



S. Austin Doherty



Lucy Cromwell



Allen Wutzdorff

Results of new curriculum draw praise from faculty, graduating students

Excitement, student's confidence in themselves as learners and prepared professionals are outcomes of work begun in 1972 as faculty began developing a new curriculum.

In 1972 the Alverno faculty identified eight competences (communications, analysis, problem solving, valuing, social interaction and understanding of the environment, contemporary world and the arts and humanities) and gave direction to a four-member task force to shape the development of these competences within a curriculum.

This design, instituted as a more effective and meaningful way to educate students, has become a crucial part of the heart of liberal arts education at Alverno.

As the freshman class in 1972 moved into their successive years of education, the curriculum was developed, keeping pace with them. Now in May of 1977 the first full graduating class of students who have completed their education through the new learning process is ready to enter the professional world.

Personal feelings and observations from faculty and students about Alverno's learning process and how it has benefited them follow.

S. AUSTIN DOHERTY

"The single most important thing I have seen happen with students through the learning process is that they have become conscious of themselves as learners rather than focusing on the persons who teach," said Assistant Dean for Curriculum S. Austin Doherty.

"This is a significant change," S. Doherty continued. "Although learning is active, most students don't think about themselves as being active but rather they view themselves as receivers of information given by teachers. Students tell me they have experienced being able to do things they never thought they were able to do," she added.

S. Doherty observed that because students are aware of themselves as thinkers there is a greater likelihood that they will continue to learn after leaving Alverno.

She indicated that faculty have also experienced a professional growth through the implementation of the learning process. "Faculty are developing styles of teaching that allow them to reach many more types of learners."

"There is increased variety in learning situations and greater development of interdisciplinary work," S. Doherty stated.

A certain exhilaration marked the introduction of the learning process according to S. Doherty, but at the same time since change is difficult the period of transition provided a challenge to faculty and students

"People were torn between the desire to change and the desire to maintain a curriculum that had served Alverno students very well in the past. The faculty's willingness to change — to develop something which they considered more effective for students kept us going."

"Although students were ambivalent about being pioneers," she stated, "they helped us succeed by their cooperation with the program."

"Alverno students endured and experienced success with the change under direction," she added. "It may be one of the best things that ever happened to students because they will undergo change many times in the future. When one endures this type of institutional change and knows what has to go into it, one comes out better prepared to deal effectively with other changes."

LUCY CROMWELL

"Students in this class have matured far beyond the level found in most senior classes," according to Lucy Cromwell, English Coordinator and Analysis Competence Division Chairperson. "Many are at the level most people reach after they are at work or out of graduate school," she continued.

"By taking the initiative in learning, knowing what they want to learn from the beginning of their freshman year through their senior year, this class of students are women ready to begin a professional career," Cromwell added.

"I have felt the excitement of our students who are prepared to look for a job, land one and do well in it."

Saying that Alverno has always prepared students well academically, Cromwell stated that the student who has come through the learning process is much more aware of her abilities.

"If this sounds simplistic," she explained, "it's important to realize that many students go through college without asking the questions and making the relationships our students must. The self development that our students gain through the competences is another distinct advantage at Alverno."

"I see each class becoming more quickly accustomed to the pace of the learning program and the need to take responsibility for one's own learning."

ALLEN WUTZDORFF

For Psychology Instructor Allen Wutzdorff, first impressions of Alverno included being excited by the organization of Alverno's learning process, its printed materials outlining competences and their levels.

It also impressed him that a college would undertake something so comprehensive as a change in its learning process.

Wutzdorff came to Alverno in 1974 as the College entered the second year of its new learning process. He stated that the program was not too hard to get into, he liked it, and progressed from there. "I really knew I was in an exciting place," Wutzdorff commented.

At Alverno, he found he had to draw upon more things than his psychology background to operate efficiently. "I had to use my skills in problem solving, analysis and social interaction to create learning experiences for my students," he said.

Commenting on student attitudes in 1974 and 1977, Wutzdorff saw students who were impatient and not too enthused, do a dramatic turnaround in 1977.

"Last spring I started hearing students say they were enthusiastic about what they are learning here — particularly when they went to their off-campus experiential learning assignments," he said. "Their off-campus supervisors say they feel Alverno students are so much better prepared. This makes the students feel good and makes me feel fantastic," he chuckled.

"Alverno students seem to have much more of a concrete idea of what they are going to do," Wutzdorff explained. "They are more responsible, more independent, much better able to sell themselves because they have done some of that here and they are more aware of the variety of things they can do as professionals."

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