

Southwestern University

July 1, 2013

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The Paideia Program At Southwestern University

Thanks to continued support from the Priddy Charitable Trust, Southwestern University has recently revamped its Paideia Program, centering it within the academic program and making it possible for all students to participate.

Paideia allows students to organize some of their courses around a central *theme* or question, which enables them to make connections across different classes and departments or programs; to do more interdisciplinary writing, creating, and thinking; and to collaborate with other students, faculty, and staff interested in the same theme. There are also opportunities to connect civic engagement projects and/or intercultural learning experiences to the theme as well as extracurricular activities (e.g., lectures, salons, reading groups, field trips) related to each theme.

Students entering Southwestern in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 are eligible to apply for a small rollout of the new program, and the program begins in full in 2014-2015.

How does Paideia work?

Students enrolled in the Paideia program will take *three interconnected cluster courses* followed by a *team-taught interdisciplinary Paideia Seminar*. All four of these courses will be related to a central theme or question.

Students choose at least three courses from within a theme to make their *Paideia Cluster*. Courses within the cluster come from all across the curriculum, encouraging students to explore the cluster theme from multiple disciplinary and interdisciplinary perspectives. Cluster courses can also count toward other general education requirements and/or toward one's major or minor.

The upper-level *Paideia Seminars* will be team-taught by two faculty members from different departments or programs (a philosopher and a political scientist, for example, or a biologist and a psychology professor). Paideia Seminars will be interdisciplinary spaces in which students and faculty will collaborate together in approaching the theme; students will also synthesize ideas from their cluster as a whole and reflect on the collective impact of the theme. The Paideia Seminars will typically be taken during students' junior year, although some may opt to take it during their senior year.

During the initial rollout of the program, all students who complete their cluster courses and seminar will be recognized as "Paideia Scholars" at graduation. Once the program opens to all students, students who maintain a high GPA and fulfill a range of Paideia-

related requirements (such as a substantial civic engagement project) will be granted “Paideia Distinction.”

What does “Paideia” mean?

Paideia (pie-DAY-uh) comes from *paidos*, a word the ancient Greeks used to describe an approach to education that was holistic and integrative. Southwestern’s Paideia Program is similarly designed to encourage students to become critical, engaged thinkers with broadened perspectives on the world around them.

How many students at Southwestern participate in the Paideia Program?

Beginning in the fall of 2014, all incoming students will participate in the program; it will be part of the structure of Southwestern’s general education program. Prior to that, a smaller number of students will be part of an initial rollout of the program. Incoming students will apply in the fall of 2013, and there will be spaces for about 100 more students (45 students were accepted during spring of 2013).

What is unique about the Paideia Program at Southwestern University?

There are some other colleges and universities that have grouped together clusters of courses around themes, but those clusters are not an integral part of every student’s experience. What’s unique about Southwestern’s program is that we are committed to providing this kind of connective experience to every student and to making it one of the organizing principles of our general education program.

We also are committed to maintaining a level of flexibility in the program. Themes, for example, will not live on indefinitely but must be re-proposed every 3-4 years; this short life-cycle makes room for faculty to propose new themes as their research and teaching interests develop, for new faculty to join existing themes and for existing themes to shift their disciplinary make-up, and for students to suggest new themes based on their experiences and interests.

Southwestern has begun offering substantial time and resources to faculty participating in the program, encouraging them to think deeply about how their own individual courses connect to their themes. This commitment is another unique aspect of the program: rather than simply grouping similar courses together under a theme, faculty are meeting regularly to share assignment ideas, discuss shared readings, brainstorm future events, and collaborate on the development of their thematic questions. As the program continues to develop, it will have an impact not only in the classroom/lab/studio, but also campus-wide as clusters sponsor speakers, workshops, field trips, and other events.

How does Paideia facilitate connections between coursework, extracurricular activities, and the larger community?

Civic engagement has always been an integral part of the Paideia Program, and it will now be more closely linked to students' academic work. Beginning in 2013-2014, Southwestern will fund fellowships for a few faculty each year to work intensively with each other and the Office of Civic Engagement to develop community-engaged learning projects. As more faculty build their capacity with this kind of engaged pedagogy, more cluster courses will be able to offer community-engaged learning opportunities related to the theme. Sarah Brackmann, director of the Office of Civic Engagement, works closely with cluster faculty to identify potential community partners related to their themes.

The Paideia Program provides a \$100,000 need-based fund to assist students in studying abroad; students can apply and be awarded scholarships for up to \$2,500. Priority is given to students who can connect their intercultural learning plans with their overall academic career, such as students majoring in departments or programs requiring study abroad or students linking their intercultural experiences with their cluster theme. The Office of Intercultural Learning, under the direction of Tisha Temple, provides pre- and post-travel sessions for students to reflect on their intercultural experiences. The Office also works with Paideia clusters to identify study abroad opportunities that fit well with cluster themes.

Each cluster has a budget for planning events related to its theme, allowing students diverse opportunities to link their cluster courses and seminar to outside speakers, cultural events, field trips, and other programming.

What is the rationale for the program? What does it allow students to do?

Southwestern University students already make connections between their courses, noting that they are reading the same text in their religion and anthropology classes, or discussing the same subject in biology and political science, or using similar skills in their mathematics and music courses. What Paideia allows students to do is to bring those experiences into the classroom for discussion with their classmates and faculty; students will now have the spaces to reflect critically on those connections in collaborative settings.

Paideia gives another way for students to talk about their education and the value of a liberal arts education. All students who graduate from Southwestern will not only have a major, but also will have had an interdisciplinary experience with a particular theme. This theme may be related to their major or may be something completely different. Either way, it gives students a chance to think about how to approach real world problems from multiple disciplines. The program also fosters collaboration among students, staff, and faculty about questions and issues that are relevant to our society.

What are the themes?

Four to six new themes will be developed each year based on faculty interests and student and staff recommendations. Sometimes themes will repeat, but only if interest is still there with faculty and students.

The three themes for the rollout program are *Taking the Pulse of Global Health*, *Representing Gender: Do We Know It When We See It* and *Mediterranean Mingling: Diversity and Cultural Intercourse*.

What is a Paideia cohort?

In Paideia, there are levels of cohorts: Every student is part of a cluster, and that's one kind of cohort. Those students might take cluster courses together and will attend required cluster meetings. Each cluster will also host all kinds of optional activities: field trips, reading groups, lectures or performances, civic engagement projects, and so on. That's another level of cohort: the students in the cluster who share interest in more extra-curricular activities or civic engagement. Then you have the students who are enrolled in the seminar together: those students will have an even more intensive collaboration because they'll be working together to reflect on their experiences in the cluster as a whole. Finally, the new Paideia program also creates cohorts of faculty: faculty within a cluster will be meeting regularly, developing relationships, and learning from each other.

What is the history of the program? How did it come into being?

The Paideia Program at Southwestern University was first developed in 2002 as part of the University's Strategic Plan for 2010, and the first class of Paideia Scholars graduated in May 2006. In its original iteration, Paideia was open to a small subsection of the student body, with participating students assigned to a cohort of 10 students and one professor. Cohorts would remain together for three years, meeting regularly for a 1-credit seminar; Paideia students were expected to participate in an intensive civic engagement project, an intercultural learning experience, and a research or creative project.

In 2011, Southwestern began the process of creating a Quality Enhancement Plan (QEP) as part of our reaccreditation process with the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). As part of this process, the entire campus chose to focus our efforts on interdisciplinarity. As the committee began to figure out how to better support interdisciplinarity on our campus, Paideia was a natural place to look. This process led to the new version of Paideia, which will begin in full in Fall 2014.

The original program was started with the help of an \$8.5 million grant from the Priddy Charitable Trust in Wichita Falls, Texas. This grant enabled Southwestern to hire several new faculty members, fund a program director, and provide stipends for students to cover Paideia-related expenses. The grant also supported the construction of the Prothro Center for Lifelong Learning, which now houses the Office of Civic Engagement and the Office of Intercultural Learning—two key components of the Paideia Program—as well as the Health and Counseling Center, Career Services, and the Center for Academic Success and Records, among others.

More recent grants from the Mellon Foundation (\$500,000) and the Stillwater Foundation (\$25,000) have created opportunities for faculty to learn more about interdisciplinary

teaching and learning. These funds have been used for faculty to gather during the semester as small groups to discuss ideas related to their themes and to help run larger faculty development sessions at the end of each semester.

How can I get more information about the Paideia Program?

For more information on the Paideia Program, visit www.southwestern.edu/paideia or contact one of the two program co-directors:

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or

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For more information on civic engagement and community-engaged learning, contact:
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For more information on intercultural learning and study abroad opportunities, contact:
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