Faculty report to the Board of Trustees  
September 28, 2012

Last spring, I presented some sobering statistics regarding our growing imbalance between the 76 percent of students majoring in the College of Natural and Health Sciences and Business and the 24 percent majoring in the College of the Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (CHSSE). I outlined the problematic consequences of that imbalance as it reverberates throughout the university and within the General Education curriculum. I also vowed that faculty would do all they could to respond to the imbalance, dedicating time, expertise and effort.

Activities Thus Far
Since last spring, there has been a groundswell of activity among faculty working with staff, especially in the Humanities, Social Sciences and Education. Headed by Charlie Byer, the dean of the College, a team of eight faculty and staff members worked throughout the spring semester and during the summer to generate and begin implementing a series of initiatives to boost enrollment and enhance recruitment. Work thus far has included:

- Revamping materials available at Campus Days for prospective students to emphasize the practicality of majors within CHSSE.
- Working with career services to better communicate information about existing internships and to cultivate new internship opportunities for these majors.
- Planning enhancements to departmental websites designed to capture the attention of prospective students and show them opportunities unique to the Carroll experience.
- Designing a two-credit course focused on career planning within the Humanities and Social Sciences.
- Developing a series of model four-year plans for double majoring between the colleges, so that, for example, biology majors might double major in English where they can study human experience, or business majors can double major in professional writing to enhance their expressive skills, or students headed toward careers in the health sciences might double major in religious studies to connect bodily and spiritual healing. Indeed, Jane Hopp has also proposed an exploratory major that might help to guard against students being trapped too early in majors that might not suit their talents and instead open paths that might lead them to their truer callings.
- Partnering with Advancement to pursue new grants that might fund outside speakers, explorations of intersections between the arts and sciences, and other activities at Carroll that renew our focus on fostering the liberal arts on campus.
- Continuing to develop a wide range of Cross Cultural Experiences and New Cultural Experience Programs, as well as other models that will provide all our students with experiences beyond their own worlds and environments.

As you can see, faculty and staff have taken up this charge with enthusiasm and strategic vision. Put simply, we are on the move. But this groundswell of activity is not enough.

Rationale for a Board-Level Initiative
As I noted last spring, Carroll has been enormously successful in establishing itself as a magnet for professions in the health sciences and business. That is a proud achievement. However, it has come at the cost of creating a notable imbalance within our student population. In 2011, the number of HSSE majors at Carroll fell to 24 percent of total students. When we exclude the
largely professional majors of criminal justice, education, and graphic communication, this figure falls to 14 percent.

Certainly, current national trends point to a decreased interest in the humanities and social sciences. According to a 2010 report from the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, these majors have experienced a 6-8 percent drop in enrollment since 2006. Since that same year, however, Carroll has experienced a 15 percent drop within our majors in humanities and social sciences. Some individual majors have experienced drops closer to 20-30 percent. Even more troubling is that this trend seems to be increasing: some programs in our college have experienced as much as a 20 percent drop in the past year alone.

It is not simply that Carroll’s trends are drastically exaggerated compared to national averages. We are also distancing ourselves from similar schools that students might consider for a liberal arts education. According to the 2012 U.S. News and World Report survey, many colleges and universities similar to ours continue to count the humanities, social sciences and education among their top five majors. At Beloit College, creative writing and sociology are among the top five majors. At Lawrence University, English, music and political science rank among the top five. At Concordia, religious studies and education rank among the top five. At Kalamazoo College, English and social sciences do. Lake Forest counts communication and English among its top five majors. The list goes on.

What is the cost of this change in Carroll’s culture and undergraduate composition? Carroll might be perceived as primarily a professional college that caters to individuals seeking careers in the medical, technical or financial fields. Students interested in the humanities, social sciences and education might no longer consider Carroll a desired or even potential choice. Outstanding faculty in those fields might be less likely to apply to teach at Carroll. We might be challenged to retain our CHSS faculty who are interested in working with a robust and enthusiastic student population in upper-division courses. Perhaps most worrisome, however, is that this trend veers us away from the spirit of our newly reinvigorated Mission Statement:

“Carroll University provides a superior education, rooted in its Presbyterian and liberal arts heritage, and draws upon its Christian tradition to prepare all students for vocational success, lifelong learning and service in a diverse and global society.”

At the heart of our Mission Statement is our commitment to the liberal arts, a mode of learning that, since classical antiquity, has placed letters (e.g., history, literature, philosophy) in strong dialog with the sciences (e.g., mathematics, medicine). Indeed, that tradition has for millennia built its educational foundation on the study of the humanities. Our Christian and Presbyterian traditions base themselves in the notion that individuals gain spiritual growth through interaction with inspirational texts. Further, these traditions embrace spiritual growth through the investigation of fundamental moral and ethical ideas in dialog with a diverse group of others. Ultimately, our new mission promises to help students prepare for a vocation. Given that this term has, at its root, the Latin word for a calling, we owe it to our students to create an environment where they can explore the route to their calling amidst a population of students embracing diverse disciplines that pursue enduring questions.

**Desired Action from the Board**

While faculty efforts will build enthusiasm among students already on campus and reach some students looking at Carroll, we need a “full court press” at all levels of the university to address
this increasing imbalance. A board-level initiative will help incentivize other stakeholders within
the university to make this issue a priority. With clear direction from the board, possible new
work might include these initiatives:

- Admission staff can investigate innovative ways to appeal to students interested in HSSE
  majors. This could begin with benchmarking best practices from other schools and result
  in a specific plan for targeted communications, recruitment and incentives.
- Leadership, communications staff, and other key spokespeople across Carroll can invest
  the language of the humanities and social sciences into all public communications. For
  example, when the President or other leaders speak to alumni groups, churches or
  conferences, they can emphasize these programs and their centrality to the Carroll
  education.
- The Pioneer magazine can feature more profiles of exceptional students, alumni and
  faculty from these majors.
- With modest and targeted investment, Carroll can foster this public image and perception
  of dedication to the humanities, social sciences, and education by sponsoring arts
  activities. We might purchase ad space in the programs of small theater companies in
  metropolitan Milwaukee or subsidize tickets for area high school students to specific
  plays or concerts. We might sponsor a film of interest to young people or parents of
  school-age children at area film festivals. We could sponsor debating events, theater
  camps, book festival or other programs that can associate Carroll with an investment in
  the liberal arts.
- On campus, we can raise the profile of Carroll as a destination for thinking about issues
  of importance in the humanities and social sciences. We can intentionally feature national
  speakers not only successful in sports, business, and medicine, but also in the visual and
  performing arts, as well as in creative endeavors and in social change efforts. These
  events can place local and national thinkers in conversation with our students and faculty.
  Encouraging community attendance at these events would bolster our public profile.
- We could set targets for annual admission growth in the humanities, social sciences and
  education for a more balanced student body.
- The Academic Subcommittee of the board, along with select administrators, faculty and
  staff could establish annual goals as a priority.
- We could request the Planning and Budget Committee to ensure that resources are
  available to support this initiative.

I name these only as examples to start the conversation. With incentive from the board, I would
look forward to hearing from experts across campus about how best manage our college’s brand;
appeal to deciding high school students and their parents; and work with our non-profit and
business partners to restore the balance of majors at Carroll and “walk the talk” of our
investment in the liberal arts.

Closing Thought
At last spring’s graduation ceremony, Carroll University gave a copy of the Steve Jobs’
biography to every graduate. I’ll end by quoting Mr. Jobs:

"Technology alone is not enough. It's technology married with liberal arts, married with
humanities, that yields the results that make our hearts sing."

This sounds to me like something very close to our vision for what Carroll stands for and what
we want Carroll to be for our students. We can do this. Let us do this as our legacy to Carroll.