WAGNER COLLEGE

SLC Faculty Guide

2022-2023

The critical question for each senior becomes: "What does it mean to practice this discipline in a reflective and responsible manner within a pluralistic society?"

The Wagner Plan

On October 27, 1997, the Wagner College faculty adopted ***The Wagner Plan for the Practical Liberal Arts.*** One of the goals for the new educational program is to create a culture of achievement among undergraduates. The language below has been taken from the current (2021) edition of the college Bulletin.

Wagner, a small residential college, is strongly committed to undergraduate education, an education that emphasizes the classical and contemporary liberal arts curriculum; an education, moreover, that integrates a variety of disciplines with a challenging core of foundation courses. A liberal education prepares students for life as well as for careers. It opens minds by introducing students to the sweep of human imagination as well as to the shortcomings of human behavior. Liberal education provides students with the tools for evaluating moral problems as well as analytic skills necessary for critical interpretation and for effective problem solving. In every historical epoch, liberal education is about freeing the human imagination to understand the past while visualizing a future beyond the present limit of possibility.

In this broad view, liberal education is both pragmatic and idealistic. To reach its mission, liberal education requires a particular approach of its students that includes both the acquisition of knowledge and the habit of critical thinking. This approach necessarily involves students and faculty in continual engagement with the world around them, asking them to integrate, through critical assessment, ideas and experience as a means to establish new knowledge. In the larger sense, liberal education has always been pragmatic—testing the value of ideas against the tapestry of human experience.

Wagner' liberal arts curriculum prepares students for careers in the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, and the arts as well as in business, education, law, and the health professions. It promotes inquiry, critical thinking and analytical skills, heightens cultural awareness, emphasizes writing and computer skills, and fosters individual expression and intellectual independence. It serves as a bridge to the student's major, broadens the student's perspective, and brings students and faculty into dialogue with the larger intellectual and professional communities inside and outside the College.

The practical liberal arts program, or Wagner Plan, ensures that Wagner College is meeting its goals of offering a liberal education as set forth by the College Mission Statement. The Wagner Plan integrates the longstanding commitment to liberal arts, experiential learning and interdisciplinary education with the geographical location and enduring bond with New York City. Fueled by a distinguished faculty dedicated to scholarly pursuits as well as to excellence in teaching, the Wagner Plan provides methodologies and pathways for intellectual inquiry. This is accomplished through the Key Skills and Knowledge curriculum, the Learning Communities program, and the completion of majors and minors, all three finding interconnections across the Plan.

The Wagner Plan's novel approach emphasizes both traditionally structured modes of learning and experiential learning ("field-based" learning or "learning by doing"). Students

participate in at least three learning communities, of which two include field work, research, and/or an internship in an organization, usually in New York City or the surrounding area. The first-year learning community includes a field-based experience that is thematically linked to two introductory, liberal arts courses and a reflective tutorial. The senior learning community, which is in the student's major, consists of a capstone course in the discipline, a substantial internship or research experience, and a major paper or presentation in the senior reflective tutorial. The intermediate learning community, which consists of two courses that are thematically linked or a single course that is co-taught by faculty members from two different disciplines, serves as an important bridge between the first-year and senior learning communities. The three learning communities individually and collectively challenge students to relate academic learning to the wider world, to social issues, and to their own individual experiences.

The Senior Learning Community

By the end of the senior year, all students must successfully complete a learning community (LC) with a reflective tutorial in their major. The Senior LC is a summative experience that contains the following elements: a summative major course and an RFT that includes a 100-hour experiential component, a substantial and sophisticated written project, and a presentation.

Reflective practice informed by advanced disciplinary theory is the central goal within the chosen field. In the Senior Learning Community, majors engage in a variety of different field projects, meet together in a reflective tutorial, and take a summative course that normally runs concurrently. In some cases, work leading to the senior experience and reflective tutorial may start in the junior year.

As the ultimate goal of The Senior Learning Community, all senior students bring together the breadth of a liberal education and the depth of specialized knowledge into a real world applied practice. Professors in the LC are afforded flexibility in determining how the experiential learning hours are completed in accordance with the learning goals of the LC. The critical question for each student becomes: "What does it mean to practice this discipline in a reflective and responsible manner within a pluralistic society?" All faculty should require their students to complete the SLC form that is available on the college website as this is an important manner in which the dean of integrated learning and SLC faculty coordinator collect data. For students completing internships, departments may also consider adapting a version of the CACE internship form to their departmental needs.

Standards for the Senior Learning Community

Each major program has designed a Senior Learning Community composed of at least two courses:
- A Summative Course (usually 1 unit)
- A Senior Reflective Tutorial (usually 1 unit)

The Senior Learning Community maintains the following *minimal* expectations:

- A senior project involving applied learning, leading to a final substantial and sophisticated written project and presentation;
- Summative course content in the discipline;
- A 100-hour experiential component; to be defined within the department in accordance with the best practices and available resources of the profession.
- Experience in the practice of the discipline as a profession. In an attempt to expand the students' practical understanding of what it means to work in the field, these experiences will normally take place off campus. Examples of professional practice may include internships with professionals in the field, presenting at an undergraduate conference, or attendance at a professional conference, talk, gallery show, or performance. Departments have autonomy in determining the nature of these experiences as they consider the standards of their disciplines and the resources available to them.
- In-class reflection on the connections between course content, experience, and professional practice.

While each major's program has been designed to meet the particularities of its discipline, typically the Summative Course houses the senior project and the summative content in the discipline; this course should be designed to support the student in engaging with advanced theory and methodologies expected of an emerging specialist within the discipline, preparing them for the professional work or graduate study ahead. The Senior Reflective Tutorial houses the experiential component, provides training in the practice of the discipline, and is the site for in-class reflection.

Potential Models for the Senior Learning Community

At the outset of the Wagner Plan, five working models were developed. By 2021, additional models have emerged and some majors have adopted hybrid approaches. One of the most important aspects of the SLC is its flexibility and diversity across the majors; this is celebrated and expected as departments assess and revise programs to meet emergent trends in their disciplines. The models below, therefore, should be seen as potential guidelines from which major programs may pick and choose components that are most relevant.

Conventional Model
All senior students in the major program enroll in a summative course and a reflective tutorial. The entire program is contained within one semester. The senior field project/experiential component would be completed within that semester. Students receive two units within the major.

Multiple, themed RFTs
In this model, a large major would need multiple RFTs thematically developed around the concentrations within the major, based on student needs and faculty expertise.

Shared RFTs
Small departments may choose to offer a combined RFT with an allied department while linking it to a separate summative course in the major. Alternately, small major cohorts may combine juniors and seniors into one summative course to be offered every other year.

Sequenced Senior Learning Community

Some disciplines rely on experimental or field-based research for the senior project's applied work. Time and sequence are essential elements to this process. In these cases, research may begin as early as the junior year.

Blended Learning Communities

Some majors may take the LC course in an applied area --- although stressing a method of disciplinary research and application. These courses may be alternating each year and if relevant for smaller cohorts may be inclusive of non-senior majors. These students would not be enrolled in the designated LC course as part of an LC nor as part of the senior program; however the senior majors in the course would be a common cohort sharing an RFT.

Selected Examples of Senior Learning Communities

Below is a short selection of SLCs from across the five divisions of the College, which feature a variety of the models and hybridity as articulated in the section above.

SCIENCES

MATH (this SLC builds on the *Blended* model)

The Senior Learning Community represents the culmination of the major and is designed to prepare our majors for advanced studies or for careers in teaching, computing, engineering, statistics, or actuarial science. The SLC consists of one advanced course (MA 321, MA373, MA420, or MA431) and an RFT (MA 400), in which students either complete a field experience at an approved facility or they develop and finalize a theoretical research project.

BIOPSYCHOLOGY (this SLC builds on the *Shared* model)

Students may select either the SLC in the Psychology or Biological Sciences Departments based on their interest in consultation with their academic advisor.

HUMANITIES

HISTORY (this SLC employs the *Conventional* model)

The Senior Learning Community in History includes a capstone seminar course, HI 490 *Making History and History Makers* in which students will research and write their senior thesis. The second part of the learning community is the reflective tutorial, HI 490 *Going Global.* The RFT includes a semester-long intensive internship in areas associated with the historical profession. While the capstone course provides students with the necessary theoretical background and research skills for graduate study or careers, the internship provides hands-on experience and practical skills.

PHILOSOPHY (this SLC employs the *Conventional* model)

The major culminates in the Senior Learning Community (SLC) which comprises a philosophy seminar (PH 401 Seminar: Topics in Philosophy) and the reflective tutorial (PH 400 Reflective Tutorial). In the Seminar, students will examine some major themes, issues, or a historical figure in traditional and/or contemporary philosophy. In the reflective tutorial (RFT), students will engage in independent research and writing: a senior thesis on some major issue in philosophy for presentation, while taking part in library research, acquiring a

grasp of the complexities of the issue, and understanding the logic of the opposed positions. Students will also share their work at either a conference, or as part of an experiential project in a local school.

SOCIAL SCIENCES

ANTHROPOLOGY (this SLC builds on the *Sequenced* model)
The Senior Learning Community includes 1. a capstone seminar course (AN 491: Anthropological Theory), 2. A reflective tutorial (AN400), in which students complete their summative project – a research grant proposal; 3. An experiential component (AN400E) in which the student engages in a hands-on, practical experience, including but not limited to an internship, volunteering, and lab research.

SOCIOLOGY (this SLC employs the *Conventional* model)
 The Senior Learning Community includes 1. a capstone seminar course (SO 491: Senior Seminar), in which students produce their senior thesis, and 2. the Senior Reflective Tutorial (SO400). The Senior RFT is a semester-long internship with a community, private, or organization where students develop a sense of professional identity. Students conduct a sociological analysis of the goals, organization, processes, and other experiences of their internship site through written logs. In the Senior Seminar, students draw on their acquired knowledge of the discipline to develop and write an independent research project; "their thesis."

FINE ARTS

ART AND ART HISTORY (these SLCs build on the *Shared* model, in that they share the same capstone course but not RFTs)
The Art major culminates in the Senior Learning Community (LC) which comprises an art history seminar (AH490: Imagining the Individual *OR* AH491: Contemporary Art) and the reflective tutorial (AH400). In the reflective tutorial (RFT) students will develop their own body of work for a gallery show while taking part in critiques, writing projects, a group community project and viewing art in New York City museums and galleries.

The Art History Senior Learning Community includes 1. a capstone seminar course (AH 491: Contemporary Art or AH 490: Imagining the Individual: What is Portraiture?), in which students produce their senior thesis, and 2. the reflective tutorial (AH400). The RFT is a semester-long intensive internship in the field at an art museum, gallery, architectural site, public arts organization, or advocacy group. While the capstone course provides students with the necessary theoretical background and research skills for graduate study or careers, the internship provides hands-on experience and practical skills.

THEATRE AND SPEECH (this SLC builds on the *Conventional* model)
(The) capstone experience combines Advanced Theatre Practicum (TH595) with Senior Seminar (TH400). TH595 focuses students on preparing to enter the professional world as they work on resumes, portfolios, business practices etc while completing a capstone production experience; these range from producing a play they have written, to assisting directing or choreographing a Main Stage production, to composing a new musical. TH400

focuses students' attention on a common topic which provides a research opportunity culminating in a final thesis.

PROFESSIONAL PROGRAMS

BUSINESS: (this SLC builds on the *Conventional* model)
The ultimate goal of the Senior Learning Community is for all Business seniors to merge the breadth of a liberal education with the depth of specialized knowledge into a real-world applied practice by completing two units: BU 400 Reflective Tutorial in Business including a 100-hour field-based experiential component as well as a 20-page thesis and a presentation. A senior thesis project involves applied and/or research-based learning, in a topic mutually agreed upon by the student and the faculty member teaching the RFT. AND BU 401 Business Policy and Strategy is the culminating team and individual challenge that draws from knowledge acquired over four years at Wagner College. The simulation, intended to replicate an actual business experience, is global in scope, running an international electronic sensor manufacturing and supply chain corporation.

NURSING: (this SLC builds on the *Sequenced* model)
The School of Nursing Senior Learning Community has four components: a research course taken in the first semester senior year followed by a community and leadership course along with the Capstone/RFT all taken in the second semester senior year.

SLC Governance

● **Representation** by every department. Ideally a faculty member who teaches in SLC or an alternate appointed by the Chair. Other faculty members are welcome to participate and vote if they choose to attend a regularly scheduled meeting.
● **Department Chairs** will ensure that at least one member of their department attends. The Dept Rep is responsible for **reporting** any relevant information to their departments.
● The **SLC Coordinator** is elected by the SLC faculty for a three-year term. The SLC coordinator should have taught in the SLC program, preferably within the past two years. ● The SLC faculty will **meet** at least twice per semester and communicate frequently through email and other means, including electronic voting on issues as they arise outside of the normally scheduled meeting times.

SLC Coordinator

The faculty coordinator for the SLC has a term of three years. The position has a $2000 stipend. This can be taken as a $2000 stipend (the faculty member can choose for it to be paid as a lump sum or spread out over a series of paychecks), a course release, or it can be banked for the PDS if a faculty coordinator also teaches in the FYP and is eligible for the PDS.

The faculty coordinator position includes the following duties:
- Organize and run all SLC meetings (two per semester)
- Set the agenda for the SLC meetings in consultation with SLC faculty and the Dean of Integrated Learning
- Update the SLC faculty guide in consultation with SLC faculty and the Dean of Integrated Learning
- Make sure the moodle participant list is up to date at the beginning of each semester
- Organize the annual showcase of the work of at least one senior per department.
  - Prior to the pandemic, this event was an in person mini-conference. The SLC coordinator was in charge of gathering the names of students from SLC faculty, setting the program, and working with the Dean of Integrated Learning to attend to all of the details with the presentation organization.
  - During the pandemic, the end of year presentations have been digital. The SLC coordinator has overseen the organization of those presentations in consultation with the Dean of Integrated Learning and the Hormann Library Archivist
- Maintain the archive of senior presentations housed on the Markham archive website, in coordination with the Horrmann Library Archivist.
- Maintain the SLC website in collaboration with the Dean of Integrated Learning

The Dean of Integrated Learning normally takes care of the SLC forms (online, curating it, and sharing any relevant downloads with faculty).