



Collegium News

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Newsletter of the Cannon Valley Elder Collegium

February 2007

"A Questing Mind Never Retires"

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Kathy Mellstrom
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May 6: Spring Meeting, Be There

You are invited and encouraged to come to the Northfield Retirement Community Chapel at 2:00 p.m. on Sunday, May 6 for the CVEC Spring Membership Meeting. We will wrap up the 2006-2007 academic year and share ideas and refreshments.

George Soule will be honored at the event for his years of service to the Collegium as professor, chair of the Curriculum Committee, Board member, and current Board Chair. As part of this honor, George has been accorded the privilege of addressing the assembled members. His topic will be "What CVEC Has Taught Me." So, he did not already know everything before?



George Soule

Curriculum Does Not Grow on Trees

by Kathy Mellstrom

Did you ever wonder where that food for the mind and soul that is the CVEC course comes from? As you look over the extensive menu of Spring Term offerings, ponder this: The classes you see listed were about two years in preparation. And at this moment, next year's courses are well on their way to the table.



Vern Faillettaz

Vern Faillettaz, who took over as chair of the Curriculum Committee when George Soule moved on to become Board chair, described the process. It involves identifying interesting topics or subject areas and potential instructors, then completing a sequence of tasks that bring them together at a particular time and place.

Many of the seeds of future courses are planted by those who fill out evaluations at the conclusion of a course they have taken. Other members respond to the questionnaires provided at our meetings, which solicit requests and suggestions for courses or instructors.

Another source of ideas is the instructors. The committee contacts those who have previously taught to see if they are interested in teaching a new course, or in some cases, repeating a particularly popular course. Newly retired faculty of Carleton and St. Olaf Colleges are also recruited and invited to share favorite subjects. Word of mouth will sometimes yield retired educators or other experts who have moved to Northfield from other places.

The Curriculum Committee also conducts brainstorming sessions to explore new possibilities and seek to fill gaps in the offerings. One such meeting led to the realization that the ratio of women to men teaching was low, another that there were no courses about Africa. Both led to specific recruiting efforts and new courses.

Much of the work of putting together the courses and instructors is done one to two years ahead. Then, as each term approaches, the task of arranging the schedules and

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Curriculum Does Not Grow on Trees (continued from front page)

classrooms falls to the Director of CVEC, currently Bill Carlson. This involves providing a variety of class times and booking accessible locations for classes to meet. The final result of all this labor is what you see in the course brochure three times each year.

Changes in the Collegium over the years have led to new ways of doing things. The growth of the organization has necessitated more division of labor and organized committee and Board work; it also made it possible to fill more classes. There are now twelve courses slated for each term next year, with the assumption that conflicts or other events will likely eliminate one or two. The loss of Minnesota Humanities Commission funding opens possibilities of more non-humanities subject areas. New ideas for beyond-the-classroom courses are being considered.

While there is some variety in course format and new ideas are under consideration, one thing remains constant: the meat of the curriculum is the small group discussion oriented class aimed at the acquisition of *knowledge* about a subject. This is a contrast to most Senior Education programs, which tend to offer “workshops” or how-to classes. So, now you can enjoy our gourmet selection of brain food with a true appreciation of the production process!



From the Director, Bill Carlson

I am excited to report that our enrollments continue to increase and we are working hard to provide more courses with a wider range of topics. The enclosed Spring Term Schedule continues this trend.

Last fall we noted that the Minnesota Humanities Commission has dropped its support of all senior programs including the \$3000 grant to CVEC. In response, you, the members of CVEC, responded with a record fund drive that collected over \$8,000 in 2006. Your donations along with strong enrollments have put the CVEC budget in balance. We should be able to operate continually using our own funding and tuition incomes and without outside support.

We have had to make some administrative changes with the resignation of Jean Larson for personal reasons. Lori Stanley has been named Associate Director and will take on some of the financial recording duties and Teresa Ballentine will provide some assistance for a smooth transition over the next year. Board Member Mary Ann Eng has graciously volunteered to record the fund drive contributions.

Some innovations have been introduced in our Spring semester courses. One example is George Soule's Shakespeare course, which will be coordinated with the Great Rivers Shakespeare Festival in Winona to present both an academic and a director's perspective on two great plays. We will also work with Village on the Cannon to sponsor a summer trip to Winona to attend the plays after studying them.

Bill