



SUMMARIES FROM SUMMER STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMUNITY DISCUSSIONS

Breaking down the barriers between “traditional” pre-professional programs and the “traditional” liberal arts program

Questions for today’s discussion

1. To the extent that a divide exists between the traditional “liberal arts” and “traditional” pre-professional programs, what steps can we take to bridge that divide? How might we encourage, support or incentivize initiatives or programs that work to bring our students the best aspects of both? Are there any costs to encouraging this kind of partnership?
2. Given student demand for the pre-professional programs, how do we support Augustana’s mission as a liberal arts college? How do we promote intentionality among students to seek and achieve both a grounding in the liberal arts and their pre-professional preparation?
3. What changes to programs, majors or requirements are needed to facilitate the goals spelled out in the first two questions?
 - a. What changes are needed, if any, to the pre-professional programs to assure students achieve a full liberal arts experience while also meeting the requirements for licensure, admission into post-graduate professional schools, etc.?
 - b. What are ways to identify, promote and support the pre-professional elements that already exist within traditional liberal arts majors (e.g., internships, skills development)? What might be additional roles for advisors and career counselors to facilitate this?

Summer Strategic Planning Discussion Topic: *Articulating the advantages of a residential liberal arts college and strengthening the links between our pre-professional programs and the traditional liberal arts programs*

Questions asked at the summer session

Note: Only the question from the summer session relevant to the topic of “pre-professional programs” is listed here. Group 1 is discussing the remaining questions at today’s retreat.

1. What are some of the best examples of strong ties between our pre-professional programs and our liberal arts mission? What are some barriers to these ties?



Summary of Summer Strategic Planning Discussion: Strengthening links between pre-professional and traditional liberal arts

There was general agreement that the divide is a largely imagined one, with all programs having a pre-professional component and all students engaged in a liberal arts education. Many felt that the divide exists mostly in the minds of faculty, and largely when resources are tight and enrollments seen as measures of value. We already have strong ties between those aspects of the education at Augustana that seem career-focused vs. those with a lifelong learning emphasis.

There is a sense that our “pre-professional” programs greatly benefit from the liberal arts emphasis within the curriculum, a distinction we hold over other academic institutions without a similar curriculum. Double majors, the linking of majors and clubs, internships, service learning and team teaching were seen as options that heighten this advantage. There was concern that faculty partisanship and infighting is absorbed by students as well, and that double majors within the same basic discipline (biology-premed, business-accounting and anthro-sociology as examples) may not be as effective as more diverse pairings (biology-philosophy, business-English, anthro-accounting). Lack of intentionality, particularly with a student’s choice of LCs or LP courses, was seen as part of a larger question about our students. Do they seek challenges, interdisciplinarity and the richest possible experience here or do they want to complete the requirements to get the diploma with the job-ready qualification attached to it? Checking boxes vs. seeking to grow.

A final concern is the seeming doubletalk of employers who claim to seek the very skills that a liberal arts degree conveys, but who still tend to hire those whose majors fit into the narrow confines of the job description rather than those whose education demonstrates the skills which are said to be valued.