

In the Service of Disagreement:
The Multiformality of "No" in the Speech Thought of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy

I begin with an enormous and practical problem. How can teachers in the elementary and secondary schools best be formed, how can the curricula they follow be shaped, so that young people graduating from the public and parochial school systems are fit to participate in public life?

Many of the educators whose job it is to train teachers and develop school curricula will find in the way I have posed this problem the hysterical presumption of crisis, an insult to the integrity and intelligence of the student, and latent political fascism. Never lecture and never impose your beliefs on students, they lecture. Education is not a question of depositing knowledge into students as much as it is drawing knowledge out of them by question and unceasing affirmation, these educators say. We must seek to liberate the student from control; make each one of them an independent person, they chide. "Uniqueness" is to be assumed, sought out, respected, and even cultivated. "Tolerance" is what good teachers have and insecure tyrants who run classrooms like penal institutions lack. Expectations are ideological-- honor goes to the teacher who has none for her students.

This is the daily swill served up at the trough of America's colleges of education. That this is self-contradictory, incoherent, programmatically absurd, circular, and in direct defiance of every phenomenology of human development matters not at all. This collection of ideological wreckage forms an interlocking set of asystatic claims people in the business of teaching teachers can never deny (though they constantly ignore and circumvent). We might dismiss these people as official cowards and hypocrites, might even give them credit for their well-meaning righteousness, and simply declare the problem of education for being in public yet another matter which can only be addressed piratically.¹ But this would-be radicalism of the teacher's colleges is more perfidious than scolding and evasion can correct. In over dramatizing the student's inviolable right of choice (American radicalism has always had an idealistic cast evident in its preoccupation with Zen and Thoreau and its unctious blather about the separation of church and state and conscientious objection to military conscription) the professor of education certifies the student's timid, ignorant, lazy, and cynical illusion of choice to be apolitical. Believing that the world owes him love and a living for his uniqueness, etc. ad nauseum, and believing his particular personal beauty and strength to lie far outside the domain of public action, the student (victim really) of such a pedagogy is not liberated but oppressed, allowed to forge his own fetters of rationalization and communicative incompetence with which he can be subjected to the corporation's and other mega-institution's needs and preferences. Bluntly, there is no liberation and no inner beauty of consequence for people who are taxed and regulated and conscripted and who have atrocities committed in their name but without their authorization or even participation or even access to participation. Communication education, education for being in public, is the battleground of our era; and if the future is to be more than an intensification of the recent past, we must ride to the guns.²

Communication education has developed dramatically and, predictably, uselessly in the U.S. since World War II. Before World War II it was presumed that all studies of human communication were conducted in order to understand what makes for good communication so that all, usually oral, communication pedagogy be truer and better. This applied equally to a consideration of Edmund Burke's eloquence, a social psycho-

logical investigation of whether women are more easily persuaded than men, or a trial of an experimental technique to alleviate stuttering. Indeed, was not this blossoming field of academic endeavor, proudly recovering its foundation in the Sophists Gorgias, Lysias, Isocrates, and Protagoras as well as in Aristotle's Rhetoric, discovering its roots, in effect, not in a public praxis but in an educational praxis at one remove from the public arena? After World War II this pedagogical presupposition vanished as those in communication studies found themselves doing "rhetorical criticism" not as an endeavor to advise the student but as an attempt to speak directly to the public (or more likely to other critics and would-be critics), doing research in persuasion and organizational and group behavior as consultants to government and industry, and training an army of media technicians whose knowledge did not either filter down to the populace or enable these people to go before an audience but only to manage message production and operate communication technology. In this splintering communication education was demoted to the role of a specialty, and it became allied to the college or department of education.

Communication education has spent most of the post-World War II era trying to put its curricular house in order, first constructing a satisfactory repertoire of public speaking activities based on self-consciously democratic and anti-communist ideals, then (as the market demanded) adding mass media activities (many American secondary schools built in the 1950's have radio production studios, many built since 1970 have television studios), and finally turning on public speaking and advocacy activities (debate and discussion) in favor of giving students human relations/inter-personal experiences in the belated and apologetic discovery that most of a student's life would be spent in one-on-one conversation and few would ever experience the "high noon" drama of public debate. Since the mid-1970's this mindless and reactive search for appropriate student activities has been augmented by a discussion of a much more profound sort: how can we best describe, define, and achieve communicative competence? The early discussion of this question in the U.S. has not been promising. As late as 1982 an eminent professor of communication education would conclude his editorially acclaimed essay on communication competence in the field's most prominent journal with the usual American wish for a technical fix:

... we must continue to break down complex communicative behaviors into small component skills that can be learned. In addition we need to expand our research efforts to identify factors which lead to positive or negative affect toward communication.³

Fortunately, the European discussion of communication competence has been more fruitful. In Britain Basil Bernstein's Class, Codes and Control: Vol. III--Towards a Theory of Educational Transmissions and in France Noelle Bissere's Education, Class Language and Ideology have fixed on class signals in language as predictive of social prejudice and the consequent inability to be taken seriously in speaking with or competing against one's socio-economic superiors.⁴ The clearest and least ideologically tainted sense of communicative competence, however, is to be found in the work of Karl Sornig. For Sornig to speak competently is to be irreducibly political, for complete communicative competence is to be able to disagree across social classes, roles, and settings.⁵ With this stroke Sornig unites the Marxist and marxissant literature on the oppressive power of class language with the classical rhetorical notion (certainly in Isocrates, Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintillian) of the speaker as the courageous and forthright actor. This is precisely the kind of bone upon which Rosenstock-Huessy would have delighted in chewing. If we accept Sornig's as the true radical agenda, to bring our students not to nirvana but to the ability to disagree, how might we enrich and amend this proposition with the speech thought of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy in order that a paradigm of disagreement become not a slogan but a programmatic alternative to the current communication pedagogy which has drifted far away from its rhetorical traditions and into those dangerous waters which lie between juvenile human relations exercises and sterile behavioral objectives?

Rosenstock-Huessy's thought explodes around the theme of disagreement. He conceived of human language as absolutely open to the full evocation of life, saying speech "is not complete without the democracy of universal participation..."⁷ In his "Farewell to Descartes" he wrote of social questions as not originating in private curiosity and requiring, patiently awaiting, "true or false" answers, but as thrust upon one by some particular other group of impatient others who demand of one assent or dissent.⁶ Hence, his slogan under which the human sciences can go forth into the great problems of commitment and change-- "Respondeo etsi mutabor"-- and his conversion of the "Cross of Reality" into a typology of human social conflict-- decadence, revolution, anarchy, and war.⁸ Social life is called forth by conflict, and the imminence of disagreement is near if not at the core of social behavior. For Rosenstock-Huessy it was the distinctly Christian contribution to the human social enterprise, that conflict go forward to change without violence.

Christianity is essentially war in peace: it distributes the bloody sacrifices of the battlefield by an even but perpetual spread of sacrifices through the whole fabric of life. World wars can be replaced by daily wars.⁹

In this contrast of world and daily war we are drawn back from disagreement as an intrinsic good; we mitigate the celebration of elemental self-assertion. Day-to-day argument is the instrument of our deliverance from chaos; as such an instrument, disagreement, can be faked and exploited as formula and confused with chaos itself, and therefore must be conceived of not just as a speech-act of political significance but as a mode of discourse around which varied socio-dramas may be played. Therefore, in Rosenstock-Huessy's writing "No" is multi-form.¹⁰

"No" as Moral Outrage

The Marxist or marxissant presupposition which underlies the contention that disagreement is the summary of communicative competence is that the distinction between the inner and outer person can be erased to leave the singular material being. This creature's "no" will always be framed by its own desires. Rosenstock-Huessy, I believe, might respect the attempt to achieve rigorous candor this materialist reduction entails, but would defend the "inner" person (and culture) against the claims of material nature by positing the "inner" as the dwelling place of the wholly other which claims allegiance even before the creature's material needs. A truly profound "no" is not a tantrum for acquisition but a humiliating act of denial.

Israel built a temple, it is true, but they added that God did not dwell in it, as the gods of all other temples did: Israel voided the Temple. Israel circumcised her young men, it is true; but they did it to the child in the cradle, not to the initiate novice of the fertility orgies: Israel voided the rite. Israel wrote 'poems,' but she denied that she 'wrote' them lest man-made 'poems' became idols. She insisted that she was told and that she replied: Israel voided the arts. In these three acts she emptied the three great 'speeches' of the heathen, the tribal, the templar, and the artistic, of their lure and spell and charm.¹¹

In listening to God's 'No,' Israel recognized herself as God's servant, as mortal man in the face of God's majesty. In this 'No' all merely human desires are burned out, and our notion of God's will is cleansed. 'Revelation' is a knowledge of God's will, after his 'No' to our will has become known. Only then is God pure future, pure act-- only when all his former creations stand exposed as non-God's, as mere artifacts. To have

revealed what is not God is the condition for all our understanding of God. On this basis the Jews became prayer. Israel is neither a nation nor a state nor a race, but it is prayer.¹²

Hitler hates everything started by the Jews, including democracy and the Freemasons. Why? They all know of the insertion of God's 'No' into history as a vital element. But a spellbinder must be sure that his spell will work under all circumstances. This prevents him from admitting God's 'No' to the fabric of history.

Hitler's will and his God's will are nauseatingly one. The great art of speech has made Hitler crazy. Since he has the privilege of speaking, of inflaming the masses, he spellbinds. And so he hoves as a ghost of the days before God touched Israel's lips with his fiery coal: Mv will O mortal, not thine, be done.¹³

We can't forget the Bible because the divine 'No' was created, in our speech, during those thousand years of Jewish prayer. And all the other departments of our linguistic faculty rest on this clear distinction between prayer, on the one side, and science, poetry, fiction, and law, on the other. If we do not pray with Israel, we cannot retain our Greek mathematics, our Roman law.¹⁴

This "no" is an injunction against oneself as well as the other. It is reflexive, indicating, in effect, that though one may be able to think or even express a particular desire that does not mean one can actually accomplish the thought, or accomplish it at the negligible cost one has anticipated. Such a "no" is not just the speech act of disobedience; it is an epistemic thrust which penetrates an illusion. For this "no" ignorance, the humble confession of limitation and vulnerability, has a privileged moral status. Not knowing and unknowability check militant heroic righteousness unto criminality.

Sham, pretense, myth, falsity, and illusion have become the standard targets of social criticism to such a degree that the inescapable conclusion has widely been reached that to speak is to lie and to live is to be deluded. Perpetrator and recipient, one and all, are blameworthy or piteous (depending on the interpretation one prefers). Cynicism, despair, withdrawal, selfishness, and black humor seem justified; and these are precisely the conclusions Rosenstock-Huessy believed do not follow. Falsity, which is itself multiform in lying, cant, fiction, and hypocrisy,¹⁵ is only sometimes the betrayal of its recipient but is always the betrayal of God. The only plausible response to falsity is the conservative "no" which brings one back from longing to gratitude and from which then humane ambition can proceed. This courageous "No" depends, in large part, for its social realization on the insider's voice.

Our society is so polite that it cannot curse social evils and prefers to blaspheme God instead. He who will not curse the shortcomings of his profession as a lawyer, a teacher, a doctor, a priest, always will have to defend it beyond the health of his soul. The doctor who defends medicine as it is today, against all outside criticism, and nowhere binds together unselfishly with these same critics, must do harm to his soul.¹⁶

The Marxist prediction is that one will not disagree within his class, that the most we can hope for is one class interposing "no" against another class. Rosenstock-Huessy, I think, would say that this is not hope at all but only abandonment, and that insider disagreement is (1) materially real, and (2) the only real hope for self- and social correction in the human future.

At several points in his writings Rosenstock-Huessy referred to the experience of needing to speak lest one choke.¹⁷ This experience is two-fold-- both an inability to make sense of the "old words" which fly meaninglessly by one's ears and the necessity to form new words to set things aright and allow for a new beginning. Though these experiences, we infer from what Rosenstock-Huessy has written and our own lives, may consist of a curse, or a command, or a profession of love, they will often come as an act of disagreement or contradiction. They are selfish, but need not be trivially so. These are dramatic moments when one feels the conflict heightened between herself and the other; moral qualities are sharply delineated, polarized. There is potential for great evil (or at least destruction) in all of this, even if the disagreement is motivated by humility before God. Recommending to students and others courageous disagreement brings one face to face with risk. Though Rosenstock-Huessy prefers the risk taker to the coward in facing the evils of the world, he makes it evident that disagreement probably will not be sufficient without the aid of ingenuity.¹⁸

"No" as Doubt

"No" is a plastic linguistic possibility as those of us who have raised small children through the "no" phase can attest. While the difficulty of saying "no" creates one social drama of conformity played on the stages of the industrial corporations and the concentration camps; the ease of forming "No," the risk minimizing "no," creates a very different human play. The definitive "no" of "This is not now and must never become the case"-- a proposition and a commitment, must be contrasted with the "no" of mere doubt which says, in effect, "Perhaps this is wrong; we shall pretend this proposition is incorrect and place upon you, the bearer, both the burden of its proof and the presumptive role of fool for taking it seriously."

Rosenstock-Huessy identifies the "No" of mere doubt with Sophistry.

The pompous Mr. Gorgias in all of us who sits back in his chair one day-- and this hour comes to most people-- and says that nothing is, nobody knows, and nobody can speak to anybody else, appears always long after the event of our having heard and understood something very well indeed. The gorgeous thing about Gorgias is that he himself has very well understood all the arguments of everybody else, knows very well that which is and that which is not, has gotten through the chicken pox and the measles, has been sent to school, has learned how to speak, how to write and read. So, the poor man has experienced all the very truths which he now refutes so splendidly.¹⁹

Negation is always cast against a bigger background of affirmation.

Our Yes is comprehensive, our No's are specific. Our Yes is One, our No's are many. The one Yes permeates everything, and even those things to which we affix a negation are still more supported by our yes, than destroyed by our No's. Yes and No are not parallel or equals, despite official logic.²⁰

And if the pretentious doubt of Sophistry is overwhelmed by experience, then too the well-meaning (if often cowardly) Cartesian doubt is swept to ridicule by the press of events in time and space.²¹ Where doubt is formula it will be a mode of dishonesty.

In real doubt, I may doubt you but I certainly doubt myself.²² Real doubt is a wound, and nay-saying a kind of bandage but not itself a cure. "No" may then be a tantrum or a toy or even a device of oppression wherein seditious people are thwart-

ed by the rigor of scientific scepticism. But the use of "No" and the behaviors of disagreement and contradiction cannot be prima facie evidence of communicative competence from a civic perspective. The commitment to some desired change must be accompanied by a willingness to be changed before that threshold of civic competency is crossed. Unfortunately, no speech act encompasses this willingness and courage.

"No" of Collective Action

Rosenstock-Huessy saw collectivism, a recurring human phenomenon, as an essential and at least partially unattractive aspect of the industrial era. Instead of rebellion taking the form of individual self-assertion, it has adapted itself to labels and generalizations with a vengeance. When "Bill Smith," an industrial assembly employee of the "Huge Automobile Company," is reduced to being a "worker" by both corporate nomenclature and assembly line practices he does not rebel at the reduction of his humanity but proudly unites with the other industrial assembly employees to form "The Workers of the World." In this same way members of school classes become "students" and members of a church become "Hard Shell Baptists" and a nation's young people become "Hippies" or "Preppies" or "Punks" or "Mods" or whatever. As industrialization has increased the process of reduction and differentiation of production and consumption, this collectivization has increased as well.²³

Collectivities necessarily define themselves aversively by what they do not practice and what they do not believe in and by the experiences its members have had which outsiders have not, as much as by positive doctrine, action, and experience. To feel a sense of collective belonging is to be an actor of historical proportion, to earn a place in the human memory. What, so far in this discussion has been the singular "I say 'No'" is transformed in the collective into "We say 'No.'" About such assertions moral glibness is inappropriate. In such assertions lies historic justice and criminality and productivity and wastage.

However, where collectivization can be wedded not to "no" but to "yes," certain essentially productive things can happen. When the youth of a society can be brought to campuses and taught the highest aspirations of their culture they will (1) have accomplished a productive solidarity for later life, (2) have been allowed a period of development before industrial disintegration sets in, and (3) have satisfied the special social needs of a critical development era in their lives.²⁴ When this is wedded to a project to bring together people of different socio-economic backgrounds in meaningful work, its potential is even greater.²⁵ Again, this is the product of not "no" but "yes." As risky as "no" can be, the most interesting and important risks demand "yes."

"No" and Genius (Conventionality - No; Mundanity - Yes)

Rosenstock-Huessy in all his speech thought and social theory exemplifies a genius for a particular kind of contradiction, the contradiction of the received and politically correct points of view. To recover the intelligence of the Christian institutions of family and state and school and liturgy and calendar and not just assert their worth against the tidal pull of scientific and nihilistic and Marxist complaint, is genius indeed. The "contrariness" of Rosenstock-Huessy is so profuse it defies documentation.²⁶ What this signifies is two-fold. First, that powerful acts of disagreement and contradiction are not simple self-assertions but supported by a rigorous intellectual praxis. Second, that when conventional dis-ease is criticized, mundane civic institutions and talk are recovered as extraordinarily profound.

The problem, of course, is that we cannot reasonably hope that mothers pass along Rosenstock-Huessy's sort of genius with their infant's milk. Though he reveals the linguistic faculty and the social institutions to be (potentially) ingenious, and though he amply illustrates how the student of today will always go wrong with her doctrine of the merely referential and arbitrary sign,²⁷ short of a revolution in

social scientific thought it is difficult to apply all this insight to a teachable doctrine of communicative competence.

A Brief Rosenstock-Huessyan Doctrine of Communicative Competence

Clearly, Rosenstock-Huessy, though he might have been intrigued, would reject "disagreement" as the single criteria of communicative competence. Disagreement is too facile, too easily faked, and too readily reduced to formula. It is an economical reduction of a teacher's concerns for her student, but a destructive disservice to the student and his community.

Rosenstock-Huessy celebrated the sovereignty of the single speaker.²⁸ Yet speech is born in human interaction. The result of this interdependency can be the "citizen," a person who is capable of founding a city.²⁹ The citizen as speaker creates an artificial sense of time for his fellows by arguing back from individual and collective death to the needs of the present.³⁰

The citizen must have four powerful speech acts at her disposal: to command, to wish, to narrate, and to describe.³¹ Of these, the most explicitly political is the command. The speaker must learn to vary these four modes of discourse by the audience, speaking in-turn, a monologue (to oneself), a dialogue (with one's peers), and a "pleologue" (to history).³² The student must be prepared to be both speaker and listener,³³ and eventually politician-prophet, artist, lawyer-historian, and scientist if she is to become a citizen.³⁴

In the final analysis there can be no political reduction of communicative competence, just as there can be no apolitical definition of communicative competence. "No" is multiform and sometimes inappropriate and destructive. But more importantly, to be articulate is to be multiform, and to be multiformly courageous. With Rosenstock-Huessy we may reject materialistic monism as the solution for the problem of communicative competence and look instead at the imperatives of the Cross of Reality for guidance in advising students in what are ultimately complex and difficult choices.

W. Thomas Duncanson

University of Minnesota,
Morris

Morris, Minnesota 56267
USA

Notes

- 1 On the "piratical" enterprise of social change outside of institutions see Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, Planetary Service (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1978), pp. 73-91.
- 2 Rosenstock-Huessy ingeniously discussed the poverty of the past viewed as the extrapolation of the present in The Christian Future of the Modern Mind Outrun, Torchbook Edition (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 32. Personally, I must confess that I had an office in Jessup Hall at the University of Iowa for three and one-half years before realizing that this building was named after the man with whom Rosenstock-Huessy is quarrelling in this passage.
- 3 James C. McCroskey, "Communication Competence and Performance: A Research and Pedagogical Perspective," Communication Education 31 (1982), 6. For a typical treatment of competencies avowedly contrived to illustrate that the university is a good servant of the corporations, see the attached Appendix.
- 4 See Basil Bernstein, Class, Codes, and Control: Volume III, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1977) and Noëlle Bissieret, Education, Class Language and Ideology (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1979).
- 5 Karl Sornig, "Disagreement and Contradiction as Communicative Acts," Journal of Pragmatics 1 (1977), 347-74. Beyond Sornig, however, disagreement looks increasingly to be the criterion of human-ness accepted at any depth and breadth in the human sciences today. For a brief period after World War II in a reaction to the seeming invincibility of totalitarian "propaganda" and terror tactics, social scientists looked for the "buttons" of motivation "to push" by which free agent peoples consent to tolerate and even support atrocities. Joost A.M. Meerloo's The Rape of the Mind (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1956) was typical of such work. Today it is assumed that people will conform to the social order of the day and that is disagreement which calls attention to itself by its oddity. Hence, we have studies about how hard it is for a citizen to disagree with a President, or a patient to disagree with a doctor, or a layman to disagree with a scientist, or a student to disagree with a teacher, or a poor person to disagree with an overseer, or a woman to disagree with a man. In works like R.D. Laing's The Politics of Experience (New York: Ballantine, 1967) disagreement is seemingly synonymous with human completion and fulfillment.
- 6 See I Am An Impure Thinker (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1969), pp. 740-53.
- 7 "How Language Establishes Relations," in Speech and Reality (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1969), p. 119.
- 8 See "In Defense of the Grammatical Method" in Speech and Reality, pp. 9-44. and The Origin of Speech (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1981), pp. 10-18.

9 From The Christian Future, pp. 26-27. On this same theme see Planetary Service, pp. xv-23. This whole view is generally reminiscent of Kenneth Burke's project of the same post-war period "Ad bellum purificandum" in A Grammar of Motives (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1969, orig. 1945).

10 This multiformity is captured in the title of his German-language autobiography Ja und Nein (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1968).

11 "Hitler and Israel, Or on Prayer," Journal of Religion 25 (1945), 131.

12 "Hitler and Israel," 131.

13 "Hitler and Israel," 132.

14 "Hitler and Israel," 132.

15 "Uni-versity of Logic, Language, Literature," Speech and Reality, p. 80.

16 The Christian Future, p. 24. Rosenstock-Huessy associates this insider reflexivity with Christianity. See Out of Revolution, p. 561.

17 For examples see "The Individual's Right to Speak" Speech and Reality, p. 155 and "Metanoia: To Think Anew" in I Am An Impure Thinker, p. 189.

18 Planetary Service.

19 "The Individual's Right to Speak," p. 182.

20 "The Individual's Right to Speak," p. 183.

21 "Farewell to Descartes," I Am An Impure Thinker, p. 13. See also The Origin of Speech, pp. 28-34.

22 See "The Theme: The Mystery of Man," which introduces The Multiformity of Man (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1973, orig. 1936), p. iv.

23 The Multiformity of Man, pp. 36-44.

24 The Multiformity of Man, pp. 39-40, 41, 44.

25 This is a reference, of course, to several of Rosenstock-Huessy's across class work and education projects.

26 Consider as just a very few examples his constant defense of culture against nature, e.g.s. "The Science of Bodies and the Appeal to Somebody" in Rosenstock-Huessy Papers, Vol. I (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1981), n.p. and "The Secret of a Self-Perpetuating Body," The Multiformity of Man, pp. 45-61; also consider his juxtaposition of "political sense" over common sense in The Origin of Speech, pp. 30-32.

27 The Christian Future, pp. 6-9.

28 "The Individual's Right to Speak," pp. 175-77.

29 "The Individual's Right to Speak," pp. 157-58.

30 The Origin of Speech, pp. 19-38.

31 Speech and Reality. These four power languages are predicted on language which is nominal (employs proper names) and variable. See "Articulated Speech" in Speech and Reality, pp. 47-49.

32 "Uni-versity of Logic, Language, Literature," p. 72.

33 "The Listener's Tract," Speech and Reality, p. 142.

34 "The Individual's Right to Speak," pp. 187-89.



An Inventory of Skills

When you complete a liberal arts education, at least two things will have happened. One, you will have been prepared to lead a more enriched life; two, you will have acquired a group of skills which enable you to solve problems, communicate effectively, and perform complicated tasks. These skills are essential in a career, any career. This inventory lists the skills that faculty at the University of Minnesota, Morris (UMM) expect students to acquire in the process of their liberal education.

The UMM inventory reinforces conclusions which have been drawn by experts all over the country. Educators, business and industry leaders and placement counselors all agree; a liberal arts education is a good investment.

This inventory was compiled using information collected through a survey on the campus of the University of Minnesota, Morris. A list of important and commonly agreed upon career skills was circulated to faculty in each of the disciplines on campus (speech, mathematics, history, etc.) Faculty were requested to rank each skill according to three criteria: all students studying in the discipline are likely to acquire the skill; most students studying in the discipline are likely to acquire the skill (more than 50%); or few of the students are likely to acquire the skill through study in that discipline.

Conclusions were drawn based upon the collected responses. For example, if a significant number of faculty from all disciplines indicated most or all of their students were likely to acquire a certain skill (such as managing time effectively) then it could be said that all liberal arts graduates at UMM were likely to acquire that skill regardless of their major field of study. Those skills which all liberal arts students share are listed in this brochure.

Faculty were also asked to identify skills which students studying in an individual discipline might acquire; that students in other disciplines might not acquire; skills which are peculiar to an individual discipline. That more detailed inventory is available upon request.

Skills Common to Liberal Arts Graduates

Listed below are skills which 90% of faculty surveyed indicated all or most students were likely to acquire through classroom instruction, co-curricular or extracurricular activities.

Leadership/Management Skills

- the ability to analyze
- the ability to apply data
- the ability to identify critical issues and make decisions quickly and accurately
- the ability to identify problems and needs
- the ability to identify priorities and parameters
- the ability to initiate projects or ideas
- the ability to make decisions
- the ability to manage time, energy and resources effectively
- the ability to organize
- the ability to set goals
- the ability to work in a self-directed way

Communication/Writing Skills

- the ability to comprehend written material
- the ability to describe objects or events with a minimum of factual errors
- the ability to listen objectively
- the ability to report accurately
- the ability to summarize
- the ability to write effectively
- the ability to write factual material clearly and concisely

Instructing/Educational Skills

- the ability to hear and answer questions perceptively
- the ability to explain
- the ability to instruct
- the ability to teach a skill, concept, or principle to others

Research/Analytical Skills

- the ability to analyze and evaluate ideas and presentations
- the ability to analyze the interrelationships of events and ideas from several perspectives
- the ability to apply appropriate methods to test the validity of data
- the ability to apply information creatively to solve specific problems
- the ability to compile and select information
- the ability to formulate questions to clarify a particular problem or issue
- the ability to gather information
- the ability to perceive and define cause and effect relationships
- the ability to review large amounts of material and extract the essence
- the ability to sort data and objects
- the ability to use a variety of sources of information
- the ability to use a library and research facilities

For copies of this general inventory, or the more detailed inventory of individual discipline skills contact:

Tap R. Payne, Co-Director
Project IMPULL
University of Minnesota, Morris
Morris, MN 56267
(612) 589-2211 Ext. 6266