Harvard SAI Workshop on the
Liberal Arts in Higher Education

August 19–20, 2017
Dubai, UAE

Introduction:

The Harvard SAI Workshop on the Liberal Arts in Higher Education is a forum for faculty and higher-education academic administrators from universities across South Asia, Middle East and neighboring regions (Central Asia and East Asia) to convene on an annual basis for collaboration, knowledge sharing and the exchange of ideas. The inaugural event of the Harvard SAI Liberal Arts Workshop will be held in Dubai, in August 2017, with the aim of launching a consortium of stakeholders committed to a robust and vibrant future of the liberal arts. This workshop will allow Harvard SAI to initiate a multi-year engagement convening the consortium on an annual basis for greater research and collaboration on the Liberal Arts in South Asia, Middle East and neighboring regions.

The purpose of this two-day Workshop is to explore ways in which universities in South Asia, Middle East and neighboring regions may develop a liberal arts education program to prepare and teach their undergraduate students accordingly, while fostering such objectives as sustainable development, social inclusion and peace, and cooperation across national boundaries, among individuals, institutions and governments. These goals are essential to addressing shared global challenges and to realizing opportunities to advance human well-being. Universities, as institutions that prepare future leadership of societies, have a unique role to play in the achievement of these goals, educating students as global citizens who can understand, value and commit to contribute to the personal as well as the common good.

In preparation for the Workshop, participants will write a succinct document of no more than 1000 words, answering these questions:
   a) In what ways does their undergraduate curriculum feature a liberal arts education?
   b) What opportunities are there to improve the experience of their undergraduates so they develop the capabilities consistent with a liberal arts education?
   c) Is there already a strategy in place in their institution to improve the liberal arts education of undergraduates?

A number of participants in the Workshop will join as teams from the same institution. We expect that these teams will play a leadership role in their institutions advancing changes in the curriculum or other programmatic activities in undergraduate education.

The Workshop will be highly participatory and action oriented. The first day will feature sessions facilitated by Harvard faculty addressing some of the foundations of liberal arts education in the undergraduate curriculum. The second day will be a hands-on activity designed to develop or refine an institutional strategy to enhance the curriculum and the undergraduate experience.

We expect that participants in the Workshop will return to their institutions with the start of an actionable plan to advance liberal education initiatives. We will endeavor to create a community of practice among the leaders of such change efforts across institutions.

Harvard Faculty:

Ali Asani, Faculty co-lead for SAI Liberal Arts Workshop
> *Professor of Indo-Muslim and Islamic Religion and Cultures; Former Director of the Prince Alwaleed bin Talal Islamic Studies Program at Harvard University*

Jorge Dominguez, Faculty co-lead for SAI Liberal Arts Workshop
> *Antonio Madero Professor for the Study of Mexico in the Department of Government and Chair of The Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies at Harvard University; Senior Adviser to the executive committee of the Weatherhead Center for International Affairs; Faculty Associate of the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and of Leverett House; former University Vice Provost for International Affairs*

Jay Harris
> *Harry Austryn Wolfson Professor of Jewish Studies*
> *Dean of Undergraduate Education*

Fernando Reimers
> *Ford Foundation Professor of Practice in International Education; Faculty Director of International Education Policy Program*

Co-Sponsors:

Harvard South Asia Institute (SAI)
Harvard Asia Center
Harvard Club of United Arab Emirates
Harvard Business School Club of the GCC
Ismaili Center, Dubai
Lahore University of Management Sciences (LUMS)

<u>Workshop Agenda:</u>

<u>Day 1:</u> Saturday 19th August, 2017

9-00 – 9: 15 am	Welcome and introductions
9:15 - 10.45 am	**Session 1: What is the state of liberal arts in South Asia, Middle East and neighboring regions?** Each university presents on their own education model and how they manage the scope, relevance, student types, and challenges of liberal arts in their context. This session will also begin a discussion and exploration the current state of liberal arts in society**.** **Facilitator: Professor Jorge Dominguez**
10. 45am – 12 pm	**Session 2: The "utility" of a liberal arts education** The session title embodies what is often considered a contradiction. Namely, there is a belief that a liberal arts education is not useful, which is why professionalizing early on the life of young university students has long been the prevailing curriculum of universities worldwide. This session will include elements of "utility" which relate to the program and panel topics. **Professor Jay Harris**
12pm – 1:15pm	**Session 3: Pedagogical and curriculum design issues in the liberal arts** How does a liberal arts education in Asian and GCC universities prepare students to be global citizens? Professor Reimers presents a framework to align a liberal arts education with the development of cosmopolitan students, and the inherent challenges faced by universities in participating in global citizenship education. **Professor Fernando Reimers**

1:15pm – 2:30pm	*Lunch*
2:30pm – 3: 45pm	**Session 4: Religious and Cultural literacy: Engaging with Diversity** Although we live in an era of globalization characterized by greater contact between peoples of different cultures than at any other point in history, exposure to diversity has not resulted in better understanding of difference. Instead, we witness greater misunderstandings and the prevalence of polarized world views. This polarization, often expressed in dichotomies such as "us vs. them" or "good vs. evil," is one of the consequences of cultural and religious illiteracy. This illiteracy hampers people's ability to understand and engage with difference, leading ultimately to rejection of diversity. In this way, illiteracy threatens not only democratic processes within countries, but also relations between nations. This session will explore the causes and symptoms of cultural and religious illiteracy in various societies and ways we can address them in educational systems. **Professor Ali Asani**
3:45 pm – 4:30pm	*Coffee Break*
4:45pm – 6:00pm	**Session 5: Future of liberal arts in 21st Century** What is the potential of liberal arts going forward? Is the future bright, bleak? How can a consortium of universities lead in shaping the future of liberal arts and its discourse going forward? Universities across Asia are investing in liberal arts education and are reinventing traditional technical university programs. There is an understanding that a liberal arts education helps build diverse intellectual capabilities and is fundamental in understanding and addressing the complexities of 21st century society. The aim of this session is to discuss the possibilities of creating programs that uphold the principles of free exchange, pluralism, and respect for diversity. **Professor Jorge Dominguez**

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Day 2: Sunday 20th August, 2017

A strategy to develop an undergraduate liberal arts curriculum[1]

The following thirteen steps are intended to help a college or university create a culture that is supportive of a liberal arts undergraduate curriculum. These steps provide a guide to get organized to deliver an ambitious and rigorous liberal arts undergraduate education. This guide is designed to be used to support the development of a strategy, that is, an action plan to advance ambitious educational efforts.

On Day 2 of the Workshop, we expect that the participants will work in small teams through Steps 1-4. Below, we give you information about all 13 steps but urge you to focus on the first four.

The **thirteen steps** are:

1. Establish a leadership team. This team will form the guiding coalition to design and manage the implementation of the liberal arts education strategy.
2. Develop a long term vision. What are the long term outcomes for students, for the school, and for the communities that these graduates will influence that inspire this liberal education effort?
3. Develop a framework of knowledge, skills and dispositions for graduates of the institution that is aligned with the long term vision.
4. Audit the existing undergraduate curriculum in light of the proposed long term vision.
5. Design a prototype to better align the existing curriculum to the competencies framework in step 3.
6. Communicate vision, framework and prototype to the extended community in the school, seek feedback and iterate.
7. Decide on a revised prototype to be implemented and develop an implementation plan to execute the liberal arts education prototype.
8. Identify resources necessary and available to implement the liberal arts education prototype.
9. Develop a framework to monitor implementation of the prototype and obtain formative feedback.
10. Develop a communication strategy to build and maintain support from key stakeholders.
11. Develop a professional development strategy for faculty and administrative staff.
12. Execute the prototype with oversight and support of the leadership team.
13. Evaluate the execution of the prototype, adjust as necessary, and go back to step 4.

DAY TWO ACTIVITIES

Step 1. Establish a leadership team. At the Workshop on Day 2, each team will imagine how to form an eventual guiding coalition to design and manage the implementation of the liberal arts education strategy.

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[1] This protocol is based on the book 'Empowering Students to Improve the World in Sixty Lessons' by Reimers et al.

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Getting the right people on this guiding coalition is critical for the success of an ambitious program of liberal arts education. Our Day 2 teams should seek to represent broadly the various key constituencies in the university, and of various departments. This team will make the first attempt to become the architect of the global strategy, aligning a long term vision of success with specific learning outcomes, and with learning opportunities designed to support students in developing competencies. Each Day 2 team will focus on the strategy, how to monitor its execution, how to troubleshoot regarding its implementation in real time, identify necessary support, secure resources and lead the necessary revisions and course-corrections. Each team will construct and role-model a learning mindset, supporting the development of an institutional culture that is aligned with the long term vision of success.

Exercise:
Write down the key stakeholder groups critical for a liberal arts education strategy in your institution? Identify for each group, how are they positioned relative to liberal arts education? How much influence do they have? What are their key interests?

Write down the names (or titles) of the people you think should form the guiding coalition? For each one of them, why are they important? What do they contribute to the process of steering a liberal arts education strategy? Map the relationships between members of the coalition and key stakeholder groups?

Prioritize 7-10 members from that group; they will form the guiding coalition.

Step 2. Develop a long term vision. What are the long term outcomes for students, for the institution and for the communities that these graduates will influence that inspire this effort?

Write down a long term vision that inspires the liberal education effort in your institution?

Step 3. Develop a framework of competencies, knowledge, skills and dispositions for graduates of the institution that is aligned with the long term vision from step 2. Examine alignment between those competencies and expected long term goals.

Select a specific group of skills, competencies, knowledge, dispositions, that represent a graduate of the institution, to be used to map the curriculum. Examine each of the long term goals against the specific capacities that you seek to help graduates develop. Are they necessary and sufficient? If necessary, revise the expected capacities, going back and forth between them and the long term goals.

Among other competencies, consider intercultural competency, ethical orientation, knowledge and skills, and work and mind habits:

1. Intercultural competency
This includes the ability to interact successfully with people from different cultural identities and origins. It encompasses interpersonal skills as well as intrapersonal skills and ways to govern oneself in the face of cultural differences.

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- Interpersonal Skills:
  - o Work productively in and effectively lead intercultural teams, including teams distributed in various geographies through the use of telecommunication technologies.
  - o Demonstrate empathy toward other people from different cultural origins.
  - o Demonstrate courtesy and norms of interaction appropriate to various cultural settings.
  - o Resolve culturally based disagreements through negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution.

- Intrapersonal Skills:
  - o Curiosity about global affairs and world cultures
  - o The ability to recognize and weigh diverse cultural perspectives
  - o An understanding of one's own identity, of others' identities, of how other cultures shape their own and others' identities, and of where one is in space and time
  - o The ability to recognize and examine assumptions when engaging with cultural differences
  - o The recognition of cultural (civilizational, religious, or ethnic) prejudice and the ability to minimize its effects in intergroup dynamics
  - o An understanding and appreciation of cultural variation in basic norms of interaction, the ability to be courteous, and the ability to find and learn about norms appropriate in specific settings and types of interaction

2. Ethical orientation

- Appreciation of ethical frameworks in diverse religious systems
- Commitment to basic equality of all people
- Recognition of common values and common humanity across civilizational streams
- Appreciation of the potential of every person regardless of socioeconomic circumstances or cultural origin
- Appreciation of the role of global compacts in guiding global governance
- Commitment to supporting universal rights, reducing global poverty, promoting peace, and promoting sustainable forms of human-environmental interaction
- Ability to interact with people from diverse cultural backgrounds while demonstrating humility, respect, reciprocity, and integrity
- An understanding of the role of trust in sustaining human interaction as well as global institutions and recognition of forms of breakdowns in trust and institutional corruption and its causes.

3. Knowledge and skills
In addition to highlighting the cosmopolitan links infused in the curriculum, a liberal arts education curriculum should provide students with the knowledge and skills necessary to understand the world in which they will live. These include culture, religion, history and geography, politics and government,

economics, science, mathematics and its applications, technology and innovation, public health, and demography.

- Culture, religion, and history and geography, with attention to the effect of globalization on cultural change
    - The study of religions as powerful institutions organizing human activity, including world religions, their histories, and points of contacts over time
    - Major philosophical traditions and points of connection
    - Historical knowledge, which includes various perspectives and an understanding of the role of ordinary citizens in history
    - World geography, including the different areas of the world, what unites them, what differences exist, and how humans have changed the geography of the planet
    - Performing and visual arts (e.g., theater, dance, music, visual arts, etc.) as a means to find our common humanity, understand different arts, and become able to see connections
    - Ability to view art as expression, to use art for expression, and to understand globalization and art
    - Literature from our language and culture, from other languages (in translation) and cultures, seeking to enhance our capacity to read as adult persons operating with a wide cultural and intellectual framework

- Politics and government:
    - Comparative government and how governments work in different societies
    - Major international institutions and their role in shaping global affairs
    - Contemporary global challenges in human-environmental interaction
    - Sources of these challenges, options to address them, and the role of global institutions in addressing these challenges
    - History of contemporary global conflicts and the role of global institutions in addressing these challenges

- Economics, business, and entrepreneurship:
    - Theories of economic development and how they explain the various stages in economic development of nations, poverty, and inequality
    - Institutions that regulate global trade and work to promote international development
    - Contemporary scholarship on the effectiveness and limitations of those institutions
    - The impact of global trade
    - The consequences of global poverty and the agency of the poor
    - The demography and factors influencing demographic trends and their implications for global change

- Science, technology and innovation, and their globalization

- Mathematics, statistics, and their applications in the physical, biological, and social sciences

- Public Health, population, and demography

4. Work and mind habits

- Demonstrate innovation and creativity in contributing to formulating solutions to challenges and to seizing opportunities; seek and identify best practices; and transfer them across linguistic, cultural, geographic, disciplinary, and professional contexts
- Identify different cultural perspectives through which to think about problems
- Understand the process of cultural change and that there is individual variation within cultural groups
- Carry out research projects independently
- Present results of independent research in writing, orally, and using media
- Learn to listen and respect the ideas of others and take them into account

Step 4. Audit existing curriculum and programs in light of the proposed long term vision and competencies framework.

Using the framework of expected competencies for graduates, identify where in the curriculum –broadly construed, to include curricular, co-curricular and extracurricular activities—are there at present opportunities for students to develop such capacities. The goal of this activity is to identify what elements of a strategy of liberal arts education are already in place in the institution and can be built upon, and also to identify existing gaps and areas of opportunity to increase the coherence and synergies between the opportunities already available.

This exercise should clearly identify whether there are opportunities to gain such capacities, and whether the same opportunities are available to all students or only to a subset of the students. Are they requirements or electives?

APPENDIX

At our Workshop, we expect to stop at the end of Step 4. We are providing you, below, with information regarding Steps 5-13 for your consideration in the future.

Step 5. Design a prototype to better align existing curriculum to the competencies framework.
There are multiple ways to initiate a process of liberal arts education in an institution, and what makes most sense in each case should be based on what is already in place (identified in the audit) and on local conditions, resources and areas of strength. The initiative designed should build on existing strengths but also challenge the guiding coalition to significantly advance the institution towards greater ambition, coherence and depth in the opportunities for students to gain liberal arts competencies. Examples of such prototype may include a core curriculum, or distribution requirements, multiple pathways for students to learn how to learn, or an innovation challenge to incentivize students to design solutions to challenges, or incentives to encourage faculty to innovate in their courses, etc.

Step 6. Communicate vision, framework and prototype to the extended community in the school, seek feedback and iterate.
The prototype developed in step 5 is only a concept to elicit feedback and suggestions from a wider group of faculty, those who will be involved in executing the strategy –which would likely extend outside the members of the guiding coalition. Most change efforts in organizations fail because they under-communicate.

Step 7. Decide on a revised prototype to be implemented and develop an implementation plan to execute the liberal arts education prototype.
The feedback and suggestions obtained in step 6 should be processed and used to develop a revised version of the prototype, which could constitute the program to be implemented in year 1. This program should be translated into a project management chart, with key milestones, deliverables and individuals responsible.

Step 8. Identify resources necessary and available to implement the liberal arts education prototype.
What resources are necessary to execute the prototype? This includes instructional resources, resources to support students, to support the development of capacity of the faculty. In identifying such necessary resources, the guiding coalition will also map available resources, a likely source of resources include parents and institutions in the community.

Step 9. Develop a framework to monitor implementation of the prototype and obtain formative feedback.
The implementation strategy should identify a small set of indicators to help the guiding coalition to keep track of execution, continuously learn from the process of implementation, help identify and

troubleshoot problems as they arise, and provide necessary support to the individuals responsible for the achievement of specific tasks.

Step 10. Develop a communication strategy to build and maintain support from key stakeholders.

Implementation of the strategy is, to a great extent, about continuous communication. This is a core responsibility of the guiding coalition, to devise and execute a communication strategy that allows all key stakeholders to understand with clarity the intended goals, and what success looks like, and that helps them know how they can support the implementation of the strategy.

Step 11. Develop a professional development strategy.

If the prototype is sufficiently ambitious, it is likely to require professional development for faculty and staff so they can adequately support students in gaining liberal arts competencies. How will they be supported? The guiding coalition should devise a plan that provides ongoing support for professional development. Much of this support should be available in real time, and be school based, and should combine team based professional development, with individual study and coaching. The guiding coalition may consider developing partnerships with other schools and with external organizations to augment their capacity for professional development.

Step 12. Execute the prototype with oversight and support of the leadership team.

Execution of the prototype should be approached with a learning mindset, understanding that the goal is to improve the strategy. The leadership team creates a culture to encourage risk taking, experimentation, and open communication among all teachers and key stakeholders involved in implementation.

During execution the leadership team will oversee the process depending on the monitoring system, provide support as necessary and manage the communication strategy. They should meet periodically to assess implementation, provide formative feedback and make any necessary adjustments.

Step 13. Evaluate the execution of the prototype, adjust as necessary, and go back to step 4.

Once a first cycle of implementation of the prototype has been completed, the leadership team will take stock of what has been learned, systematically obtain formative feedback from all faculty and students involved in implementing it, assess any student work and student views that can help discern the results of the prototype and make any necessary revisions to develop a revised version, or to extend the prototype in new directions.