

MORE than

A quilter starts out with simple colors and shapes. Guided by centuries of tradition and her own creative sensibilities, she pieces together the colors and shapes, creating patterns and palettes and textures barely suggested in the original materials. The quilter's skill and care, the fineness of the stitches and the thoughtful juxtaposition of elements lend depth and richness. The layering of fabrics, filling and backing makes of the construction something that is not only beautiful, but useful, warming the body

and comforting the spirit.

Liberal education is a similarly complex and multidimensional process. Over the past 25 years, the faculty at Alverno College — a liberal arts college — have constructed and practiced and refined a unique way of educating women.

It begins with elements common to most liberal arts colleges. Regardless of major, every student is required to take a series of courses — arts and humanities, mathematics, natural and behavioral sciences — which help her to develop the background and

knowledge, the vocabulary and frameworks that enable her to engage in the great human dialogue. Advanced courses explore the breadth and depth of various disciplines.

It is how Alverno faculty have focused directly on student learning that makes an Alverno education distinctive. Rather than simply "exposing" students to concepts and ideas, Alverno immerses a student in learning experiences that require her to act on the concepts and ideas she is learning.

For example, in a history course, a student takes responsibility for her interpretation of an historical event by explaining and defending it publicly to her peers and instructor. In psychology, a student develops a project to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of different theories and methods and to apply complex psychological frameworks related to human behavior.

Learning experiences are carefully designed to help each student develop independence through mastery of eight abilities that faculty have agreed are necessary to living as a contributing member of society: communication, valuing in decision making, analysis, problem solving, social interaction, global perspectives, aesthetic responsiveness and effective citizenship.

Rather than simply counting hours spent in a classroom, an



“When I first started at Alverno College, I think I was the shyest person in the classroom. I never spoke and wouldn't participate in group work. Now, I have become a leader in most of my group discussions; I am not afraid to share my personal perspective. Because of the education I received at Alverno, I am a well-rounded individual ...and a marketable individual.”

Marie Lisa Cruz '96
Milwaukee, Wisconsin
Major: Business & Management
Branch Manager, Mitchell Bank



the Sum of its parts...

Alverno student works her way through the curriculum by demonstrating her mastery of these abilities at increasingly complex levels. Faculty have defined six levels that are appropriate to each of the eight abilities. Generally, the levels follow this pattern:

- The beginning student (levels 1 and 2) identifies and articulates the ability in herself and observes and analyzes it from various disciplinary perspectives;
- The intermediate student (levels 3 and 4) begins to use frameworks from the disciplines to explore the ability in various situations (at work, at home, in volunteer activities, and so on), and makes connections between those situations.
- The advanced student (levels 5 and 6) uses the abilities

"Alverno has helped me increase my self-confidence and self-esteem by challenging all my abilities. Through successful completion of courses, I was able to expand my horizons, experiences and perspectives. The eight abilities developed by Alverno helped me to see the common threads of study in any class, and then to apply these to everyday life in my career."

Lynn Robers '96
Burlington, Wisconsin
Major: Nursing
Employee Health Nurse
Burlington Clinic



in a professional context, collaborating with others, choosing appropriate frameworks and demonstrating leadership.

Pen-and-pencil tests do not adequately allow a student to demonstrate her developing abili-

ties. So Alverno faculty have created performance assessments for each course. The student gives a presentation, completes a project, or takes part in an activity which requires her to integrate the abilities she has developed into a demonstration of her grasp of the course content.

In this way, with the cooperation of her fellow students and the guidance and feedback of her instructors, the student develops the habits of reflection, judgment and appropriate action that most observers agree are hallmarks of a liberally educated person. By the time she graduates, an Alverno student has successfully integrated her learning into the quilt of her life, a life of continued learning and meaningful contribution to her workplace and to her various communities.

"For many people, teaching is telling. We've moved away from that 'dissemination of information' model to really developing the learner, and it's a much more interactive and personal type of approach."

Mary Diez, SSSF, '67
Professor and
Dean of Education
Alverno College

