The beginning of higher education in America coincided with the Age of Enlightenment in Europe, and since then, the undergraduate higher education curriculum has continued to reflect the elements of this movement, most notably through courses in the classics, philosophy, history, and religion, among other disciplines. Building on a liberal arts core, Stevenson has sought to articulate academic programs that create effective educational outcomes. Recently, Stevenson’s faculty council has attempted to articulate how a renewed core curriculum might contribute to the overall education of the Stevenson student.

In an effort to integrate the **Career Architecture**™ career-planning process into the overall program, we have begun to look at the elements of an effective education as part of a broader mosaic. There are several elements that help students clarify values for life and for careers, including curriculum selection, which often includes arts and humanities, as well as a focus on theory, practice, and mentoring. This is something we have come to call "The Stevenson System."

**CAREER ARCHITECTURE**

An effective education should help students identify and define values for life. This is the primary benefit of the arts and humanities because it helps us formulate a philosophy related to self, to life, and to others. **Career Architecture** compliments this by helping students identify how personal values influence career selection. For example, it makes a difference in a profession whether or not a student values contribution or integrity versus achievement and independence. The articulation of these critical values must be explicitly addressed in the career counseling process.

Yet in the 21st century, the emphasis on core curriculum values alone will not be adequate for career guidance as has always been the case in professional education. Historically, and to some extent today, it was believed that if the major was properly identified and taught, the rest of a student’s life would be clear and secure. The selection of majors can range from philosophy, history, and religion to medical technology, accounting, and computer science. As long as the academic discipline is explicitly connected to life and career values, the education of the student will be dynamic and meaningful. In the past, we counted on the post-graduate experience to make these connections. At Stevenson University today, we believe that it can and should happen at the undergraduate level as well.

**THEORY, PRACTICE, AND MENTORING**

Any effective education can only be shaped by filtering the discipline through theory, practice, and mentoring. Significant developments in science and medicine and technology in the 20th century have shown that we need to go beyond theories alone. This is especially true in medicine, where surgeons can only be effectively trained by exposing them to theory in their coursework and practice in the operating room where they are mentored by an experienced surgeon. These educational practices also need to be present in the undergraduate curriculum.

At Stevenson, for example, we offer a unique degree brought to the University by Paul D. Lack, Ph.D., Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs: our public history degree. This major allows students to explore the important principles and values identified through a study of history in the liberal arts and then connect them to practice. Because of the Stevenson System, we attempt to add additional perspective by helping a student identify the fact that learning and social transformation are important career values. The study of history alone, although excellent for understanding life and personal values, does not really lend itself to action and social transformation. Although important content is addressed in the traditional major, practice and mentoring are equally vital. For this reason, we add various experiences in documentary production, museum work, archival practices, and other elements associated with a public perspective on history.

At Stevenson University, it is our belief that we need to bring together the best of what we have in the liberal arts with the knowledge we have gained from the professions during the past 100 years. By merging liberal arts with **Career Architecture** and using the powerful filter of theory, practice, and mentoring, we prepare Stevenson students to make meaningful contributions to their careers and, when necessary, completely reinvent themselves through their knowledge of their own deep-seated core values and their subsequent ability to act on them.

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**TOWARD CURRICULUM CLARITY AND CONNECTION IN HIGHER EDUCATION: THE STEVENSON UNIVERSITY SYSTEM**

By Kevin J. Manning, Ph.D.