



Bridging Reed and the world: enriching student experiences outside the classroom and providing paths to careers

The Ad Hoc Committee on Strategic Planning and Working Groups with Related Questions

Reed has established an ad hoc committee on strategic planning. This committee has been defining working groups and outlining the questions that they will address. The committee has suggested 11 working groups. Two relate to this topic:

Education Outside the Classroom

Should Reed do more to encourage students to be involved in activities off campus? What are the goals of such programs, and what are their results? How do they relate to the academic program? Specific questions include: Should Reed require or support more involvement in community service? Should Reed do more to facilitate study abroad? What more should Reed do to help students prepare for careers after graduation? What changes, if any, should Reed make to its relations to Portland and the world?

Summer and January Term

What role do the summer and winter breaks play in a Reed education? To what extent should we concern ourselves with providing opportunities for students in these periods, and what sort of opportunities should they be? What opportunities do we offer already and how do they relate to the academic program? Should we continue to have a long winter break, and if so, do we need to offer more possibilities to the students during January? Should we offer more opportunities during fall and spring break, whether externships, workshops, or field trips?

Your Task

We invite you to reflect on a related question:

How can Reed most effectively build bridges between its students and the world, enriching student experiences outside the classroom and providing paths to careers?

History and Current Status

Virtually all constituents celebrate Reed's singular dedication to the life of the mind. But many alumni—particularly those who have graduated in the last twenty years—have argued that the college needs to do a great deal more to prepare students for a challenging job market in and beyond academia; to help students earn acceptance to appropriate graduate programs; and to create stronger alumni networks to help students and alumni successfully forge professional identities.

Today's students face increasingly intense competition as they enter the job market and apply to graduate and professional schools. In a 2010 survey conducted by the Association of American Colleges and Universities, 73 percent of employers agreed that higher education would better serve students by emphasizing “the ability to apply knowledge and skills to real-world settings through internships and other hands-on experiences.”

Though Reed has commonly been thought of as a preparatory school for graduate education, the number of students who immediately continue their studies in graduate school is actually significantly smaller than the number of students who leave Reed seeking employment. So-called “first destination” data collected from the class of '12 show that 17 percent of that graduating class reported that they were headed for graduate school, while 67 percent were headed for the workplace. Of that group, 81 percent reported finding a position within 6 months of commencement. The constriction of tenured positions in higher education may be a factor influencing the choices of new graduates, though of course graduate education is a route to many different careers.

Strengths

Reed's long-term success in providing its students with a truly world-class education has prepared graduates well for many careers inside and outside of academia.

Reed's great strength has been its consistently strong record of sending graduates to PhD programs. From 2001 to 2010, Reed ranked fourth overall¹ on a list of the percentage of a college's graduates who go on to earn a PhD. This ranking has held remarkably steady since 1975.

The last decade has ushered in rapid shifts in the shape of the job market. In that time, the Reed faculty has also changed its profile, becoming significantly younger. Newer professors have come of age during a time when academic careers also require a broad range of entrepreneurial and promotional skills. Reed faculty members are eager to assist their students in understanding how practices taught in Reed classrooms—like questioning, creative problem-solving, and striving to excel—can position them for success in many fields and positions.

Reed is also well placed to realize the benefit of a groundswell of enthusiasm from alumni, parents, and friends to help students make their way into the wider world.

¹ Source: National Science Foundation and Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.
<http://www.reed.edu/ir/phdrank.html>

The college is building on these strengths in order to offer a suite of student experiences, ranging from volunteer positions with nonprofit organizations to paid internships to summer research opportunities. Reed aspires to create continually innovative solutions to better position its students to apply the depth of their classroom experience and their intellectual creativity to their post-Reed lives.

Current Programs

Reed has made a great deal of progress in the past decade in building a suite of on-campus programs that ask students to apply skills they have learned in the classroom to new settings, and through those experiences craft a pathway to life beyond Reed. Some of those opportunities include the following:

1) Summer Research

Thanks to a host of endowed funds and research grants, Reed faculty are able to offer many students positions as paid summer research assistants. Summer research students gain the opportunity to work directly with faculty who operate at the leading edge in their fields, gaining valuable experience in techniques and collaboration with fellow research assistants. Especially for students intending to apply to graduate school, or to pursue a career in medicine, a summer research assistant position is a valuable experience, one that pays immediate dividends. In many instances, students work on research projects that form a bridge to their senior thesis or lead to publication in professional journals. The Undergraduate Research Committee oversees distribution of many of these funds; others funds are administered by departments or individual professors. In recent years, contributed gifts from foundations and individuals have provided the bulk of the roughly \$50,000 needed each year to fund these programs.

During the 2012–13 academic year, approximately 25 students held research positions supported by faculty grants. For example, faculty members with grants from the MJ Murdock Charitable Trust (Vancouver, WA) provide full-time research positions for 2 students each summer. Faculty receiving grants from agencies like the National Science Foundation and the National Institutes of Health also have budgetary support for student summer researchers.

In addition, Reed is able to offer stipends for an additional 50 student researchers in both the sciences and the humanities each summer, funded through endowed funds created by friends of the college.

2) Volunteering in the Community

SEEDS (Students for Education, Empowerment, and Direct Service) brings together students, faculty, staff, and alumni who seek involvement with community organizations, matching individual and group interests with local, national, and international opportunities to serve others. SEEDS offers students opportunities to volunteer for nonprofit agencies in Portland.

During the 2012–13 academic year, 146 Reed students participated in direct service through the SEEDS program. Programs led by SEEDS student interns included Start Making A Reader Today (12 students), Hunger and Housing Advocacy (25 students), Environmental Service and

Education (46 students), and Eye-to-Eye (13 students), a program that provides learning disabled Reed students with a positive mentoring and teaching experience by matching them with students who qualify as learning disabled at a local elementary school. Many more Reed students participated in other single-event SEEDS activities, like blood drives.

SEEDS also worked with the office of institutional diversity to convene a *Faculty Conversation about Community Engagement and Scholarship*. Eleven Reed faculty members attended this event. The SEEDS coordinator then followed up with faculty to offer support in their efforts to include community-based learning in their classes.

Some colleges, like Carleton and Swarthmore, have actively sought ways to integrate issues of civic and social responsibility into the academic and co-curricular experiences of students. To date the Reed faculty has not been inclined to adopt such an approach, in keeping with the college's adherence to a more traditional academic structure.

3) *Science Outreach*

The science outreach program, which began in 1995, was long funded by grant support (Howard Hughes Medical Institute, James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation) but is now supported through institutional funds. Its objectives are to establish long-term partnerships with schools in communities with limited opportunities and resources in order to provide access to high-quality science lessons and materials that would otherwise be unavailable to students; engage students with interactive, inquiry-based science lessons to help develop an early interest in and understanding of the sciences; and provide Reed students with a positive service opportunity in the greater Portland community. Program funding provides Reed staff support in the form of a program coordinator, travel funds, and a classroom supplies budget.

During the 2012–13 academic year, 46 students worked as volunteers for the science outreach program, with 38 of those students teaching for the full academic year. Each student worked to formulate the curriculum and teach a number of lessons to elementary school students. Reed students also worked with teachers to ensure that the lessons continued to benefit the elementary students throughout the year, long after the volunteers had departed. Many alumni of the science outreach program have gone on to successful careers in teaching, and most of these students point to the outreach program as a formative experience in their lives.

4) *The Center for Life Beyond Reed/Internships & Externships*

To complement its historical strength in having its students accepted to graduate school, Reed has provided its office of career services, recently renamed the Center for Life Beyond Reed, with increased resources. With time-limited donor support and matching funds from the college, last year Reed created a new position in the Life Beyond Reed office to support a range of programs helping students enter the job market and to continue to build the network of alumni and parents who want to help.

Increased staffing in the center has been key to increasing our partnership with the volunteers who have provided innovative leadership for programming such as Working Weekend, the Life Beyond Reed Committee of the alumni board, and the Reed Switchboard, each of which continues to help the college conceptualize how partnerships with the wider Reed community

can expand the options available to students. For instance, for the past two years Reed has sponsored—and alumni have supported and organized—a three-day event called Working Weekend. At this on-campus event, alumni provide current students with career advice, networking opportunities, and panels and workshops on a variety of topics of particular interest to students about to enter the job market. One highlight of Working Weekend is the StartUp Lab, an event that matches entrepreneurial alumni with students anxious to shepherd a groundbreaking idea from concept to reality.

Last year, the center provided direct support to 45 percent of the student body in the forms of direct programming and individualized counseling meetings; maintained a job board through which 40 percent of 2012 graduates who identified employment as their first destination found work; and worked with over 2,300 Reed Career Network volunteers to assist students in their personal and career development, including the exploration of a variety of career fields and suitable internship and job opportunities.

One important focus of the center is to develop and identify fruitful internship opportunities, both paid and unpaid; provide students with the skills necessary to take ownership of their personal and career development to compete for these positions; and tap into Reed's network of alumni, parents, and friends to expand offerings. For many Reed students, an internship provides an ideal opportunity to expand their horizons beyond the classroom, apply what they have learned at Reed outside the campus borders, and investigate future career paths and opportunities. During the summer of 2013, 20 students received a Reed-funded internship. Many more secured an internship or other meaningful summer experience, either through opportunities captured and promoted by the Center for Life Beyond Reed or independently, in a wide range of career fields. The following is a sampling of such experiences: a technical theatre internship at the Wolftrap Foundation for the Arts outside of Washington, DC; a curatorial internship with the Museum of Modern Art in New York City; a position in the office of Senator Brian Schatz (Hawaii); a medical informatics internship at the Oregon Health & Sciences University; a summer analyst position at Bloomberg Government; and a summer undergraduate research internship at the National Institute of Standards and Technology.

The Center for Life Beyond Reed is also creating an externship program. Externships—brief experiential learning opportunities—are designed to help current Reed students plan for their transition from college to career by learning new skills in short-term opportunities during the semester break. These externships, ranging from two days to two weeks, provide students with a range of practical and applied experiences to augment the academic program. During winter break of 2013, 24 students engaged in externships developed by the Center for Life Beyond Reed through its alumni and parent partnerships.

5) *Student Creative Endeavors*

The college has a long tradition of supporting students' engagement with creative work, including research projects (independent and with faculty), and exploratory student-designed programs that address societal problems (such as the long-standing McGill Lawrence program). Most recently, a donor has stepped forward to create a five-year pilot program of Presidential

Fellowships². This competitive program is intended to encourage current first-year students, sophomores, and juniors to develop a creative and innovative experience that can be carried out over the course of a summer that will lead to individual growth and transformation. Applicants are encouraged to consider the high value the college places on critical inquiry, freedom of expression, and exploration of identity, and to look for opportunities to complement and enhance their rigorous academic experience.

Challenges

Despite enhanced staff support, funding, and volunteer energy, Reed lacks sufficient resources to provide meaningful extracurricular opportunities to each student. These are some of the barriers to reaching our aspirations:

1) Limited Resources

As in most administrative areas at Reed, the Center for Life Beyond Reed is smaller than similar functions at most peer colleges, limiting our ability to promote opportunities and assist students. The staff is stretched to respond creatively to shifts in the job market and attitudinal trends of new student populations, which requires constant innovation in all aspects of this work, including technological systems.

The center is pressed to find adequate staffing for vetting internship opportunities to ensure their quality and help avoid exploitive, frustrating, or unproductive experiences. Screening is particularly important with regard to unpaid internships³, though they remain an important avenue for some to find entry into the career of their choice.

2) Cultural Factors

The college's culture can pull students away from exploring opportunities off campus because Reed so successfully focuses students on intellectual growth and full engagement with classroom learning. Unlike some peer schools, Reed does not require community service or reward academic credit for such work.

As in most matters, students are allowed autonomy in pursuing extracurricular interests. Many have chosen Reed because they seek a full intellectual immersion and may not be interested in contemplating career paths. And, those who access student services the most are often those already well positioned for success. Capturing the attention of those who will benefit the most is a continual challenge.

3) Designated Funding

Each summer, academic departments find that the number of students seeking a research position exceeds the available supply. Due to the grant marketplace, grant funding for student researchers is primarily available to faculty in the sciences, while grants for humanities faculty are limited. Students in the humanities therefore have far fewer opportunities for research experiences.

² <http://www.reed.edu/the-center-for-life-beyond-reed/students/fellowship.html>

³ <http://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2013/06/the-court-ruling-that-could-end-unpaid-internships-for-good/276795/>

The college also lacks funding to provide stipends for students with unpaid internships, putting them out of reach for students on financial aid who have to take summer jobs that do little to further their long-term career goals, but do provide a paycheck. About half of Reed students receive financial aid and many Reed students are expected to earn money over the summer to support their academic expenses.

4) *Building a Network*

While Reed has made important progress in connecting alumni to each other, to the college, and to students, a great deal of work remains. Historically, Reed offered fewer avenues of engagement for alumni than our peers, although that has changed noticeably in the past decade. The majority of alumni who have pursued careers outside of academia are often most prone to feel disassociated from the college.

Giving Opportunities

Reed seeks support to provide students with funded summer research opportunities, and with paid internships with nonprofit organizations.

1) *Summer Research Funds*

Endowed funds providing students with research opportunities will improve the educational experience for all students, as success in the research endeavor is quickly transferred to the classroom. Creating an endowed fund to support student research requires a minimum gift of \$100,000.

2) *Stipends for Unpaid Internships*

Reed aims to underwrite student experiences in unpaid internships at nonprofits. Though the needs of each student with an internship vary, Reed estimates that the minimum level of support needed to provide a paid internship over the summer is \$5,000.

Reed is seeking at least \$300,000 in funding, which would translate into \$75,000 per year in underwriting for four years, a funding stream that would allow the program to expand and mature.

3) *Staffing Support*

Creating long-term funding for one to two additional staffing positions through an endowed fund remains an important goal.

Questions for Further Thought

- 1) How can Reed help students better use existing opportunities (summer research, SEEDS, Science Outreach, internships and externships) to productively transition to their post-Reed lives?
- 2) How can Reed most effectively tap into its vast network of supporters (alumni, friends, parents) to provide students with additional opportunities and networking support? What funding opportunities seem most promising?
- 3) In what ways do you see the work of preparing students for a career and Reed's historical focus on a liberal arts curriculum in tension or competition? How can the Reed community best help students understand how their zest for learning might find expression in a variety of choices after graduation?
- 4) How could we better assess our services and areas of need of the current student body? What new, creative techniques might help us engage and motivate students who would benefit the most from help in preparing for their life after Reed?
- 5) Given constant shifts in the job market and attitudinal trends in new student populations, how can we best remain constantly innovative in our methods and tools?