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The Liberal Arts Endeavor

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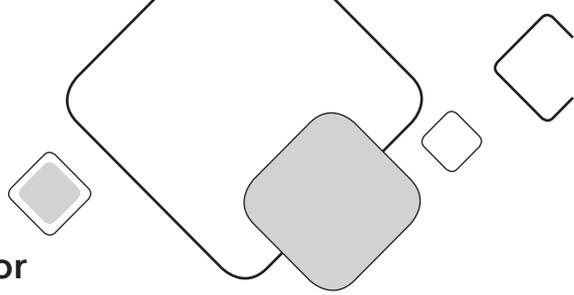
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Thick Collegiality and General Education

At the *Journal of General Education (JGE)*, we are committed to general education as a cornerstone of the arts of liberty that prepare citizens to live engaged, responsible, and meaningful lives. At the heart of this effort is the ability to work in equitable and collaborative ways with colleagues. *Collegiality*, however, is an often lauded but seldom defined term in academic circles. Perhaps this is because collegiality is a relatively thin and ambiguous concept—it can mean different things in different contexts for different people. Although collegiality is widely acknowledged as a virtue, its lack of descriptive content makes it challenging to put into practice. And yet, collegiality is something that we can point to when it manifests; we recognize it in practice and feel its value when we encounter it.

Of course, the ambiguity of the term also gives rise to its misuse. In its baser manifestations, calls for collegiality, or its cousin, civility, are poorly disguised attempts to exclude or undermine the legitimacy of a particular position or approach. As advocates for the liberal arts, we ought to be concerned about collegiality being used to exclude certain kinds of knowledge, promote gate-keeping practices, and limit the voices of those who offer necessary critique. Providing a thicker definition of collegiality is important precisely because we want to avoid invoking it in the service of exclusionary practices that limit innovation and reinforce calcified ways of knowing.¹

Recognizing collegiality as a virtue helps to thicken our determination of it as a habit developed through practice. Its signature characteristic is reciprocal respect in contexts of collaboration. This suggests that the production of knowledge is a natural space for cultivating collegiality, for knowledge is, and has always been, a shared endeavor that is most richly advanced through reciprocal respect.

At *JGE*, we seek to thicken our practices of collegiality by encouraging three dimensions of scholarly engagement:

- Hermeneutic Empathy: the ability to accurately describe what animates the scholarship under review
- Hermeneutic Generosity: the willingness to invest expertise, experience, insight, and ideas toward improving the scholarship under review
- Hermeneutic Transformation: the ability to engage the community in ways that enrich the scholarship we are producing together

To practice thick collegiality is no simple task, for the cultivation of a virtue often requires us to act in ways that feel uncomfortable as we intentionally realign our habits with our best sense of what is just. As we develop these practices of collegiality within scholarly communities engaged in general education, we offer *JGE* as a space to both theorize and showcase the collegial production of knowledge.

To this end, we invite our readers to consider what thick collegiality might look like in our everyday scholarly practices, from the peer-review process, to co-authoring papers, to general education reform. How might practices of thick collegiality reshape and deepen our commitment to general education? *JGE* is itself a space for the shared production of knowledge and therefore ought to serve as a model for the cultivation of practices of thick collegiality. Just as we seek new scholarship that advances the arts of liberty at the heart of the general education endeavor, we seek peer reviewers committed to thick collegiality who are willing not only to evaluate but also to provide formative feedback that might enrich the work submitted.

From critical-thinking practices in foreign language classes, to inclusion and equity within the scope of the university, to innovations in assessment, the authors included in this issue exemplify the forward-thinking theoretical commitments of general education. In “Critical Thinking in the Foreign Language and Culture Curriculum,” Daren Snider argues that explicit teaching of critical-thinking skills in foreign language courses would strengthen higher-order thinking skills while enhancing language and cultural proficiency. In “Humanities Professors’ Conceptions of Assessment,” Chad Rohrbacher presents a case study that makes visible humanities professors’ assumptions and beliefs about assessment, in order to understand how those conceptions affect approaches to teaching and learning. In “Measuring Racial Bias and General Education Assessment,” Bob Blankenberger et al. discuss a model for assessing general education student learning outcomes related to reducing racial bias in

postsecondary students. In “General Education: The Front Lines of Equity and Inclusion at a Midsize Public University,” Ed Klonoski, Gregory Barker, and Vernese Edghill-Walden argue that general education classes present prime opportunities to address the academic inequity that persists despite increased access to higher education in the last half century. Finally, Futao Huang provides an analysis of how U.S. general education has been transferred to Japan, China, and Hong Kong in “Transfers of General Education from the United States to East Asia.”

We invite readers to consider how you might participate in these critical discussions and the shared production of knowledge rooted in practices of thick collegiality.

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NOTE

1. Leigh Johnson points to the dangerous exclusionary effects of appealing to “collegiality” and “civility” as methods of policing knowledge in her blog *ReadMoreWriteMoreThinkMoreBeMore*. See Leigh Johnson, “Normalizing Civility, Policing Critique, Enforcing Silence, and Misunderstanding Collegiality,” *ReadMoreWriteMoreThinkMoreBeMore* (blog), September 14, 2014, accessed June 24, 2018, <http://www.readmorewritemorethinkmorebemore.com/2014/09/normalizing-civility-policing-critique.html?m=1>.