

SANTA CLARA UNIVERSITY

EDUCATING FOR COMPETENCE, CONSCIENCE, AND COMPASSION

Executive Summary

Introduction

Santa Clara's Strategic Plan expresses its fundamental vision in the following words: "Santa Clara University will excel in educating men and women to be leaders of competence, conscience, and compassion." Competence emphasizes the acquisition of knowledge across multiple areas, the practice of critical thinking, and the pursuit of lifelong learning. Conscience informs and develops the moral compass in students, regardless of their religious or cultural heritage, and establishes the importance of living an ethical life, recognizing consequences, and addressing justice issues. Compassion nurtures the human desire and will to fashion a more humane, just, and sustainable world. It means using knowledge for the well-being of all, especially the poor and powerless.

Educating for competence is a *sine qua non* for all universities; the integration of conscience and compassion makes a Santa Clara education unique. Efforts to advance the dimensions of conscience and compassion are present in every SCU undergraduate and graduate program and in the scholarship of faculty and students. The following briefly summarizes the ways the University currently advances these dimensions.

I. Integrating Competence, Conscience and Compassion in the Core Curriculum

New Undergraduate Core Curriculum

Developed by faculty leadership and approved by the Board of Trustees in May 2007, Santa Clara's new Core Curriculum will be implemented over the next two years. It provides the common learning that our students need to become citizens of competence, conscience, and compassion in a globalizing world. Emphasizing knowledge, habits of mind and heart, and engagement with the world, the Core explores relationships among ideas and cultures; it encourages intentional choices that bring coherence to the undergraduate experience; and it develops students' commitments to intellectual inquiry, moral reflection, and active engagement.

Deeply rooted in a humanistic tradition, the Core inspires integrated and coherent learning and critical thinking on the great questions of life, as well as providing the knowledge and skills to overcome global problems such as poverty, war, and conflict, lack of peaceful co-existence and of respect for different cultures and faith traditions.

The new Core Curriculum emphasizes engaged and experiential learning, civic life, and social justice. Critical pedagogies promote the development of conscience and compassion to prepare students to work toward a more humane, just, and sustainable world.

Undergraduate Courses

Faculty have assumed leadership integrating the vision of educating for competence, conscience, and compassion into their courses. For example, Lawrence Nelson of the Philosophy Department served as the 2006-07 curricular ethics consultant and provided assistance in incorporating ethics into undergraduate courses in any department.

New Graduate Core Curriculum

In addition to a revised undergraduate Core, our graduate and professional programs are each developing a Core Curriculum. For example, effective Fall 2008, in the School of Engineering all graduate students will take one of three courses that go beyond narrow specialization and promotes a global and societal orientation (e.g., Engineering and Society).

Graduate Courses

Finding ways of effectively integrating ethics into law curricula is the aim of a project recently funded by the SCU Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. The project will entail consultations with legal practitioners and leading experts in teaching legal ethics, and a survey of the approaches currently being used.

II. Integrating Competence, Conscience and Compassion through a Pedagogy of Engagement – Community-Based Learning, Immersion Experiences, DISCOVER and Residential Learning Communities

Beyond course content, the manner in which students are taught also impacts learning outcomes. At Santa Clara this pedagogy of engagement is integrated across curricular and co-curricular activities and the campus residence programs. These initiatives include – community-based learning and immersion experiences, DISCOVER, and the eight undergraduate residential learning communities. Our commitment to a pedagogy of engagement directly promotes the qualities of conscience and compassion as an enhancement to academic and professional competence.

Community-Based Learning

For 17 years, Santa Clara has been promoting community-based learning, placing over 500 students each year in a non-profit organization as part of 30 undergraduate courses offered each academic quarter. Course content is linked to a placement in a community service or non-profit agency, as part of students' assignments. This experiential form of learning enables faculty and students to pursue the truth from numerous perspectives, encouraging intellectual development, a deeper understanding of discipline-specific concepts, commitment to active citizenship, and vocational discernment.

Immersion Experiences

Launched in 2005, carefully planned immersion experiences (domestic and international) expose students to diverse cultures and communities. These experiences can alter perceptions and choices as students encounter marginalized or under-represented communities, sharing daily realities and routines with community members. When students return to campus, they are led to

integrate and reflect upon these experiences in subsequent courses and among their learning peers.

The DISCOVER Program

The lens of conscience and compassion is further sharpened through the DISCOVER program, which encourages students not only to select courses that help them achieve career objectives, but, at a deeper level, explore and reflect upon their sense of calling or vocation.

With funding from a multi-year Lilly Endowments' Exploration of Vocation grant, Santa Clara established the DISCOVER (Developing and Inspiring Scholarly Communities Oriented toward Vocational Engagement and Reflection) program. The first half of the title, Developing and Inspiring Scholarly Communities, integrates with Santa Clara's residential learning communities learning models (described below), to bridge students' academic, social, and spiritual experiences. The program also recognizes that learning happens in community, where the whole person can be engaged. The second half of the title – Oriented toward Vocational Engagement and Reflection – captures the unique Ignatian approach to discovering God's call – at the intersection where faith engages the world. From the perspective of Ignatian spirituality, individuals find their vocation by engaging the world and reflecting upon how that engagement elicits fundamental desires to – heal, serve, and create. DISCOVER supports students participating in immersion and community ministry experiences, helping them reflect on academic choices and professional opportunities at an emotional and spiritual level. The program complements and expands SCU Career Center programs and also offers community internships and programs with a ministry perspective.

Residential Learning Communities

SCU has eight Residential Learning Communities (RLCs). These interdisciplinary, cooperative living/learning environments were originally funded through a William and Flora Hewlett Foundation grant. RLCs cluster incoming freshmen in self-selected theme-based communities. Each has a faculty director (<http://www.scu.edu/rlc/>) and students share several classes and form study groups together. RLCs foster connections among peers and other students on campus, promote relationships with faculty in and outside of class, and facilitate a connection with SCU student organizations and the broader University community. RLCs also express Santa Clara's commitment to competence, conscience, and compassion and incorporate these dimensions in students' residential experiences.

III. Integrating Competence, Conscience and Compassion Through Faculty Research and Student Fellowships and Design Projects

Faculty Scholarship and Research

Santa Clara expects faculty to demonstrate excellence as “teaching scholars,” contributing to the University through outstanding teaching and scholarly contributions to their field. Both aspects are mutually reinforcing: scholarship should inform and invigorate teaching, and teaching should motivate and frame scholarship. As teaching scholars, faculty frequently focus their scholarship on areas of human concern and in ways that integrate the value dimensions of conscience and compassion. For example, Michael Kevane, Associate Professor of Economics, teaches courses

on African Economic Development, the Economics of Emerging Markets, International Economics, and an Environmental Studies Capstone course. His research on economic institutions and development in poor countries focuses on Africa and the importance of libraries to promote reading, charting the benefits and impact of a reading public on society.

Student Fellowships and Projects

Junior and senior Santa Clara students become eligible for fellowship opportunities and produce senior projects on a range of topics. These undergraduate research projects challenge students to develop and demonstrate in-depth content knowledge and apply this competence to urgent and emerging global or societal issues, such as applied ethics and sustainability.

For example, students chosen for a Hackworth Fellowship, the student research program coordinated by the Markkula Center of Applied Ethics, encourage and promote ethical reflection and appropriate action among student peers by developing their own projects within one of the Center's program areas. With regard to student research and sustainability, recently SCU students from all undergraduate schools participated in the 2007 Solar Decathlon competition sponsored by the U.S. Department of Energy. The competition challenged 20 select colleges and universities from around the world to design, build, and operate a solar powered home. Santa Clara participated in a year-long process that culminated in achieving 3rd place in an adjudicated competition on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. (http://www.scu.edu/engineering/solar_decathlon_news.cfm).

IV. Integrating Competence, Conscience and Compassion within the Centers of Distinction

Santa Clara University has three Centers of Distinction: the Center for Science, Technology and Society (<http://www.scu.edu/sts/about/>), the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education (<http://www.scu.edu/ignatiancenter/>), and the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics (<http://www.scu.edu/ethics/>). Individually and collectively, the Centers provide unique opportunities for interdisciplinary scholarship and rigorous inquiry, hallmarks of Santa Clara's mission. The Centers also link the campus to Silicon Valley communities and the larger, global world. Public conferences, publications, and web resources, provide access to these Center's research and critical dialogues about important issues.

V. Integrating Competence, Conscience and Compassion across Student Organizations

Student organizations also host co-curricular programs and activities focused on conscience and compassion. One of the most prominent is the Santa Clara Community Action Program (SCCAP) (<http://webpages.scu.edu/ftp/sccap/>). SCAAP offers opportunities of service, community based learning, advocacy, activism, and leadership to the University community. SCCAP promotes the holistic education of each volunteer through service to the regional community and reflection on social justice issues, with the intention of challenging participants to create a more humane, just and sustainable world.

Conclusion

The programs and activities summarized above have evolved organically at Santa Clara and share a commitment to Santa Clara's unique vision: to educate students of competence, conscience, and compassion. The addition of the human values of conscience and compassion both express and transform the direction of our educational enterprise so that we graduate students with not only demonstrated subject expertise but also well trained minds and hearts.

In closing, the voice of a Santa Clara student approaching graduation best expresses the impact of this vision:

Santa Clara has taught me to constantly critically evaluate the world around me, to ask questions, to seek answers, and to search myself in order to find how I can affect the world. I know I will come across moral problems and huge decisions in the future, but the education I have received at Santa Clara has given me the confidence that I will be able to face them all and make a difference in the world.