away from disciplines.) Richard Lynch suggested that perhaps some sort of preface addressing attitudes of openness to inquiry or discovery would address these concerns about disciplines. O'Shea noted that a number of enduring questions cannot be asked outside of a discipline—students cannot begin in a vacuum. Holyer asked to what extent some level of specialization is necessary. Allan offered the example of a high school physics teacher, who begins with a situation to analyze without any quantitative measures, and then proceeds to add such details later. Fuller responded that the danger of such an approach is that one will load students up with abstract notions. On the contrary, learning a discipline is preparation for another kind of questioning, interdisciplinary. Cook added that while she doesn't want to lose the precise languages of the disciplines, we don't want the human experience to become so partitioned and specialized that we can't be generalists and ask big questions. Ramsay expressed
agreement with Allan's proposal about beginning with biographies, which also ask "big questions." (Of course, biography-writing is also a discipline—perhaps autobiographies would be better suited to such a task.) At this point, Anderson suggested that a codicil to his proposed statement concerning the aims of liberal education might be in order: "toward the end of producing informed, self-aware, reflective, values-conscious, life-long learners."

Ramsay then asked where living in a democratic society fits into this definition. He noted that these passages come from the professorial Du Bois, not the later activist Du Bois. Anderson worried that at this point we might begin to cross the line and slip into ideologizing. Allan replied that Dewey wants to teach one to be intelligent; he is not teaching citizenship—because if one is intelligent, one will be a good citizen. Holyer offered another citation from Schaub from the readings (p. 63). Shinn remarked that this may mark another divide within this group. He likes everything in Anderson's definition, except that it lacks a sense of reciprocity. The weakness of the Western tradition is in faculty and administrators who see themselves as the end of such an education, as in the saying that "Once I'm tenured, I never have to say I'm sorry again." On the contrary, collaboration is important. Cook observed that this presupposes that one knows what the good is. It would be a mistake to try to teach one particular good. Shinn agreed that Cook has stated the problem. For example, we're part of the community of this colloquium. Allan asked whether it would it be sufficient for us to develop an awareness of the common good. Ramsay added that one should be able to choose to be a non-civic citizen, based on certain reasons. At this point, Anderson proposed dropping the codicil, and revising the fourth part of the definition instead, including language about how the liberal arts "promotes concern for the common good." Shinn clarified that at issue is not the common good, but collaboration. Fuller asked why Shinn is not satisfied with what Anderson's language, which implies faculty responsibility. Cook concluded the meetings with an observation and a question. She still sees a contrast between what American liberal education is all about and what European traditional education is all about, and doesn't think that Europeans sit around agonizing about what they're doing. "Given that we're in this unique American situation," she concluded, "is it possible that I'm right, that we need the core texts?"

Final version of Anderson's statement on the liberal arts: The essential content of the liberal arts is a course of study that introduces students to the major areas of human knowing and their methods of inquiry through a study of texts and other materials from differing historical periods and global cultures that raise questions of enduring values. The pedagogy fosters in students the ability to express their understanding of these texts and to engage in deliberative discourse with others about their understandings, toward the end of producing informed, self-aware, reflective, values-conscious, life-long learners.
Discussion: wrap up
Saturday night

George Allan presided over a brief final session that brought the colloquy to a formal close. Allan asked the group whether it would useful for all to write essays pulling the meetings together. One way to do that, he suggested, would be to write short pieces (500-600 words) for the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts’ LiberalArtsOnline. Those pieces might then be collected and offered to a publisher as a prospectus for a volume of essays. Allan asked for such essays within the next month and suggested further that the group might take David Anderson’s definition from Session 5 and connect it to existing research and discussions attempting to define liberal arts education. Allan argued that the most important value of such a colloquy is the effect it has on the participants and how they might rethink what they do on their own campuses; publication would be a “bonus.”

John Churchill stated that Phi Beta Kappa sees the Center of Inquiry colloquies as “in confluence” with a set of conversations with alumni associations throughout the country; one of the aims of such meetings is to highlight Phi Beta Kappa as a “champion of the liberal arts.” Churchill said Phi Beta Kappa expects to release a white paper at the end of the summer, and that this colloquy and others will feed into the ongoing Phi Beta Kappa discussions.