

South Mountain College

Overview

South Mountain College is a community of students and faculty dedicated to the exploration of ideas and issues in a fluid, interactive environment. Drawing from the curricular resources and intellectual capital of the University, students in South Mountain College will be challenged to assume responsibility for their educations and to make connections across the disciplinary barriers that inevitably plague most colleges. South Mountain College will consist of a physical place (a dedicated residence), a curriculum (a unique set of programs and activities), and an implicit intellectual space (organized as an educational “flat space” rather than a hierarchical, compartmentalized academic structure). Its guiding philosophy is devoted to encouraging dynamic exploration of ideas, combined with a pragmatic emphasis on the relevance of these ideas to human life, problems and practices.

Rationale

We seek to provide students with a fulfilling intellectual experience that also supplies a template for life-long learning. We want to give students the self-confidence to realize they can solve problems, unravel knots, and trust their creative instincts. South Mountain College graduates will be known for their flexible, creative thinking, as well as for their discipline of mind. They will develop an ability to work effectively with others, but also to think “outside the box” and shape the opinion of others in interesting and productive ways. South Mountain College will provide the kind of environment not only to educate such students but also to attract them to Lehigh in the first place. We envision the College serving as a powerful new resource that can be brought to bear on the increasingly challenging task of student recruitment. As we move aggressively to enhance campus diversity of all kinds, South Mountain College provides a means of attracting students seeking a more creative and less traditional structured curriculum. Intellectual diversity is absolutely vital to the health of a great university, but it is not the inevitable result of success achieved in attaining certain levels of racial, cultural or socio-economic diversity. Admissions policies for South Mountain College will make creativity and intellectual diversity its primary goals.

Many faculty—and increasingly many students as well—seek alternatives to the careerist, “work hard, play hard” ethos found on Lehigh’s campus. South Mountain College will be a laboratory for the development and dissemination of a new kind of ethos, a lively community of *inquiry* sustained by a cultivated habit of engaged discourse with the same strong sense of community that is a historical Lehigh trademark. South Mountain College is conceived as a model for the sort of inquiry that can occur throughout the university, as a rich seedbed of ideas that might in some cases be transported and developed elsewhere, rather than as an oasis isolated from the rest of campus life. Its walls will be low enough, permeable enough, to allow inquiry and dialogue to spill over and across the campus, its intellectual menu rich and

enticing enough to keep drawing people in.

Admissions

Admission to South Mountain College will be competitive and is only available to students admitted to Lehigh through the regular university admissions process. We will look for non-traditional students who want and can handle the program. These people merit a sense of place and identity at Lehigh. South Mountain College is *not* conceived as another honors program, like the Eckardt or IBE programs. University admission standards are already selective. Lehigh already only admits very academically accomplished students. Interest in South Mountain's program and goals, intellectual maturity, creativity, and high levels of motivation, rather than SATs or class rank will be the primary admissions criteria. While South Mountain College will have a distinct identity, its students should participate comfortably in the social and intellectual life of the larger university and surrounding community. Students will apply to the South Mountain College, in the form of an essay or creative work that makes the case for why they want to participate. An interview, with South Mountain College faculty and students will also be required. Students already enrolled at Lehigh can apply to the program and be admitted but a primary objective is to use South Mountain College as a means to attract certain kinds of students to Lehigh (either as first year students or as transfers) who might otherwise not have considered it as an option.

Faculty Participants (South Mountain Professors) and Advisory Board

Lehigh faculty will apply for membership in South Mountain College as well, to be chosen based on their interest in and suitability for this sort of pedagogical experiment. Faculty will serve for designated periods of time and be appointed as South Mountain Professors. Given the special character of South Mountain College as a residential community, it would be ideal if 2-3 faculty could live with the students in the College. Alternatively, or in addition we could offer interested graduate students and postdoctoral scholars housing in exchange for engagement in activities and the life of the College. In any event, it will be important for all faculty involved in South Mountain College to agree to some level of "off-hours" participation in the College's life/activities. South Mountain College will also need an advisory board ideally composed of faculty, alumni, and student life staff, to provide advice to the Faculty Master and individual South Mountain College faculty.

The Program

For students who are full members of the college, distribution requirements will be waived. Approximately one-third of a South Mountain College student's credit hours and academic activity will be devoted to fulfilling the requirements for a major (B.A. or B.S.) in an existing Lehigh department or program; one-third will be devoted to South Mountain College seminars, courses, activities and projects; and the remaining third will be utilized for free electives. Students joining the program later in their academic careers would maintain a similar proportion of courses in their remaining semesters, in consultation with an advisor. There will also be a fundamental writing requirement for

members of the college, as well as a residency requirement. South Mountain College students will be expected typically to live within the physical space occupied by the college, although there might be exceptions during any given semester—and for a variety of reasons—to this rule. The initial implementation phase will involve academic year programs and activities, but over time we envision unique intersession and summer experiences to enhance and build on South Mountain's goals and educational philosophy.

Each semester students will take a minimum of 4 South Mountain College credits per semester in order to maintain continuity with the College's intellectual life. Embedded in these credit requirements are an ongoing two-credit core seminar and a minimum of two-credits in a theme based project. A critical component of these seminars is the vertical integration of students, freshman through seniors, into peer groups and collaborative learning teams. A South Mountain student will graduate with a minimum of 32 South Mountain College credits. The maximum South Mountain College credits possible would be 64 (two-credit reading course, plus six theme credits every semester).

Ongoing core seminar. South Mountain College faculty will lead a set of ongoing seminars that count for two credits per semester. Meeting twice a week, each seminar will be organized around the discussion of books, articles, films, artworks etc. selected by the students in consultation with their faculty mentor. The general intent is to read or examine significant works and debate important ideas that can serve to provide the basis for a broad liberal education, but the details of what is chosen will vary from group to group, and the process of selection should itself be a part of the ongoing discussion. Students will also be involved in the conversation about how their work in the seminar will be assessed, although the assumption is that extensive critical assessment and feedback (in both oral and written forms) will be emphasized at South Mountain College rather than traditional grades.

Theme-based projects. Every fall, starting with a conference or retreat held in August, members of South Mountain College will select one or two themes that all members of the College will participate in. Students can choose to pursue independent projects under the umbrella of the theme, but many of these themes will serve to identify issues or problems that will require cooperative effort to address or to solve. Students will decide on their goals and then on a strategy for achieving them: parsing out specific tasks according to interest or ability for the purpose of efficiency, or working in parallel in a way that might be perceived as "inefficient" but could provoke stimulating conversation and exchange of ideas. One important goal of the projects will be to develop in students the skills that are essential to genuine collaboration and conversation, along with the awareness that collaboration/conversation can take many different and sometimes highly idiosyncratic forms. The ongoing reading seminars will promote the continuous growth and development of ideas; the theme-based projects will explore grand

challenges and facilitate the process of continuously transforming theory into practice. Examples of theme based projects include: Transitioning from a Hydrocarbon Economy, The Potato and Coca-Cola: Case Studies in Globalization, Rebuilding New Orleans^{*see addendum}. Nominally, students will roster two credits of a South Mountain College theme based seminar per semester, but in consultation with their adviser, they can roster between 1 and 6 credits.

Activities. As part of the intellectual and cultural life at the South Mountain College residence, a complete spectrum of lectures, debates, concerts, films and events of various kinds will be scheduled in an ongoing fashion. Between semesters and on weekends this might include trips, short-courses and special seminars. These events will be open to the entire Lehigh community.

Visitors. Distinguished visitors will be invited on a regular basis to South Mountain College, for formal lectures, performances and presentations, as well as to spend time in informal interaction with students. If possible, a scholar/artist-in-residence program could help to sustain these interactions over extended periods of time.

Alumni Engagement. Lehigh alumni and future alumni of South Mountain College provide a rich source for engagement as project advisors and student mentors.

Affiliates. Students can also choose to experiment with South Mountain College as affiliates rather than becoming full members. They will be permitted to join informal South Mountain ventures and activities and can register for South Mountain College seminars by permission of the instructor. Credits acquired will apply toward free electives. If these students should subsequently apply for full South Mountain College status, these credits would be applied toward college requirements.

Impact

South Mountain College reflects Lehigh's core mission and values: challenging great minds, inspiring great imaginations, integrating education and inquiry, developing personal responsibility, and celebrating diversity. South Mountain College emphasizes process in addition to content as fundament to learning. South Mountain College's innovative approach to education will help establish Lehigh's reputation as a creative campus. The integration of learning and living, working collaboratively, and pursuing questions and answers unfettered by disciplinary boundaries models the real world. Adopting this educational philosophy from day-one and continuing it as part of a four-year Lehigh experience will prepare our students to make a difference in the world as they lead their lives after graduation. While South Mountain College is designed with a cohort in mind, its reach and impact will extend far beyond that cohort. South Mountain College seminars and courses, will be open to Lehigh students outside the college through the affiliates program; events and activities are open to the entire Lehigh community. Lehigh alumni will serve as mentors forging new relationships and

adding a new dimension to alumni interactions with students. South Mountain Professors will move in and out of South Mountain College creating a two-way transfer of innovation and creativity between the college and the university. A new ethos of inquiry and engaged discourse will spread its tendrils throughout the Lehigh community influencing the culture and climate on campus.

Implementation

We propose a phased implementation plan based on admitting our first students in fall 2007. An initial class of approximately 25-30 students will be drawn from current Lehigh students and new admissions to Lehigh. Our entering class will be composed of 6-8 students from each class, first-year (new admissions) through fourth-year students. Subsequent recruitment each year will include a higher percentage of first year students (new admissions). By the time South Mountain College is fully implemented (AY 2010-2011) we anticipate recruiting 25-30 students from each incoming class.

We need to identify a physical space, a residence or part of a dorm, that can hold up to 100-120 students by the time South Mountain College reaches full implementation. Initially, we will need space for ~25-30 people to live together. Ideally this space would include both living and learning spaces, facilities for cooking and dining, formal and informal gathering spaces, and studio space. Identifying a house on South Mountain has obvious attractions, where South Mountain College would be a unique presence, rapidly serving to diversify campus life on the hill. A building down the hill in South Bethlehem could also have advantages, facilitating experiential learning activities that would help to integrate students with the local community, while supplying in the community a living laboratory for student inquiry. An ideal state of affairs might include "South Mountain College North" and "South Mountain College South" with two residences, one in each of these locations. Cost here will be determined largely by the options/opportunities that are presented or pursued.

A Faculty Master will oversee South Mountain College: students, faculty, curriculum, events, activities, etc. Administrative support will be required to handle student records, scheduling of events, tracking of budgets, communication, and organization of the (annual) August retreat. The Faculty Master will coordinate ongoing assessment of the program, scheduling of themes and core seminars, fund-raising, recruiting, admissions, and assessment.

We will need faculty to conduct the core seminars, which ideally will be limited to about 10-15 students each. Ideally these faculty will handle an entire year in order to provide continuity but some flexibility is possible. When the College is at full membership, it will require approximately 8-10 faculty teaching two-credit core seminars each semester. Each theme-based project could require 1-2 faculty serving as mentors, advisors, and assessors. The details will depend on the nature of each theme. Involvement with a theme-based project will be equivalent to teaching one course per semester, at least. Consequently, we need approximately 8-10 FTE to staff a 100-120

student South Mountain College, but this effort would need to be distributed over some 15 or more people. Clearly, this number would scale to smaller numbers during the start-up phase. The core faculty would receive term appointments (variable terms of 1-3 years) as South Mountain Professors.

In practice the expertise of faculty will likely serve as a constraint on what themes are chosen, and even what books are read in the core seminars. To be successful, exciting, and flexible South Mountain College will require a pool of willing and able faculty who can be called upon for advice, guidance, and expertise. This will require a second, larger group of faculty, "friends of South Mountain," who agree to be on call if they are needed, either for some theme-based advice, or to help with a reading chosen by one of the core seminars.

The goal is to have South Mountain College up and running in the fall of 2007. We propose to recruit a core group of faculty and students already enrolled at Lehigh to be involved during the 2006-07 academic year in intensive planning. They would work with admissions to recruit/select a small group of students from the class of 2011 who would then join them in August. So the first group of approximately 25 students in South Mountain College would include a disproportionate number of those already at Lehigh. Building the group to 100-120 over the next several years will require extensive work with admissions, with less emphasis on recruiting internally.

Implementation Plan

AY 2006-2007 Planning and Development

- Fall 2006
 1. Course and Curriculum Approval (CAS Policy Committee, CAS Faculty, University Educational Policy)
 2. Project Dissemination: faculty, current Lehigh students, Admissions
 3. Communication and Marketing: develop promotional and recruitment material
 4. Identify Faculty Master
 5. Fund raising
- Spring 2007
 1. Faculty Development Seminar (10-12 faculty)
 2. Recruit First Class 25-30 students
 3. Recruit South Mountain Professors (4)
 4. 1-credit planning seminar – students, faculty, student life staff
 5. Identify Living Space
 6. Appoint Faculty Master
 7. Hire Administrative Support Staff
 8. Development Assessment Tools
 9. Fund Raising

AY 2007-2008 Inaugural Year

- August Retreat
- Offer Core Seminar(s) - 2
- Offer Theme-Based Project(s) - 2
- Recruit Second Class
- Faculty Development Seminar
- Recruit additional South Mountain Professors and Friends of South Mountain
- Host events, lectures, films etc.
- Fund Raising

AY 2008-2009

- August Retreat
- Offer Core Seminar(s) - 4
- Offer Theme-Based Project(s) – 4
- Recruit Third Class
- Faculty Development Seminar
- Recruit additional South Mountain Professors and Friends of South Mountain
- Host events, lectures, films etc.
- Fund Raising

AY 2009-2010

- August Retreat
- Develop Intersession and summer programs
- Offer Core Seminar(s) - 6
- Offer Theme-Based Project(s) – 6
- Recruit Fourth Class
- Faculty Development Seminar
- Recruit additional South Mountain Professors and Friends of South Mountain
- Host events, lectures, films etc.
- Fund Raising

AY 2010-2011 Full Implementation, First Graduating Class

- August Retreat
- Intersession and summer programs begin
- Offer Core Seminar(s) - 8
- Offer Theme-Based Project(s) – 8
- Ongoing Recruitment
- Host events, lectures, films etc.
- Ongoing communications and marketing

Addendum: Representative Examples of Possible Theme-based Projects

Transitioning from a Hydrocarbon Economy. The growth of civilization and societies has gone hand in hand with the development of efficient, abundant energy systems. Abundant sources of clean energy are essential to sustain our health, quality of life, and national security. Regardless of whether we've reached 'peak oil', there are numerous reasons to move from dependence on fossil fuels, particularly oil and coal, as our major source of energy including: the hidden costs in real dollars, accessibility of supplies, and the long-term impact of rapid growth in CO₂ admissions. Today approximately 60% of the energy entering the system is lost in production, transmission, or as waste resulting in discarded rather than useable energy. An irrational fear of nuclear power and technical challenges related to energy storage and transmission remain major obstacles in using alternative energy to power our economy. Innovation in technology, business models, and policy design can pave the way for the next generation of energy products and services.

The Potato and Coca-Cola: Case Studies in Globalization. World travelers, especially those who journey to more remote locations know about the Coca-Cola line. Coca-Cola, a distinctly American icon, is almost ubiquitous around the globe; you can order a Coke (with or without ice) almost anywhere in the world including small towns and villages in countries with still developing economies where basic amenities like water running through a faucet into a sink have yet to come. But as you continue on to even more secluded reaches you cross an invisible but real line beyond which Coca-Cola is suddenly unavailable. There is no potato line. Originating in the high mountains of South America, potatoes spread rapidly around the globe reaching the most isolated valleys and villages in the high Himalaya at a time when the main mode of transportation was the foot. Food, essential to survival, a key element of cultural identity, a status symbol, a driver of the global economy, provides an excellent entrée to explore the evolution of cultures, society, trade, and business.

Rebuilding New Orleans. The opening paragraphs of a *National Geographic* article was eerily prophetic in its description of the impact of a direct hit of a hurricane on New Orleans almost a year before Katrina slammed into the gulf coast. The scale of potential flooding from such an event was well known for over 30 years, an amazing gamble; the actual devastation compounded by faulty levees, the tragedy magnified by poverty, racism, and poor planning. As a nation we have at hand tremendous knowledge and resources and a remarkable opportunity to shape a city with deliberate intentions. Given the possibilities what form could the city take? Applying lessons from history, geology, sociology, psychology, music, art, architecture, engineering, political science, urban planning, business, and economics we can explore multiple scenarios for rebuilding New Orleans balancing ethics and aesthetics with practical realities.