

- to conquer our egocentrism, we must understand, and exercise some control over, the three basic functions of the human mind: thinking, feeling, wanting.
- because we humans spend most of our time thinking about what we personally want or value, we need to question our personal values.

GO BEYOND SUPERFICIAL MEMORIZATION TO DEEP LEARNING

As a student, it is important that you think seriously about what you want to accomplish in each of your classes and in college in general. If you simply want to get by, to do no more than pass your courses, you know the logic of how to do so: You go to class. You find out the minimal requirements of the course. You fulfill those requirements with the least effort possible. You get the grade. You move on to the next semester. After four years and a certain number of course hours, you get a degree. Using this kind of thinking, you think of college merely as a vehicle to get a job. The problem with this “minimalist” strategy is that, in using it, you miss the opportunity to develop skills and insights that you can use for a lifetime. You graduate, but you do not become a lifelong learner.

If, however, you look at college as an opportunity to learn how to learn, to develop your mind, to seek out new ways to look at things, to expand your knowledge, to learn ideas that will help you figure out the problems of your life, you must seek to internalize a set of intellectual skills that will enable you to learn more deeply and more permanently in every one of your courses. With the proper vision of what you are after, you can begin to practice effective thinking in all your classes. And if you strive to develop certain habits of thought and characteristics of mind, such as intellectual humility, perseverance, and fairmindedness, you can transform the way you operate in every challenging context and situation. You will acquire the tools of good thinking and learning. You then will go into each class with powerful questions on the tip of your tongue. You will ask these questions whenever possible. You will ask them while you are silently reading, while engaged in writing, while speaking, while listening.

You will recognize, then, that the content that defines college instruction can be learned only through thinking. You will recognize that when you think poorly while learning, you learn poorly, and that when you think well while learning, you learn well. So, if you are serious about acquiring powerful tools for learning, you must be committed to developing your ability to think well, to reason your way into any body of content, to organize content in your mind, to relate it to your experience, to assess it using appropriate standards.

If, however, you have become subconsciously habituated to rote memorization as your principal tool of learning, if your mode of preparing for an exam is to cram bits and pieces of content into your head, you may get by temporarily, but you will retain little of what you learned. The result, in the long run, will be poor performance, poor learning, and poor habits of thought. You will be of little value to an employer who wants to hire people who can systematically pursue important

goals, recognize and analyze significant problems, communicate important findings, and assess their own performance on the job.

7.1

THINKING DEEPLY ABOUT WHY

What are you trying to accomplish in college? Are you committed to developing thinking in a deep way? Or are you going to college simply to get a job or a degree? Are you going to college just because your friends are going? Are you interested in the social life that college offers? Or are you not sure what your real motivation is? To complete the following statements, what would you say? My fundamental purpose for going to college is . . . I am committed to . . . Write out your answer or explain orally.

THE RELATION OF CONTENT TO THINKING

A key insight into content—and into thinking—is that all content presents a distinctive mode of thinking. Math becomes easier as one learns to *think* mathematically. Biology becomes easier as one learns to *think* biologically. History becomes easier as one learns to *think* historically.

EXHIBIT 7.1 *Thinking is the key to all content.*

