



# *Site Evaluation Report*

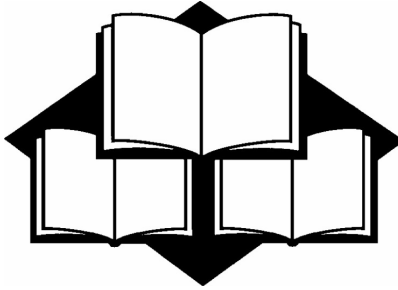
**Integral Program, St. Mary's College  
California**

**Visit conducted October, 2008**

**The American Academy for Liberal Education**

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This report represents the observations and recommendations of the site visitation team based on the campus visit April 8-11, 2007 and in light of the standards and criteria of the American Academy for Liberal Education.

*The site evaluation team report and any statements therein regarding compliance with the accreditation standards and criteria of the American Academy for Liberal Education represent only the considered opinion of the evaluation site team members at the time of the visit. Definitive evaluation of compliance and the accreditation decision will be made by the Academy's Board of Trustees, upon consultation with the Council of Scholars, following a thorough review of application materials including, but not limited to, the self-study, the site evaluation team report, a financial review, and any official responses to the site team report.*

### **Evaluation of the Integral Program at St. Mary's College for the AALE**

**INTRODUCTION:** St. Mary's College in Moraga, California was founded by the bishop of San Francisco, Joseph Alemany, in 1863. Originally located in San Francisco, it was founded to educate young catholic men who had come to the California during the gold rush. In 1868 it was effectively transferred to the control of the Christian Brothers, as the diocesan clergy had proved to be incapable of sustaining it. It was granted a charter by the state of California in 1871 to award advanced degrees, with the first bachelor degrees granted in 1872, and the first masters in 1873. In 1928 it moved to its present location in Moraga, in the hills behind Oakland. In 1970, it began admitting women. The college is on a 4-1-4 calendar. In addition to the traditional Humanities and Sciences, it has programs in Education, Nursing, Business, and Engineering, and consists of four schools, the School of Liberal Arts, the School of Economics and Business Administration, the School of Education, and the School of Science. Thus, while it retains the term College in its title, it is effectively a regional university.

The Integral Program grew out of courses that were being offered as far back as 1941 by a professor of philosophy devoted to reading "great books," inspired by the Great Books movement that was taking shape at the University of Chicago under the influence of Mortimer Adler and Robert Maynard Hutchins, as well as the New Program at St. John's College in Annapolis under the direction of Stringfellow Barr and Scott Buchanan, who had come from Chicago. By the 1950s eight seminars required of humanities students and four of science and business students were in place in the college. In 1956, however, an Experimental Curriculum was developed for a few students who were graduated in 1960. In 1964 Edward Sparrow came from St. John's and established a complete curriculum patterned after the curriculum used at St. John's. It included seminars, tutorials, laboratory science and music that filled up the four years of undergraduate instruction, and thus formed a complete major within the College of Liberal Arts. As evidenced in the Self Study, and in conversation with the faculty, it is clear that the Integral Program to this day takes St. John's to be a model of what they are doing and trying to achieve.

However, while it is in the College of Liberal Arts, the Integral Program grants its own degree other than the Bachelor of Arts. It has its own curriculum that “rests firmly on the eight seminars, one each term of attendance.”(Self Study, p.6) These seminars read texts designed to prompt engagement with “the ‘great conversation’ as it grows out of the *Reading List*.” (Self Study, p.6) In addition eight terms of mathematics tutorial are undertaken working through the great historical texts in the development of Mathematics from Euclid to Lobachevski and Einstein. There is a language tutorial in Greek that takes place over eight terms, and one term of a music tutorial. Finally, there are two terms of laboratory science in the freshman year concentrating upon measurement, observation, and calculation particularly against the background of ancient science. And there are two more terms of laboratory science in the junior year concentrating upon modern techniques in classical mechanics, biology, and chemistry. The College has general education requirements in Collegiate Seminar (4 courses), Theology and Religious Studies (2 courses), Written English (at least 2 courses), Area Requirements (6 courses), Language Proficiency, Diversity (1 course on the history, traditions, and/or culture(s) a people or peoples of non-European origin,) January Term (4 courses). And the curriculum of the Integral Program is judged by and large to meet those requirements. Because of the self contained nature of the curriculum, and the fact that it grants its own degree, it is fair to say that the Integral Program is a “college within a college.”

Respectfully submitted,

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November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008

List of programs officials, committees, and others interviewed during the site visit:

1. President of St. Mary’s College
2. Provost of St. Mary’s College
3. Vice-provost of St. Mary’s College
4. Dean of the College of Liberal Arts, St. Mary’s College
5. Chair of the Integral Program
6. Instruction Committee of the Integral Program

7. Various faculty seminar and tutorial leaders in the Integral Program
8. Students currently enrolled in the Integral Program, both formally and informally interviewed.
9. Seven or so students graduated from the Integral Program spanning its most recent history to much earlier stages.

## STANDARD I. LIBERAL LEARNING ASSESSMENT

### 1.1 Effective Reasoning

**An education in the liberal arts always seeks to develop student's abilities to recognize and to think clearly about important issues and questions. The ability to reason effectively includes certain foundational skills or abilities (e.g. fluency in reading, writing, and oral communication, mastery of the basic principles of logical, mathematical, and scientific reasoning), as well as higher-order capacities for formulating, analyzing, integrating and applying arguments and information.**

As indicated in the self-study, the Integral Program students lay the foundation for effective reasoning most of all in the freshman mathematics tutorial. This tutorial is devoted almost entirely to the study of Euclid's *Elements*. Here they have the opportunity in each class to demonstrate to their tutors, to their fellow-students, and to themselves their grasp of the basic principles of formal argumentation. Classes proceed as one student at a time proceeds to the board to demonstrate a proposition from Euclid to his or her colleagues. The student identifies the given premises of the argument, states what is to be proven, and takes the class step-by-step through the proof. Classes pause to consider the relationship between the various steps of the process, whether they might have been presented in a different order, whether the same propositions could have been proven in another way, the strength of positive demonstrations as opposed to "reductio" proofs, as well as other issues. Students must be able orally to communicate complex arguments.

The evaluation team's visit to the freshman mathematics tutorial showed that in this environment assessment of the individual student's progress in the ability to make, analyze, and communicate rational arguments is immediate. Students must present regularly before the class, and are subjected to questioning from their tutors and their peers. They are pushed to think about the structure of the demonstrations they present. When difficulties are encountered, the class works together until all members are satisfied and ready to move on to the next proposition.

This process of public demonstration and examination of formal arguments bears fruit in all aspects of the program. In a freshman seminar on the *Meno*, students not only worked to understand the arguments of Plato's Socrates, but were also pushed to think about the structure of their own arguments as they entered into discussion with their peers. The tutor more than once asked a student to identify the premises of his or her argument, at times identified the argument a student was making as a reductio, or challenged a student to state logically the connection between the point that that he or she had just made and the prior point in the conversation.

Students were challenged to think rationally and to articulate their arguments to one another with force and clarity. Again, opportunities for assessment of student progress presented themselves moment by moment as the students engaged one another and the tutor publicly on complex issues and in relation to a challenging text.

The laboratory and language tutorials also both demonstrate and develop the students' use of effective reasoning. In the former, students read seminal papers from the history of science. In these works the reasoning that led to a particular discovery is usually clearly visible. Students are able to think about the evidence the writer examined, follow the logic of a scientific argument, think through the author's use of experimentation, and evaluate the conclusions reached. The laboratory is particularly effective in encouraging students to rethink material that they think they "already know." On what basis, other than the argument from authority, do they claim to know much of what they would think of as their own scientific knowledge? In what way is knowledge one's own if it is not (as Plato put it in the *Meno*) "tied down" through some sort of rational understanding? Students reexamine the basis of their own thought about the world around them, beginning with the most basic issues of observation and measurement. In classes, students were observed to be actively involved. A junior laboratory was attempting to understand an argument from Robert Boyle about air pressure and weight. They moved, mostly through a process of questioning one another, from the assumption that they did understand the argument to the realization that they did NOT understand it – and then recovered themselves and began to work eagerly toward an accurate appraisal of Boyle's experiment. In other words, they were able to use reason to uncover their own deficiencies in knowledge, and then to work together toward a better understanding.

Finally, in the language tutorials, students investigate the role of language and its relation to reasoning, both as a tool of communication and as that through which we reason. The primary purpose of these tutorials is not to teach a foreign language; learning a foreign language – Ancient Greek – serves instead as a means to raise issues about effective reasoning and communication, as well as issues about the structure of language and the challenges of translation. Through their encounter with the alien forms and grammatical structures of the Greek, students re-encounter their own language and think about language as such. They also develop their fluency in reading by developing skills in close reading that the pace of seminar makes impossible.

The Integral Program is to be commended for the opportunities it offers for students to study the structure of formal argumentation and for the way it challenges its students to practice effective reasoning in the classroom, particularly in making clear and effective oral presentations and participating in rational discourse. However, the situation with regard to the development of "fluency in writing" was somewhat less clear. This was particularly true with respect to what was presented to us in the self-study; after extended conversation with members of the Program's Instruction Committee, the team was somewhat reassured that the actual practices within the Program corresponded more closely to the criteria of the AALE than the self-study had led us to believe. Still the issue needs to be raised. Opportunities for written expression are ample. Each student writes a substantial paper at the end of the sophomore year and completes a substantial senior essay. The sophomore paper is on a standard subject. The senior essay is on a topic of the

student's choosing. In addition, papers are assigned in the various tutorials, labs, and seminars throughout the program.

However, it is unclear from the self-study how assessment works with these papers, with regard both to the fluency of the writing and the quality of the content. Papers that were made available to us showed a wide range of proficiency in the mechanics of writing. In addition, many of the papers we saw had surprisingly few (or even no) written comments. In conversation with the Instruction Committee, we learned that tutors have recently invited a colleague from the college's writing center to evaluate their practices. Based upon this evaluation they have moved away from written comments on papers, which students may not read or understand, to a stronger concentration on individual oral feedback. Students meet with their tutors in individual conferences on their papers. They are often asked to rewrite a paper, and may go through several drafts returning to the tutor each time for guidance and critique. Tutors have also come together to assess and compare their evaluations of student essays in order to ensure more consistent evaluation throughout the program.

The faculty are to be commended for these efforts to strengthen the teaching of writing in the program. However, questions remain about the extent to which students in the program are actually being taught the mechanics of writing good English prose. Is there evidence that students improve in this ability as they move through the program? Or are those students who write well at the end of the four years those who entered the program already competent in this respect? Might the program institute some sort of longitudinal evaluation of students' written work, such that it might become more possible to assess the impact of the work done in the Program on students' abilities in this area?

## **1.2 Broad and Deep Learning**

**A liberally educated person should possess a rich fund of meaningful knowledge, as well as the ability to compare and integrate new and diverse areas of knowledge in fruitful ways. A program's general education curriculum should impart a broad foundational knowledge of the various liberal arts and sciences. In most cases, students will also experience the depth of learning that comes from a sustained, progressive exploration of the distinct modes of inquiry belonging to one or more of the major disciplines. Through such studies or their equivalents, students acquire the ability to relate disparate areas of the arts and sciences to one another, as well as to integrate knowledge gained across different fields of study.**

The criterion of broad learning is satisfied fully through the structure of the all-required curriculum. All students take mathematics, laboratory science, foreign language study, and read through an impressive selection of the greatest works – philosophical, literary, mathematical/scientific – of the western tradition. The curriculum is arranged so that the connections among these various fields become evident to students. From the freshman year, when they immerse themselves in ancient Greek texts in the seminar while studying ancient Greek in the language tutorial and working on Euclid and Archimedes in the mathematics tutorial and lab, it is clear that material from one class may be immediately relevant to discussions taking place in another. As all students and tutors are pursuing the same curriculum,

there is no difficulty in bringing up something from mathematics in seminar, or from language in the lab; all members of the class have a knowledge base in common and work together toward its meaningful integration.

The criterion of depth of knowledge may pose more of a problem for the Program. There are no majors or even areas of concentration. However, it might be said that the students have a rare opportunity to think about some of the most fundamental human questions (for instance: What is the nature of a human being? What is knowledge? What is the good life? How do we come together as a community? as well as many others) and pursue them through various texts and approaches with a singularity of purpose that few institutions would allow. Conversations with students and recent alumni gave evidence that students had been challenged to think deeply in a variety of ways – perhaps most of all by the nature of the community in which they live. For four years they engage in a rigorous and ongoing conversation with a very small set of fellow-students and tutors, and they are pushed again and again to take their explorations together further. They also experience the growth of knowledge and expertise, probably most notably in mathematics and in reading philosophical texts, which comes with the sustained and cumulative acquisition of knowledge in a given field.

The most important opportunity for demonstration and assessment of depth of learning is presented by the senior essay. This essay allows each student to choose a topic to work with in a sustained way, in conversation with a faculty advisor. The result is a substantial essay that becomes the basis for a conversation among a group of students and faculty. In conversation with the faculty, we learned that students had in the past felt that they were not adequately prepared for writing the senior essay. We commend the faculty for taking this criticism seriously and attempting more deliberate ways of preparing them for this undertaking and working with the students throughout the process. A sophomore essay on an assigned topic now gives the students some experience in writing pieces longer than those assigned in seminars and tutorials. Work on the senior essay often begins even before the senior year, if a student has already found a topic and an advisor. At any rate, a topic is due early in the senior year and advisors bring the students through the process step-by-step until the paper is due in April.

Our examination of senior essays and conversations with students found an impressive variety of topics, with texts and questions drawn from all aspects of the program. The enthusiasm shown in conversation by both current students and alumni when speaking about the senior essays demonstrated both how seriously they took the questions they pursued and how much they felt they had benefited from the process. On the other hand, the quality of the essays – both in terms of the content and the mechanics of the writing – was again very uneven. It was not clear that all students had in fact gained the ability to engage in the sort of sustained enquiry that the writing of such a paper involves. Also, the topics of a few essays seemed more personal/confessional than strictly academic. While there is certainly value in such writing, it does not give the student the opportunity to demonstrate sustained intellectual enquiry and depth of learning. However, conversations with students and tutors revealed that such papers have become rarer over the past few years as students have been guided to grapple with other topics.

## **1.2 The Inclination to Inquire**

**An education in the liberal arts and sciences is more than the mere accumulation of knowledge and skills. It fosters and encourages the students' desire for seeking out and acquiring important knowledge and skills, both for their own sake and for the good they contribute to our common and individual lives. For this reason, a disposition for asking incisive and insightful questions and for pursuing enriching and useful skills is perhaps the surest sign of a liberally-educated mind.**

While the criterion of breadth of knowledge is addressed through the curriculum of the Program, the inclination to inquire is addressed perhaps most of all through the pedagogy. Classes are not seen as occasions in which professors dispense knowledge that students absorb; rather, they are taken to be common enquiries into a text or subject matter. This is easily said. Only experience of the Program can say whether the claim rings true. In our visits to seminars and tutorials we did indeed experience such an environment. Upper-level seminars were initiated by a student's opening question. The freshman seminar was initiated by the tutor's opening question –but once the question had been asked, though the tutor at times asked students to clarify their claims or intervened in other ways, the burden of sustaining the enquiry rested on the students. In this case, eleven freshmen carried on a lively conversation on the Meno for two hours. Had the students not brought their own curiosity and desire for knowledge to the seminar, nothing could have happened.

Tutorials, though more guided, proceeded similarly. Students identified questions or demonstrated propositions and worked together to understand the subject at hand. At times the tutor would intervene to draw students' attention to an issue, or to raise a point for consideration, but it was clear that the students neither expected nor even desired the tutors to supply the questions that drove their inquiries.

This last criterion seems perhaps the most difficult to assess in a formal way. In any class, a student's inclination to question and inquire (or lack thereof) would likely be evident to the tutor. Classes are small and proceed so entirely through student participation that the unengaged student has little opportunity to hide. This inclination is addressed through the breadth of a student's work in a given semester through the Don Rag. This is a meeting of all the tutors of a particular student with the student himself or herself in which the tutors talk to one another about the student's work in each class. The student then has a chance to respond to his or her tutors' concerns. Thus the tutors have the chance to assess whether a student's appetite for learning is evident only in one class or extends across the entire curriculum.

The nature of the criteria for Liberal Learning makes questions of assessment particularly difficult. They are not criteria that are particularly amenable to quantification. It is probably true that the sort of assessment provided by the Don Rag is most able to help students and faculty know whether the student is making progress in these areas. However, assessment of necessity involves other issues. There is, for example, the question of grades. Reading of the self-study inclined some members of the team to believe that grades in the Program are essentially meaningless, having little relation to students' actual performance. Conversation revealed that although the faculty is unanimous in its belief that the most important evaluation of a student takes place in the Don Rags, still the grade does reflect an evaluation of the student's work that

should be useful to outside evaluators, such as graduate and professional schools, seeking to understand the level of a student's achievement. This should be more clearly stated in the study.

It might be added that, although the Don Rag allows for a broad horizontal survey of a student's work across a given year, it does not facilitate a year-to-year assessment. For instance, if a student has a particular problem in his or her writing across the board this year, was that same problem also in evidence last year? It would be good to know more about how student progress is assessed over time.

There is also the question of faculty assessment of their own curriculum and practices. Here again it was important to the team that the material in the self-study was supplemented by what we learned in conversation. As noted above, the faculty has brought in an outside consultant and worked with one another in various ways to improve quality and consistency in the teaching of writing. In addition, the archons (leaders in charge of various areas of the curriculum) meet with one another at the end of the year to review questions that have emerged over the course of the year. The Integral Program, along with the regular departments at St. Mary's, is required to complete a self-study for the college on a regular basis. Making adjustments to an all-required "Great Books" style curriculum is always an arduous process; changes in one part of the curriculum have an immediate impact upon other parts. It is a task that calls upon the tutors' knowledge of the entire program. The faculty should be commended for their refusal to allow the daunting complexity of these considerations to deter them from constant assessment of the pedagogy and curriculum, and they should be encouraged to continue and refine these assessments. More information about the nature of these assessments and the changes that have emerged from them should be included in the self-study.

## **STANDARD II. EDUCATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS**

### **1.1 Mission**

**The program's mission statement reflects the importance and centrality of liberal education and states the program's purposes and goals in a manner that corresponds to the way in which the curriculum is actually organized and taught. The program regularly reviews its mission statement or statement of purposes as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.**

According to the Self Study, and in conversation with the chair of the program, as well as faculty within the program, it is clear that for the purposes of a mission statement the Program adopts the mission statement of the College as a whole. Thus it does not have a separate mission statement specific to the program. The college mission statement is the following:

The Mission of Saint Mary's College is:

**To probe deeply the mystery of existence by cultivating the ways of knowing and the arts of thinking:**

Recognizing that the paths to knowledge are many, Saint Mary's College offers a diverse curriculum which includes the humanities, arts, sciences, social sciences, education, business administration and nursing, serving traditional students and adult learners in both undergraduate and graduate programs. As an institution where the liberal arts inform and enrich all areas of learning, it places special importance on fostering the intellectual skills and habits of mind which liberate persons to probe deeply the mystery of existence and live authentically in response to the truths they discover. This liberation is achieved as faculty and students, led by wonder about the nature of reality, look twice, ask why, seek not merely facts but fundamental principles, strive for an integration of all knowledge, and express themselves precisely and eloquently.

**To affirm and foster the Christian understanding of the human person which animates the educational mission of the Catholic Church:**

Saint Mary's College holds that the mystery which inspires wonder about the nature of existence is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ giving a transcendent meaning to creation and human existence. Nourished by its Christian faith, the College understands the intellectual and spiritual journeys of the human person to be inextricably connected. It promotes the dialogue of faith and reason: it builds community among its members through the celebration of the church's sacramental life; it defends the goodness, dignity and freedom of each person, and fosters sensitivity to social and ethical concerns. Recognizing that all those who sincerely quest for truth contribute to and enhance its stature as a Catholic institution of higher learning, Saint Mary's welcomes members from its own and other traditions, inviting them to collaborate in fulfilling the spiritual mission of the College.

**To create a student-centered educational community whose members support one another with mutual understanding and respect:**

As a Lasallian college, Saint Mary's holds that students are given to its care by God and that teachers grow spiritually and personally when their work is motivated by faith and zeal. The College seeks students, faculty, administrators and staff from different social, economic, and cultural backgrounds who come together to grow in knowledge, wisdom and love. A distinctive mark of a Lasallian school is its awareness of the consequences of economic and social injustice and its commitment to the poor. Its members learn to live "their responsibility to share their goods and their service with those who are in need, a responsibility based on the union of all men and women in the world today and on a clear understanding of the meaning of Christianity." (From: The Brothers of the Christian Schools in the World Today: A Declaration).

Thus the mission of the program has three main characteristics. First, the broadly educational characteristic of any school whatsoever is expressed under the heading "To probe deeply the mystery of existence by cultivating the ways of knowing and the arts of thinking." It is under this heading that the mission affirms the "importance and centrality of liberal education" when it says, "as an institution where the liberal arts inform and enrich all areas of learning, it places special importance on fostering the intellectual skills and habits of mind which liberate persons

to probe deeply the mystery of existence and live authentically in response to the truths they discover.”

Now, because the program adopts this mission statement from the college, it would be inappropriate within it to specify how the program fulfills “the program’s purposes and goals in a manner that corresponds to the way in which the curriculum is actually organized and taught,” as described in the criterion. It is better to ask how the program’s curriculum, faculty, and students exhibit that mission. So, when the team considered the actual structure of the program, which is a great books curriculum, it was not difficult to discern the ways in which the texts that are studied in seminars and tutorials are taken to exhibit that mission, and the ways in which faculty and students alike form a community exhibiting it. The point of the great books curriculum they follow is to consider those texts that have proven over time to be lasting contributions to, and critical examinations of “the mystery of existence by cultivating the ways of knowing and the arts of thinking.”

The self study makes it clear that this role is as true of the more scientifically oriented tutorials as it may be of the more literary and philosophical seminars, as the texts chosen for their scientific interest are also chosen because of their tendency to raise seminal questions about the philosophical and theological presuppositions of those texts concerning the world. And our observations of seminars and tutorials confirmed this, whether they were seminars on the gospel of Mark, Pascal’s *Pensées*, Plato’s *Meno*, or the freshman tutorial on constructing standard weights and the junior seminar on Boyle. In each the students displayed an active and engaging curiosity to pursue the questions raised by the tutors or the subject matter itself beyond a simple understanding of the matter at hand.

The second feature of the mission is expressed under the heading, “To affirm and foster the Christian understanding of the human person which animates the educational mission of the Catholic Church.” This feature of the Program’s mission marks its distinctive character as involving a liberal arts education and great books curriculum within the context of the Roman Catholic tradition. The institution was founded by the Christian Brothers, a religious community within the Catholic Church founded by St. Jean Baptiste de La Salle, the distinctive mission of which was the education of middle class and poor students.

It is important to note that this aspect of the mission of St. Mary’s College generally is embodied in part within the general education requirements for all undergraduate students of a two course requirement in Theology and Religious Studies.

Here an examination of the Integral Program curriculum exhibits a certain ambiguity, as there are no specific seminars or tutorials devoted to theology and religious studies. In conversation with the faculty it became clear that the upper administration of the College allows the Program to consider itself as fulfilling the two course requirement through the seminars, by reason of the fact that the students are exposed to and discuss many of the scriptural and theological texts that would ordinarily be considered in courses in the College that do technically fulfill the requirement. As the Self Study puts it with regard to these College requirements, “when the breadth requirements [of the General Education requirements] demanded theology in particular,

it was decided that the readings in seminar and in language covered so much religious material that the demand of the general curriculum was met.”(Self Study, p.10)

So, given what appears to be a “hands off” attitude of the upper administration, it does appear that the Program is fulfilling this aspect of its mission in the view of the administration. They do so particularly, but not exclusively, through the examination of philosophical and theological texts that are integral to the intellectual tradition of the Catholic Church--certainly the theological in the study of the Bible, Augustine, Anselm, Aquinas, St. John of the Cross, among others, but also in the philosophical with Plato and Aristotle, and later Descartes, and Pascal, as well as texts from outside the Catholic intellectual tradition that bear upon issues pertinent to that tradition, such as the literary in Goethe, Dostoyevsky, and Kierkegaard. In observing the seminar on Mark one team member remarked on how active the students were in raising questions in the text about the meaning of the phrase “the Son of Man” and its implications when applied to Christ, while in the Pascal seminar they discussed not only his famous wager on the existence of God, but even more deeply his views of human nature and its “wretchedness.” In both, nearly every member of the seminar became involved. In the Pascal seminar in particular the discussion naturally led to discussions of Original Sin, and Catholic approaches to the question of just how wretched human nature is. Was Pascal going too far, and so on? This discussion was not carried out in a heavy handed or narrowly sectarian fashion, but in a genuine spirit of inquiry. It was evident that there were non-Catholics, even perhaps non-believers actively engaged in the discussion without any fear that it was inappropriate in that setting.

So through the ordinary course of the seminars, the Program displays a lively spirit of discussion on the deepest of human questions about God, revelation, and human existence that animate the Catholic intellectual tradition of education, as it does with all of the texts discussed in the seminars. Indeed, from discussion with administrators and faculty, it is probably fair to say that the Program is at present exceeding College expectations in this regard.

The third feature of the mission is expressed by the heading, “To create a student-centered educational community whose members support one another with mutual understanding and respect.” There is little doubt that the program manages to fulfill this aspect of the mission. This section stresses the LaSallian tradition of student centered learning, and the spiritual development of faculty through their role in assisting that education, as well as the LaSallian tradition of concern for the education of the poor. From discussion with the faculty, it became clear that the LaSallian presence is particularly strong in the program. If the estimates given to us are accurate, more Christian Brothers are faculty in the Program than in any other unit of the College, even perhaps throughout the rest of the academic units of the College as a whole. It is clear that the College should be very grateful for this continuing commitment on the part of the Christian Brothers to its identity.

Also, from discussion with administrators it was noted that that there is some concern throughout the College with LaSallian identity. Given the high tuition at St. Mary’s and the amount that they can discount that tuition in admissions, the strong presence of Christian Brothers in the Program positions it very well for taking the lead on arguing that St. Mary’s not lose that aspect of LaSallian identity that is concerned with educational service to the middle class and the poor. Perhaps the Program could take the lead in identifying underprivileged students who would do

well in the program, and argue strenuously for the College to make sure that those students can attend. Because it is a program within a larger college, and in that respect unlike institutions like St. John's and Thomas Aquinas College, this is a distinct service to the larger institution that the Program can provide.

But this part of the mission is not exhausted by the presence of the Christian Brothers on the faculty. The spirit of that commitment was observed by the team in a commitment of the tutors to the education of the students in both the seminars and the tutorials. In the seminars they held back from an artificial steering of the conversation in a certain direction. So, for instance, in the Pascal seminar the tutor allowed the discussion of human nature and its wretchedness to dominate the seminar, rather than the discussion of the wager. To be sure, she made sure that the wager was discussed for a significant amount of time. However, it takes great forbearance to allow the discussion to center on the question of human nature and wretchedness, since standard philosophical approaches to Pascal will reduce him almost exclusively to the wager, and ignore what is arguably more important in him, his views of human nature in relation to God.

In the tutorials the tutors made sure not to proceed without confidence that all of the members of the tutorial understood the point at hand. This was particularly evident in the Euclid seminar, as the tutor repeatedly asked the students whether they understood the step in a proof one of the other students was doing on the board. Again, this displays a kind of maturity, patience, and discipline in teaching that can be harder to achieve in a standard lecture format.

This section of the mission statement also emphasizes a concern with social responsibility beyond the classroom. And again through discussion with the faculty, as well as students, and graduates of the Program, it became clear that the program is successful in inculcating in students a spirit of service, whether that service is displayed in campus leadership positions or charitable activities outside of the campus community proper. The graduates of the program spoke of the ways in which the Program still influences them as they pursue very diverse professional careers and social commitments.

The College should be proud of the Integral Program as an element within its larger educational mission, and should highlight it within the educational community of the West. But because it is a great books program, it also gives St. Mary's a kind of national profile akin to St. John's and Thomas Aquinas' that it might not otherwise have. So it would be good for the College to recognize that added value of the program and make sure that it provides the necessary resources to the program for sustaining and building the Program as an expression of its mission.

On the other hand, we noted the ambiguity in the Program's relation to the Catholic mission of the College. The AALE criteria presuppose that the Program itself has a mission statement, and that it regularly review the curriculum in light of that mission statement. We grant that the Program takes the mission of the College as its own. And yet, insofar as the Program is seeking its own accreditation, it ought to develop its own more specific mission statement in line with the AALE criterion for programs, a specific mission statement that would incorporate the College mission statement, but make more clear the ways in which the Program and its curriculum embodies it. As it stands, the team has to put that relationship together for itself from the comments of faculty, descriptions of the curriculum, and observations from the seminar.

Such a Program mission statement would also aide the Program in fulfilling another element of the criterion, namely, that it “regularly review its mission statement or statement of purposes as part of its ongoing efforts to assess and improve its performance.” As the discussion of Standard I one makes clear, the Program does regularly review and assess its curriculum, although it notes that the means of assessment ought to be set down in writing. But that review and assessment ought also to take place against the background of the mission of the College expressed in a particular way in a Program mission statement. Such a review and assessment would then be more likely to take into account in a more intentional way the specifically Catholic mission within which the Program operates, more intentional, that is, than the internal features of a great books program as such lends itself to.

The team did discuss with the faculty that the Program could perhaps be more intentional in the way it pursues the Catholic mission of the college. The curriculum of the program is unique in the College. The Self Study emphasizes its relationship to the great books program at St. John’s College in Annapolis as a kind of model, as well as Thomas Aquinas College in Ojai. It is distinguished from Thomas Aquinas College in that it does not conduct tutorials in Catholic theology. Instead, it counts upon questions and issues relevant to the Catholic intellectual community coming up “naturally” in the context of seminars and tutorials, given the texts that are being studied. This is good, and yet it is admittedly happenstance.

The team noted that however fortuitous it might be for those issues and questions to arise, one might be able to say that the same issues and questions arise at St. John’s College. The Self Study notes that the administration counts the Program as fulfilling the Theology and Religious studies general education requirements, because “readings in seminar and in language covered so much religious material.” Couldn’t this be said of St. John’s as well? The similarity of the texts, and pedagogy of the great books naturally give rise to those sorts of questions, and there will likely often be students of similar backgrounds at the two institutions, Catholics and non-Catholics alike. Yet the Integral Program commits itself to the mission of the College, which is unabashedly framed in terms of the Roman Catholic and LaSallian intellectual and educational traditions. St. John’s College does not and could not make a similar commitment. So the question arises, given the Integral Program’s explicit comparison to St. John’s, how that Catholic mission, without being more intentional, actually makes a difference to the education in the Integral Program at St. Mary’s not made at St. John’s?

And to make the point more specifically, with regard to the fulfillment of the two course requirement in Theology and Religious Studies, a requirement out of place at St. John’s but not at St. Mary’s, as it stands the Program’s fulfillment of those requirements depends upon the good graces and favor of the College administration in the absence of coursework that is designed to fulfill them. One could anticipate that with a change to an administration that might be less well disposed to the Program, this absence of a specific element in the curriculum could pose a problem for the Program’s future.

So the team was interested in pursuing the question of how the distinctively Catholic mission of the college is embodied in the curriculum in such a way that it makes a difference to the educational experience of the students at St. Mary’s, as opposed to a similar curriculum at St. John’s. What does a student gain through the curriculum at St. Mary’s insofar as it is integrated

into the Catholic educational mission of St. Mary's college that he or she would not gain at St. John's? We thought it would be wise for the future of the Program to be more intentional in addressing that question.

A number of ways of approaching this question were discussed with the faculty. The team was concerned that its questions and suggestions in this regard not be understood to be suggestions for some major revision of the curriculum, which is already a very intensive course of study and instruction. There should be no danger of undermining it brought about by some form of major revision. The Program thinks very hard about what it does, and why it does it. It has succeeded in putting together a very good education for students. And the team understood that the Integral Program is to a certain extent intentional in distinguishing itself from Thomas Aquinas College in not offering theology tutorials. So, the pursuit of any suggestions the team made or alternatives the Program developed on its own should be taken to be consistent with the character of the great books approach embodied at St. Mary's, not at other institutions.

So the suggestion is that the Integral Program think about ways that it might be more intentional about the influence of the Catholic intellectual and educational traditions upon the already existing curriculum, particularly with respect to the College requirement in Theology and Religious studies. It might think about the ways in which guiding questions for the whole curriculum might include questions not only of human nature or God or existence, but also about the nature of Theology, not so much as an issue in a particular seminar, but with respect to the curriculum as a whole. In the Catholic intellectual tradition, Theology has a kind of comprehensive integrating function with regard to other areas of inquiry, philosophical and scientific. It is one thing for questions to arise in a fortuitous but nonetheless happenstance fashion depending upon student demographics, and another thing for them to arise as the result of an intentional goal of the program.

Another question to be considered might be the role of Scripture within the curriculum. The Catholic educational tradition recognizes a special character to Scripture insofar as it affirms that it has a divine, and not simply a human authority. But what difference does that difference of authority make to the reading of Scripture in a Great Books curriculum? The description of the curriculum says that students will participate "in small group discussions that explore the works of Western history's greatest thinkers." How well does that description apply to Scripture within the Catholic educational tradition? Is Scripture a "great book" according to the kind of criteria relevant to judging other great books as worthy of inclusion in the curriculum? Might reading it as just another great book with other great books have the unintended effect of effacing the particular claim to authority that the Catholic educational tradition recognizes within it? Does that approach respect the distinctive Catholic approach to reading the Bible in light of an authoritative tradition represented both by exemplary theologians and by a claim to apostolic authority? The suggestion is not that the Program eliminate reading of the Bible in the seminars, but, rather, that it think of ways in which it might have as a goal that the students call into question its role in the curriculum alongside all of the other "great books." After all, a serious point of inquiry in any education ought to be to inculcate in the students an ability to engage in a self reflective critique of their education in order to further it.

One suggestion was that the program might institute something like the Program seminar we observed on Plato's *Ion*, but on great texts concerned with the question of the role of Sacred Scripture within Christianity, as well as the nature of Theology, its object and goal as distinguished from other areas of enquiry. The team was very impressed with the program seminar devoted to the *Ion*, as it involved very lively interaction between students and tutors as between equals. Why not something similar with Pre-reformation and Reformation theological texts concerning the nature of Sacred Scripture and Theology? Such an approach could be understood along the lines of a capstone course seeking integration of the various issues raised throughout the curriculum, a course that would involve meeting less than the regular seminars, but throughout the year, and be carried on over a cycle of four years, with texts chosen so that participants could jump right in.

These are suggestions. There might be other approaches worth considering in order to reflect more seriously upon the Program's mission within the College and its distinctive character within the Catholic educational tradition. Any approach to the questions raised concerning the mission need to be evaluated from the perspective of the approach of the Program's distinctive great books curriculum and pedagogy. But a more intentional approach to this issue is likely to safeguard the Program's future within the College.

In conclusion, given the present constitution and attitude of the College administration, the Program is fulfilling the mission it adopts from the College, particularly with respect to the general education requirements in Theology and Religious Studies. But with a change of administration, one could anticipate problems developing for the Program along just those lines. In line with the AALE criteria, the Program ought to develop its own mission statement that is specific to it, but that incorporates the College mission statement. And to avoid possible difficulties in the future it ought to look for ways to be more intentional in its fulfillment of the College requirement in Theology and Religious Studies. Our suggestion is that it not rest content with its present success, but build upon it both for the sake of the Program itself, and also as a contribution to the larger intellectual culture of the College as a whole.

### **7.1 Qualified Faculty, Instructors, and Academic Support Staff**

The faculty of the Integral Program is dedicated, talented, and thoughtful. They are scholar-teachers in the best sense of this phrase, with the emphasis on teachers. They relish expanding the intellectual horizon and nurturing the souls of undergraduates and they are less interested in publishing a long list of seldom-read articles.

They seem obviously dedicated to the program and are enthusiastic in their teaching responsibilities. We saw this enthusiasm and dedication in every tutorial and seminar we visited. In the tutorials there was somewhat more direction from the tutor as befits teaching Greek to those who do not know it. But especially in the seminars, tutors admirably let the students dictate the course of inquiry with a minimum of tutorial input.

The faculty was also dedicated to teaching all parts of the program, from any of the tutorials to any of the years or semesters of the seminars. The faculty was free of the disciplinary

boundaries that one is tied to in graduate school. This freedom in the faculty is essential to a program that is itself not tied to disciplines but to inquiry. A philosopher may be leading a tutorial on mathematics and a tutor with a doctorate in rhetoric might well be guiding a seminar discussion on Luke-Acts.

The talent and dedication of the faculty is evident. In these respects the faculty represents the standards of AALE.

**An education in the liberal arts always seeks to develop students' abilities to recognize and to think clearly about important issues and questions. The ability to reason effectively includes certain foundational skills or abilities (e.g. fluency in reading, writing and oral communication, mastery of the basic principles of logical , mathematical and scientific reasoning), as well as higher order capacities for formulating, analyzing, integrating, and applying arguments and information.**

The faculty are committed to guiding their students in acquiring the talents of effective reasoning both in specific areas of mathematics, language, and science as well as integrating their studies. In one tutorial, for example, students learned 3<sup>rd</sup> year Greek by working through Plato's Phaedo, not just passages in a textbook. In a seminar, material the students knew from working through the "prologue" to the Gospel of John in Greek was used to understand phrasing in Luke-Acts.

**A program's general education curriculum should a broad foundational knowledge of the various liberal arts and sciences. In most cases students will also experience the depth of learning that comes from a sustained, progressive exploration of the distinct modes of inquiry belonging to one or more of the major disciplines.**

Especially in the seminars the faculty demonstrate that they are committed to broad and deep learning and bringing to bear knowledge across the disciplines. Faculty encourage this in a variety of ways from teaching Greek through reading Plato to encouraging students to rely on Greek in other contexts. For example, when a tutor in a seminar announced a summer program in classical art and architecture at Syracuse in Sicily to a sophomore seminar, some students were reminded that they had read Thucydides as freshmen and remembered the tragedy that befell the Athenian army at Syracuse.

**An education in the liberal arts and sciences is more than the mere accumulation of knowledge and skills. It fosters and encourages the students' desire for seeking out and acquiring important knowledge and skills both for their own sake and for the good they contribute to our common and individual lives. For this reason a disposition for asking incisive and insightful questions and pursuing enriching and useful skills is perhaps the surest sign of a liberally educated mind.**

Faculty also fostered the inclination to inquire by drawing out students to ask probing questions of each other or the text or discipline. The faculty facilitate questions, not merely the repeating

of answers. In some cases students may ask a tutor about a particularly complicated Greek construction that is confusing but these episodes seem to be few and far between.

Admiration for the faculty and their present teaching must be combined with a recognition of challenges going forward. These challenges seem to be well recognized by the faculty. In general there are those challenges that the faculty of the program can properly deal with among themselves and those challenges which must be resolved at the collegiate level. Let us start with challenges that the faculty may be able to resolve or at least partially resolve by themselves.

### Faculty Issues Within the Program

**Recruiting:** In order to have a stable flow of undergraduates, recruiting is essential. Though the most successful recruiting is typically done by students, more faculty involvement could be helpful. Faculty can explain in depth the idea behind the Integral Program and its many virtues. Faculty might also be helpful in talking about past cohorts of students and what they have done with their education through the integral program. Students inquiring about the integral program may very well have questions about future careers or life choices that faculty might be especially helpful in answering.

**Mentoring:** As in other great books programs faculty involvement is crucial. Over time, faculty need to teach all parts of the program, i.e. any of the tutorials and any of the seminars. If faculty members are recruited from a more typical department at the College they may, for example, know the great books well but have no background in Greek. Others may have a substantial background in science and mathematics but have little exposure to Plato, Aquinas, or Tolstoy.

Thus the Program faculty needs to provide the time for new tutors to master the areas they will teach and learn from other tutors the best way to teach those fields that may require somewhat more tutorial direction such as Greek or more advanced mathematics like Newton's calculus.

In the self-study, the program notes that this next year they will be hiring two new tutors dedicated specifically to the program, as distinct from attracting members from more conventional departments to devote part or all of their time to the program.

This recruiting is necessary for the future health of the program. But doing so on tenure track lines leads to questions. The college faculty told us there are at present minimal research requirements for tenure. The experiences of other small colleges suggest that, rightly or wrongly, this requirement will grow over time. But in a mentoring intensive program like the integral program there cannot be the kind of research and publishing requirements for tenure that may be the norm in more typical departments.

### Faculty Issues and the College

While the faculty is excellent, many are nearing retirement, and some could retire at any time. In ten years the faculty will look very different. This raises the question of replacements which are crucial to the long term vitality of the program. I noted above the issues related to mentoring new tutors in this unique program and its methods of teaching and mentoring. But the most basic

question comes first: hiring new faculty. There should be a commitment from the College to maintain the robust character of the Program, a commitment that will require replacement hiring. The Program will need to make a strong case to the College administration for replacement hiring, and we trust that, over time the College will support a program that in its publicity it promotes as distinctive and outstanding.

If enough full time replacements cannot be hired at the right time the Program will need to attract faculty members from existing departments, as some tutors now are. In this case the College should support the recruitment of faculty into the program.

In recruiting new faculty the focus should be on attracting new faculty who can thrive in a non-traditional environment that requires a heavy investment of time and a love of both deep learning and broad learning. The College itself should support the hiring of faculty members for the Program who are less interested in specific disciplines and more interested in interdisciplinary and integrated learning.

We stress here a point noted above. Teachers in this program teach and teach well by every method we saw or read about, including informal conversations with students. The tenure of those in this program should reflect this commitment to students and the classroom.