

Bulletin of

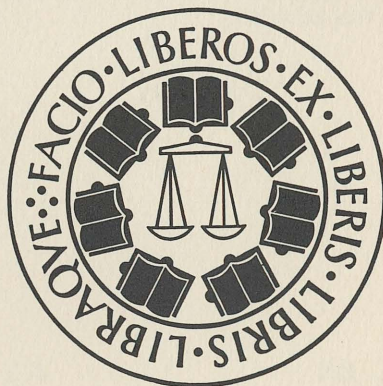
St. John's College

Annapolis, Maryland

Santa Fe, New Mexico

STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL POLICY AND PROGRAM

1967



A Message From The President

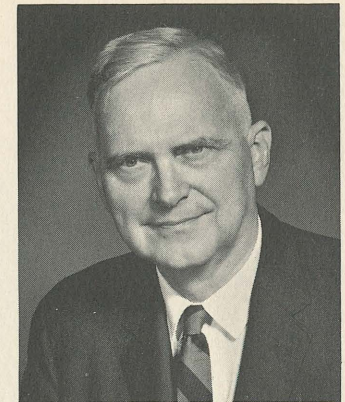
Each year the Dean of the College prepares a statement of educational policy and program. This is done with the advice and concurrence of the Instruction Committee. The statement is presented to the Faculty on both campuses for discussion and possible objection. After agreement is reached, the statement is submitted to the Board of Visitors and Governors as a report.

This most recent statement of educational policy and program was submitted to the Board in December of 1967. It deserves the wider dissemination of the printed page, since it addresses itself to the subject of relevance in education. The Dean well states the conviction of the Faculty that the St. John's program, both with respect to curriculum and teaching method, is highly relevant to young men and women living in the late Twentieth Century.

As a matter of general interest, the Dean has appended to the statement a summary of various changes which have been made in the St. John's curriculum since 1937, when the present program was adopted.

Richard D. Weigle
President

STATEMENT OF EDUCATIONAL
POLICY AND PROGRAM 1967



Thirty-one years ago this fall, St. John's began teaching under what was called the New Program. The Board adopted it as an alternative to the diffuse and incoherent curricula taught in most American colleges of the time. It was presented as an attempt to recover the traditional unity of the liberal arts and to bring back under their aegis the natural sciences, which had been so largely responsible for the fragmentation of the old classical curriculum.

A full generation later, St. John's is still operating under the same program although many changes of detail and emphasis have been made. A generation later, American colleges are still in the same incoherence and diffuseness as when the program began. Departmental rivalry and lack of communication, attempts to relate to the passing interests of the students and to be "modern," the exaltation of the expert over the educated, are still with us. Even when a college faculty tries to do something about the situation, it tends to reinforce the idea of expertise. The "Experimental College" has become a species in America. One feels that it makes little difference what is done so long as it can be labeled an experiment and be scrutinized by panels of expert consultants.

The St. John's policy of recovering a modern equivalent of the traditional liberal arts has frequently been misunderstood. Some people are put off by connotations of the St. John's claims, thinking of the College as medieval and out of touch with the modern era. Therefore, a statement or restatement of our educational policy may well be a discussion of relevance in the curriculum.

It is the most fundamental premise of liberal education that the primary relevance of the curriculum is to the student. The doctrine, whether Christian or Kantian, that human beings are ends in themselves and must never be used as means to another's end, without their consent, is the source of this premise and its justification. It follows, however, from another doctrine about man—that he is a political animal—that education has secondary relevance to society.

The relevance to the student is twofold: to the capacities and learning he brings with him to his liberal education and, more importantly, to what he is going to be. Education is a process of making men actually what they are potentially. The very meaning of education is growth toward fulfillment. In other words, treating a human being as an end in himself means for the teacher helping him to find the end for which he is destined by his individual nature.

Society's right in the educational process is first that the learner in fulfilling his potentialities fulfills the political aspects of his nature. Since society is but a name for the complex patterns of institutions, law and customs by which men assist one another to achieve their ends, it wishes liberal education to develop members who can understand these patterns and live with them. And further, it wishes these members to have such a definition of the good life that they can see the errors and shortcomings of social institutions and point to ways of correcting them. Education brings the young into their social heritage and provides them with the means of critical understanding of its faults as well as its virtues. It prepares him to act responsibly in fulfilling his duties to his fellow man: the duty to resist evil, to work for the good, and to understand the principles on which to distinguish good from evil.

To deal with the question of relevance as applied to our present curriculum in the present time, it is not sufficient to state general principles. It must be shown how the curriculum is in fact relevant to students living in the actual world.

There are several "idols," in Bacon's sense of the word, that tend to confuse the discussion of relevance. One of these is the idol of "contemporaneity"; another is "utilitarianism"; a third might be called "comprehensiveness"; and the fourth and last, "specialism."

As to the first, what is relevant to the spiritual and social development of an individual is not necessarily the latest novel or the newest scientific discovery. This is by no means to deny that contemporary writers and thinkers may produce relevant works; but that judgment of what works to include in the program is based on principles other than timeliness. To state these principles is difficult. In a sense the tradition as a whole, through the liberal arts, judges what belongs to it. The exercise of this judgment belongs to the Faculty, who, through scrutiny of many candidates for inclusion in the curriculum, become skillful in recognizing the works that have marks of greatness and permanence.

Utilitarianism manifests itself in the suggestion that this or that be added to the curriculum not for its relevance to the main purpose or to the rest of the program, but because the graduate schools require it or it will help the graduate find a better job. Since the end of liberal education is life and not a living, most suggestions of this kind are irrelevant if not detrimental to the goal of the program. But even more, most of the matters proposed as requisites for graduate school can readily be acquired by the serious student for himself.

The third idol, comprehensiveness, arises when the wholeness that education aims at is interpreted to mean the sum of human knowledge. Those impelled by the logic of comprehensiveness say that the student should be made acquainted with a list of specific knowledges running from accounting to zoology. This demand overlooks the fact that the wholeness liberal education pursues is an intellectual integrity and more unity that comes from understanding first things first.

Specialism, premature specialization at the undergraduate level, has always been the object of attack by the St. John's Faculty. Certain critics of St. John's misinterpret the parts of the program as inadequate efforts to provide specialized work in a limited number of subjects. But the several parts of the St. John's curriculum—seminar, laboratory, and tutorials in language, mathematics, and music—are not to be construed as courses within the definition of those offered in a departmental system. There is rather an inner structure that builds the parts of the program into a whole, though a whole whose parts may be in tension towards one another, and which overcomes the unrelatedness that characterizes the course offerings in most colleges and universities.

St. John's counters idols with ideals. To contemporaneity it opposes the eternal relevance of reason; to utilitarianism it opposes intrinsic value; to comprehensiveness, comprehension; and to scholarly specialization, the breadth and depth of the liberal arts.

The College claims that through reading the great books the student enters into meaningful discussion with them and in this process grasps something of what Matthew Arnold called "the best that has been thought and said." While making this contact, the student, in tutorials and laboratories, learns to recognize a meaningful discussion and wins the intellectual right to entertain ideas.

Since the Faculty are also students, the ends claimed for the students are also achieved in more or less completeness by the Faculty. The continu-

ing education of the tutors provides flexibility, for as they entertain ideas and grow proficient in discussion, they find ways of improving their teaching, both in classroom practice and in changes in the program to make their task more effective. It is an unjust caricature of our work to suggest that the program is a rigid monolith that we are determined to defend to the death.

As one surveys the educational landscape of America today, one is saddened by the spectacle of so many colleges and universities complacently repeating the errors of the past. As a consequence of deficient education, men and women in positions of leadership fail to show the breadth of understanding and the depth of thought possessed by the classically educated leaders of the Revolution and the framers of the Constitution. Both in the universities and in affairs of the world we have many experts whose one-sided expertise is offered in place of wisdom. An "expert" who is just that can do harm enough in the area in which he is thought to possess expertise; when his claim to expertness in a certain field is made the basis of a claim to speak out in other matters, he may do catastrophic damage.

St. John's makes no claim to having achieved true wisdom. It is content if its tutors accept with humility the task of pursuing wisdom for themselves and for their students. They are men who have exchanged the ideal of competence in a subject matter for a Socratic ignorance, a knowing that one does not know, from which state the way to wisdom lies open, hard though it be to persist in.

John S. Kieffer
Dean

CHANGES IN THE CURRICULUM

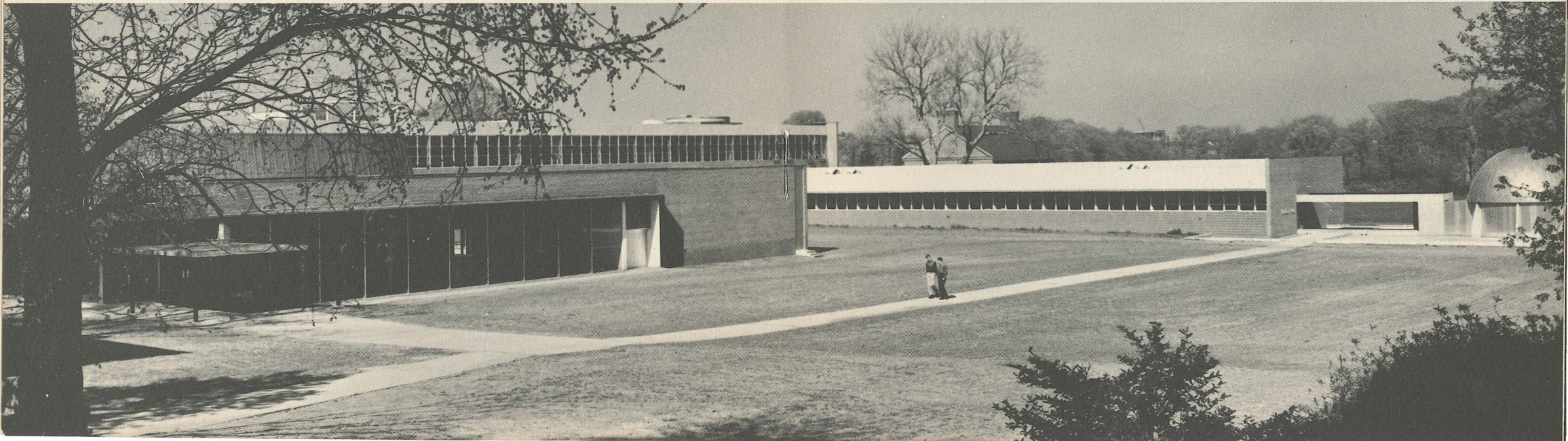
1937-1968

General Comments

The form of the curriculum established in 1937 has shown durability and adaptability. As the changes listed show, the only change in form has been the introduction of the preceptorial. But this is really the continuance of the seminar by other means. The music tutorials added to the curriculum what had been desired from the beginning.

The content of the curriculum, as the list of changes makes clear, has altered as the Faculty has seen the need of improvement here or extension there. It is not clear whether a pattern is exhibited in the changes. Two things seem to stand out:

(1) Some of the hopes of the founders of the program proved to be too ambitious, or at least to demand too much of the students coming to the College. Thus the reduction in the number of languages was dictated by the frustration of the students and tutors, who found that a single year was not enough to achieve any kind of sufficiency in a language. The introduction of written work in English was remedial in nature. The high schools simply were not preparing students adequately to write English. (This situation has improved over the last ten years.) The use of composition, however, turned out to have its own value as a way of tying the language tutorial and seminar together.



(2) As the last remark illustrates, other changes were the result of pedagogical considerations. The earlier teaching of analytical mathematics was in part to enable the student to cope with the third year laboratory better than he had been able to do. Some of the changes in the laboratory, furthermore, resulted from the Faculty's own increased understanding of modern science, so that they saw the need, in a liberal arts program, of including, for example, atomic physics. (The advance in knowledge in physics in the last thirty years and the greater concern physicists have shown to make the subject intelligible to the layman have, of course, affected what we are able to teach.)

In conclusion, it should be clear that, as Scott Buchanan said thirty-one years ago, "This program is not an experiment, but every part of it is experimental."

Specific Changes

Laboratory: The initial conception of the laboratory was that science was a way of understanding the material world through number and geometrical figure. It attempted to pursue this theme across the lines of the conventional sciences, mixing physics, biology, mechanical drawing, chemistry in any one year. The aim was to bring the tremendous vitality of the scientific enterprise into the control of the liberal arts, by disregarding the usual divisions into separate sciences. In 1947 the Faculty abandoned the means, though not the goal, and set up the four-year laboratory program in accordance with the three sciences, physics, chemistry and biology. In 1961, further rearrangement for better pedagogy concentrated biology in the second year and physics in the third. The first year became the introductory study of measurement and theory-making. The fourth year is still under study and may return partially to biology.

Language Tutorials: From the original plan of studying Greek, Latin, French, and German for one year each, the Faculty has moved to the present two-language program in Greek and French. This involved dropping Latin in 1948 and German in 1960, adding English grammar and formal logic, and emphasizing written composition. A faculty study group this year considered further revision of the program. At the March meeting of the joint instruction committee, it was decided to experiment with teaching some linguistics in one senior language tutorial. Adoption of other recommendations of the study group will be considered at further meetings.

Mathematics: The mathematics tutorial has moved in the direction of increased time given to modern analytical mathematics. The time given to

Euclid, Ptolemy and Apollonius has been somewhat reduced to include more and earlier study of analytical geometry and the calculus. The latter moved from the fourth year to the beginning of the third. The fourth year math tutorial has been under experiment for several years. Non-Euclidean and projective geometry now offers a good capstone to the four years.

Music Tutorial: Added in 1948 for freshmen, later put in the second year, the music tutorial is to include the language of music as a supporting part of the program.

Preceptorial: Started in 1962 for juniors and seniors the preceptorial replaces seminars for nine weeks at the end of the first semester. About twenty subjects of study (a book or a theme from seminar) are offered by tutors to be chosen by a few students each. Its purpose is to permit Faculty and students to study in depth a matter that has particular interest for them.

Seminar: The core of the curriculum, the four-year sequence of readings in great books, is under constant revision. The best way to show this is to list the books' names in the 1938 catalogue but absent from the 1968 and vice versa.

Listed as seminar or tutorial readings in 1938, but not in 1968 (in chronological order):

Hippocrates: <i>Selections</i>	Boyle: <i>Skeptical Chymist</i>
Aristarchus: <i>On the Distance of the Sun and Moon</i>	Montesquieu: <i>The Spirit of the Laws</i>
Aristoxenus: <i>Harmony</i>	Voltaire: <i>Candide</i>
Lucian: <i>True History</i>	Hegel: <i>Science of Logic</i>
Strabo: <i>Geography</i>	Schopenhauer: <i>The World as Will and Idea</i>
Cicero: <i>De Officiis</i>	Coleridge: <i>Biographia Literaria</i>
Horace: <i>Ars Poetica</i>	Mathus: <i>Essay on the Principles of Population</i>
Ovid: <i>Metamorphoses</i>	Mill: <i>System of Logic</i>
Quintilian: <i>Institutes</i>	Balzac: <i>Pere Goriot</i>
Marcus Aurelius: <i>To Himself</i>	Thackeray: <i>Henry Esmond</i>
Justinian: <i>Institutes</i>	Dickens: <i>David Copperfield</i>
Augustine: <i>De Musica, De Magistro</i>	Zola: <i>Experimental Novel</i>
<i>Song of Roland</i>	Ibsen: <i>The Doll's House</i>
<i>Volsunga Saga</i>	Dalton: <i>A New System of Chemical Philosophy</i>
Bonaventura: <i>On the Reduction of the Arts to Theology</i>	Clifford: <i>The Common Sense of the Exact Sciences</i>
Bacon: <i>Opus Maius</i>	Fourier: <i>Mathematical Analysis of Heat</i>
Da Vinci: Notebooks	Faraday: <i>Experimental Researches in Electricity</i>
Erasmus: <i>Colloquies</i>	
Grotius: <i>The Law of War and Peace</i>	
Spinoza: <i>Ethics</i>	

Peacock: *Algebra*
Bernard: *Introduction to Experimental
Medicine*
Galton: *Enquiries into the Human Mind
and its Faculties*
Gauss: *Mathematical Papers*
Galois: *Mathematical Papers*

Boole: *Laws of Thought*
Hamilton: *Quaternions*
Riemann: *The Hypotheses of Geometry*
Virchow: *Cellular Pathology*
Poincaré: *Science and Hypothesis*
Freud: *Papers on Hysteria*
Russell: *Principles of Mathematics*

Listed in present catalogue, but not in 1938 (in chronological order):

Anselm: *Proslogium*
Donne: *Poems*
Descartes: *Rules for the Direction of the
Mind, Discourse on Methods,
Geometry, Meditations*
Spinoza: *Theological-Political Treatise*
La Fontaine: *Fables*
Huygens: *Treatise on Light*
Berkeley: *Principles of Human
Knowledge*
Leibniz: *Discourse on Metaphysics,
Monadology*
De Tocqueville: *Democracy in America*
Hegel: *Philosophy of History, Lordship
and Bondage, Preface to the Phenom-
enology*

Kierkegaard: *Fear and Trembling*
Stendhal: *The Red and the Black*
Nietzsche: *Birth of Tragedy, Beyond
Good and Evil*
Austen: *Emma*
Baudelaire: *Poems*
Freud: *A General Introduction to
Psychoanalysis*
Whitehead: *Science and the Modern
World, Appearance and Reality*
Pierce: *Philosophical Papers*
Valéry: *Poems*
Einstein: *Relativity: The Special and
General Theory*
Documents in American Political His-
tory: *The People Shall Judge*



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