# **Delaware Will Shine Concept Paper**

**Models of the New American Research University**

**Curriculum & Delivery Subgroup**

# An Eighth College

## Overview

Throughout the work of our subgroup, particularly within constituent meetings, one message was heard repeatedly – the faculty at the University of Delaware are engaging in many exciting, innovative, and effective efforts regarding curriculum and delivery, but too often these are isolated efforts and the current environment does not allow them to serve as nucleation points for widespread change. Both the decentralization of support and the lack of cross-unit communication as well as the culture surrounding promotion and tenure were seen as root causes of this phenomenon. The need for a coherent center for innovation in curriculum and delivery was oft expressed, along with the idea that this central organization should be a driver for change across the university, creating the 21st Century Research University from within and serving as a defining center for the roles of the 21st Century faculty member.

At the same time, through both the work of this subgroup and the task force on general education, a clear message from the faculty has been heard – the University of Delaware must move to put a meaningful emphasis on general education as the place to provide the essential skills for the 21st Century student. As discussed in the concept paper on general education, a key component of this is a move toward a “common intellectual experience” for all students through the development of a multi-course core curriculum. The need to deliver these courses in a genuinely interdisciplinary manner, with consistency and fidelity to the objectives of general education, also argues for centralization of this effort. But, beyond simple centralization of these various efforts, there is also strong support for the idea of broadening our notion of “research” and bringing the same level of intellectual rigor that we bring to research to the evaluation and iterative revision of curriculum and methods of delivery. This eighth college at the University of Delaware would nucleate wide-spread change in curriculum and delivery, centralize support services for faculty, serve as a home and model for the creation of a 21st Century faculty member, provide a home for general education, and would be organized around a research driven, intellectually rigorous, understanding and development of the 21st Century classroom.

## Vision

Given the synopsis of arguments for the creation of an eighth college above, we distill the messages around the mission of such a college into four points. In particular, the mission of “College #8” would be:

1. Provide for the foundational development of student skills in all five general education objectives through a set of core courses required of all students as discussed in the concept paper on general education.
2. Serve as a “nucleating center” for sustainable, wide-spread innovation in curriculum and delivery across the university.
3. Serve as a home for supporting structures and for the “21st Century Faculty Member,” creating a model of workload and promotion and tenure that emphasizes scholarship, learning, and engagement.
4. Elevate the standards applied to the evaluation and re-evaluation of curriculum and delivery to the same standards traditionally applied to scholarly research, serving as a home for the learning sciences and as a driver for national innovation in higher education.

Tufts University provides an example for centralizing innovation in curriculum and delivery. Although called the Experimental College, it does not function like other “experimental colleges” which were formed in the 1960s-70s to provide student-run curricular experiences. Students are involved on the board of Tufts’ ExCollege, but they are joined by faculty and led by the Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education.

“The oldest organization of its kind in the United States, the **Experimental College** at Tufts University serves as a major focus for educational innovation, expansion of the undergraduate curriculum, and faculty/student collaboration within Arts, Sciences, and Engineering…

Through its innovative, interactive, and interdisciplinary programs, the Experimental College strives to enrich the intellectual experience of undergraduates at Tufts. These programs serve as an incubator for new ideas about teaching, learning, and curriculum. They also aim to engage students actively in the design and delivery of new academic initiatives, often in collaboration with faculty.  Shared governance, collaborative learning, and involvement with the community are hallmarks of the ExCollege.”

## Potential Structures

While much more deliberation is necessary in order to decide upon an actual organization of “College #8,” multiple ideas for units that would fit best within this college were discussed. We outline these here.

**Academic Units:** the Honors Program, the Office of Experiential Education, which includes Undergraduate Research and Service Learning, the Offices of Academic Enrichment and University Studies, and other such units would naturally fit within “College #8.” A new individualized, interdisciplinary (cross-college) degree could be housed here (University of Pittsburgh’s BPhil, University of Virginia’s Echols Major, Brown University’s Curriculum).

**General Education:** The responsibility for offering core courses in general education would fit within the proposed college. The creation of capstone alternatives for units that do not have the ability to offer a major-based capstone would also be a likely component of this college. Additionally, those units, or pieces of those units whose role is foundationally driven and aimed at the general education of all students may be possible components of this college.

**Units to support learning-centered initiatives:** CTAL, ATS, and other programs that support learner-centered research.

Evidential Information/Resources

**1. A College for Innovation in Learning: Tufts University’s Experimental College**

Tufts University’s ExCollege is the oldest in the country (est. 1966) and a comprehensive and interesting example for thinking about a new college for UD. <http://www.excollege.tufts.edu/>

Headed by the Associate Dean of Undergraduate Education, the Experimental College has a Board of undergraduate students and faculty who set policy, select new courses from proposals submitted, plan campus events, and develop new initiatives for the ExCollege. Academic Partners of the ExCollege include [Communications and Media Studies](http://ase.tufts.edu/cms), [Multimedia Arts Minor](http://excollege.tufts.edu/MMA), [Institute for Global Leadership](http://www.tuftsgloballeadership.org/), [Writing Fellows Program](http://ase.tufts.edu/wts-writingfellows/), [Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service](http://activecitizen.tufts.edu/), and [TuftsFilmWorks](http://excollege.tufts.edu/TFW/index.htm). Related Programs include [Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at Tufts](http://ase.tufts.edu/lli/), [Center for Interdisciplinary Studies](http://ase.tufts.edu/cis/default.htm), and [TUTV](http://ase.tufts.edu/tutv). The ExCollege works with professionals in the community, creates new courses, influences the undergraduate curriculum, and works for faculty and student collaboration. ExCollege courses are interdisciplinary, discussion based, participatory, and can best be characterized as general education courses based on student exploration of new areas of inquiry.

From their website:

“The oldest organization of its kind in the United States, the **Experimental College** at Tufts University serves as a major focus for educational innovation, expansion of the undergraduate curriculum, and faculty/student collaboration within Arts, Sciences, and Engineering.  
  
It would seem safe to say that after 50 years as a vital, thriving part of the university, the Experimental College is no longer an "experiment." Yet our commitment to keeping Tufts an exciting place to learn and teach remains as strong as ever.

**Mission Statement**   
Through its innovative, interactive, and interdisciplinary programs, the Experimental College strives to enrich the intellectual experience of undergraduates at Tufts. These programs serve as an incubator for new ideas about teaching, learning, and curriculum. They also aim to engage students actively in the design and delivery of new academic initiatives, often in collaboration with faculty.  Shared governance, collaborative learning, and involvement with the community are hallmarks of the ExCollege.

**The Importance of Students**  
Student participation has always played a key role in the administration and activities of the Ex College. Since 1966 students have been full voting members on our governing board, have served on committees that evaluate all course proposals, and have taught courses of their own design. Nearly 1500 undergraduates take advantage of our academic offerings each year -- enrolling in over 100 courses, including our peer-taught, first-year seminar programs: Explorations and Perspectives.

**Our Courses**  
ExCollege courses are aimed at students looking for something new. While wide-ranging, they tend to involve issues of current importance and/or interdisciplinary subject areas that do not significantly overlap what's being offered in the traditional departments. They are also intended to be discussion-based and participatory in nature. Interactive and collaborative teaching methods are strongly encouraged, and many instructors have incorporated such dynamic elements in their teaching as small-group work, case-study method, role-playing, simulations, and service learning.  ExCollege courses earn regular Tufts credit and count toward graduation.”

**Note:**

Most colleges termed “Experimental Colleges” at other institutions are student-run divisions offering non-credit bearing courses of interest to the student body (University of Washington, Haverford, UC-Davis, Oberlin, Wake Forest). Experimental colleges seem to have become a trend in the 1960s. See <http://college.usatoday.com/2013/04/02/experimental-college-programs-promote-for-the-students-by-the-students-courses/> (Oberlin)

Also, “General Studies” is not the appropriate term for the proposed College #8. Colleges of General Studies typically do not have majors or departments, but are a home for undecided students (Boston University. Others are for adult/working learners and others who want to professional education (University of Pittsburgh, Columbia University).

**2. A Central Location for General Education**:

**University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill**

Every student enters without a major into the College of Arts and Sciences (the General College) for 2 years to complete the general education curriculum (“Making Connections”). The Office of Undergraduate Curricula resides in the College of Arts and Sciences, which functions as a central location for all undergraduate student learning in the first 2 years. Students finish their final 2 years in the Division of Academic Affairs (which includes the College of Arts & Sciences) or the Division of Health Affairs (there are individual “Schools” within each Division).

<http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/requirements.html#office>

<http://curricula.unc.edu/>

<http://www.unc.edu/ugradbulletin/flowchart.html>

<http://curricula.unc.edu/curriculum/>

**Penn State University**

“The Office ofUndergraduate Education is an academic administrative unit that provides leadership and coordination for University-wide programs and initiatives in support of undergraduate teaching and learning at Penn State. Undergraduate Education works closely with faculty and academic units to create stimulating learning environments inside the classroom while providing avenues for learning outside the classroom and provides leadership and advocacy as Penn State becomes a more student-centered university. This includes special academic programs for students; international education opportunities; and enrollment management functions designed to recruit, enroll, and retain students to each of the University's undergraduate campuses.

Priorities for Undergraduate Education include:

* Expanding learning opportunities that facilitate application and integration of academic knowledge including undergraduate research and public scholarship.
* Collaborating across the University to enhance the first-year student experience.
* Providing leadership to integrate and coordinate curricular offerings across campuses and colleges.
* Promoting quality and consistency of academic advising.
* Coordinating and increasing opportunities for e-learning.
* Expanding assessment of educational outcomes.”

Office of Undergraduate Education:

<http://www.psu.edu/oue/>

<http://bulletins.psu.edu/undergrad/generaleducation/generalEd2>

<http://bulletins.psu.edu/undergrad/generaleducation/generalEd1>

**3. A Central Learning Research & Development Center: University of Pittsburgh**

<http://www.lrdc.pitt.edu/>

This unit reports through Senior Vice Chancellor/Provost’s Office.

“The mission of the Learning Research and Development Center (LRDC) at the [University of Pittsburgh](http://www.pitt.edu) is to advance the science of learning by bringing together leading researchers in the cognitive, social, and educational sciences. This mission has guided LRDC in its programs of basic and applied research, its demonstration projects, and its direct support of school improvement and reform. In LRDC’s multidisciplinary setting, scientists study learning in its cognitive, neural, social, and organizational aspects, making research and development links to formal education practice, policy, and out-of-school settings.   
  
Although the general mission of LRDC has remained constant, the center has pursued this mission by promoting research that evolves over time, informed by varied perspectives across multiple disciplines. LRDC’s research portfolio includes large programs of extended duration as well as single-investigator projects that are generally of smaller scope and shorter length.”

<http://ifl.pitt.edu/index.php/home>

The Pitt LRDC contains the Institute for Learning, which pursues research and develops educational tools for K-12.

**4. Flexible/Interdisciplinary Degree Programs**

**University of Virginia’s Echols Scholars Major**

<http://college.artsandsciences.virginia.edu/echols>

**“**Echols Scholars have the option to design their own interdisciplinary major.  Students choosing to exercise this option will identify three areas of study and assemble their own “advisory board” comprising a faculty member from each area.  Together, they will choose courses totaling at least 30 credit hours to complete the major.  The transcript will show Echols Interdisciplinary as the major.  Your University of Virginia diploma does not mention a student’s major.

The assumption underlying the Echols Interdisciplinary major is that no existing major, or combination of majors, would satisfy a student’s interest.  Therefore, students declaring the Echols Major will do so on the provision that it will be their sole major. It should also be noted that if you want to graduate with honors or Distinction, you will need to declare a major that offers a Distinguished Majors Program.  The numbers of students choosing the Echols Major has been steadily declining since the College has begun offering a substantial number of Interdisciplinary Majors encompassing many of the areas of study that interest Echols Scholars.

Professional schools, graduate schools and employers are often less concerned about the undergraduate major is and more concerned with a student’s GPA, courses taken and test scores.  They are interested in achievers; people with high energy and motivation;  people who write and speak well, with clarity, directness and vigor;  people who are fast learners; people with skills in analysis and perceiving connections; and people who take initiative while being respectful of others. No major alone automatically provides these.  Be prepared to complement the Echols major (or any other major) with internships, externships, independent studies, research work, study abroad, leadership positions and a portfolio of writing.

**University of Pittsburgh’s BPhil Degree**

<http://www.honorscollege.pitt.edu/bphil-degree>

“Since its inception in 1987, the University Honors College (UHC) has been granted the authority to award the Bachelor of Philosophy (BPhil) degree. The BPhil is a unique undergraduate degree jointly awarded by UHC and any undergraduate school/college at Pitt, which is the “home school” of the recipient, signifying the highest level of scholarship attainable by an undergraduate student. The BPhil is the degree title and not related to the academic discipline of philosophy; one can pursue the BPhil degree in any undergraduate discipline at the University of Pittsburgh. The BPhil degree replaces the standard bachelor's degree a student would receive; students do not receive a BPhil degree in addition to another undergraduate degree, such as a Bachelor of Arts (BA) or a Bachelor of Science (BS). Please note that in some professional schools the degree awarded will be a jointly-conferred BS or BA, not a BPhil; some professional schools may also give students the option of choosing between a BPhil degree or a jointly-conferred BS or BA degree.

**Requirements**

In order to receive the BPhil degree, you must fulfill the degree requirements (major, general education, and/or other curricular requirements) of your “home school” (Kenneth P. Dietrich School of Arts and Sciences, Swanson School of Engineering, College of Business Administration, School of Nursing, etc.) and maintain a 3.50 cumulative GPA. The honors college, then, adds two additional requirements: a demanding program of study proposed by you and approved by the Honors College, and independent research culminating in the production of an undergraduate thesis.

Your program of study should have breadth, depth, and focus. Often, this is achieved through a double degree between schools or through double or triple majors in a single school. But even if you have only one major, you can meet the spirit of this requirement if your course work and related academic accomplishments are particularly noteworthy through their rigor. In sum, the program of study component is an indicator that you are willing to challenge yourself academically. To complete the thesis component, you identify and work closely with a faculty member to design and implement a research project related to your academic discipline (i.e., one of your majors) and write a thesis related to that research. You then defend your thesis before a faculty examination committee that includes a visiting external examiner from another college or university within the United States. Students should strive to have the same research experience -- and produce the same caliber of thesis -- as that of a graduate student at the master's level within your academic discipline.”

**Brown University’s Flexible, Individualized Curriculum**

<http://www.brown.edu/academics>