Making the unconscious conscious (Jung)

The committee started this process by discussing the value of and need for reflection for our students. Our sense is that many of our students arrive on campus without having put much conscious thought into why they are embarking on this experience. Our ideal situation would be for our students to be asked to begin considering why they are here, what they value and what their aims are for themselves in this place. We would like this questioning to begin as they arrive on campus, if not before. We also consider it critical that our students are asked and expected to reflect – often returning to the same questions repeatedly – both formally and informally in their time as a St. Olaf student.

St. Olaf currently does a nice job of providing opportunities for students to be reflective about their education, personal growth, awareness of the larger communities near and more globally, and to thoughtfully consider and identify their own talents and how those talents might be useful outside of St. Olaf.

What we already know and practice:
IR&E has provided a summary of findings regarding what we already know about our students and their reflection on vocation (summary, details and list of sources for evidence attached). Briefly,

- St. Olaf as a whole fosters reflection on vocation for a majority of students;
- Academic courses, and in particular Lilly-supported courses that give attention to vocation, often foster reflection on vocation;
- Co-curricular experiences, and experiences that bridge academic and co-curricular life, are also important in many students’ sense of preparation for a life of worth and service;
- Reflection on vocation is nurtured in relationships, often informal rather than formal;
- Reflection on vocation both draws on and fosters integrative thinking

Subcommittee members also went out and gathered information from around the St. Olaf campus regarding existing activities and programs that encourage and support student reflection within their St. Olaf experience. Our finding is that our students are formally asked to reflect in classroom situations as well as in their work towards completion of their majors (i.e., Dance majors have formal annual reflection with a
faculty member; Social Work students have a capstone project to name just two). Students are also offered many opportunities to reflect formally and informally – through participation in student organizations, CEL programs and in conversation with faculty and staff.

Finally, if reflection is to be thoroughly woven into the fabric of what we do as students, faculty and staff of this place, efforts to encourage a more conscious and deliberate experience will work best if they are practical. More than not, we recommend doing what we already do….with a more formal acknowledgement of the value of and need for reflection. This being said, we provide the following list of possibilities, some involving creating new initiatives and others tuning existing courses, programs and services:

1. Ask existing academic and co-curricular programs what they do and/or could do to deliberately incorporate and encourage reflection in their work with and for our students.
2. Consider providing a common speaker during Week One: ask a faculty member to address “What Liberal Arts Means to me.” Follow the talk with discussions in halls (or first class). Have faculty and staff pairs facilitate discussions. And/Or Consider a common reading regarding the purpose of a liberal arts education – then faculty and staff pairs invited to halls for conversation….a coming together to hear someone with reflection. Why are we here? What’s the whole point of a liberal arts education?
3. Incorporate an assignment into the current First Year Writing requirement – assignment asking students to answer first big questions (i.e., who am I, why am I hear, what do I value, what are my aims in this place).
4. Institute “Quo Vadis” – retreat designed for sophomore students, the point of which is reflection and consideration of what will come next
5. Sophomore Interim seminar proposed by Mentoring subcommittee. This course proposal includes considerable opportunity for reflection and general consideration of purpose. We would be supportive of this effort.
6. We recommend that the college consider utilizing current EIN academic requirement as opportunity for more formal consideration of big questions/reflection as students consider and arrive at the end of their time at St. Olaf College. A suggestion: provide incentive for faculty to retool the requirement and their EIN course.
7. Incorporate a more formalized requirement that students maintain a journal of (daily guided) reflection in their time away. If not kept in journal form, perhaps as daily reflective discussion. Require a written reflection for consideration within first month of return to campus. In off campus programs consider including structured conversations/writing considering privilege (i.e., ‘we are privileged to be able to be here …push that to ‘and what now and why?’
8. Develop a web site center for information around Main Street – a center that does not necessarily have a physical manifestation, but connects relevant campus resources – electronic hub of information. Gustavus has something like this:  [http://gustavus.edu/vocation/](http://gustavus.edu/vocation/)
9. Create more formal faculty connection to residence halls and honor houses (models of residential colleges). We found several examples of academic/residential programs on various campuses for use as guidance.

We attach the results of our searching and exploring with clear acknowledge that what we provide does not represent and exhaustive search and listing of what currently exists on our own campus as well as outside of our campus. We all remain willing resources in further research and development of efforts to make reflection a more obvious thread in the St Olaf experience.