

Global Dialogue on Liberal Arts and Science
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Abstract

A Liberal Arts and Science College within its cultural context, cultural contexts within the College – The case of University College Utrecht

The educational philosophy of Liberal Arts and Science may seem to be almost perennial, and quite independent of national societal context and change, but the practice and experience of liberal education are strongly dependent on cultural context – both in institutional practice and in the minds of students and teachers.

University College Utrecht (UCU), the first Liberal Arts and Science College in the Netherlands, serves as a case study in this paper. The author demonstrates that institutional practice – curriculum, pedagogy, outreach, and the like – is constrained and conditioned by the fact that UCU is embedded in Dutch society and culture. Students at UCU are of more than seventy nationalities. On the basis of survey data and interviews, the author also discusses how UCU's liberal education is experienced differently by students of various national and cultural backgrounds.

This paper fits into the following broad conference theme: "The contextual role of cultures and values in liberal arts and science education".

Rob van der Vaart
Dean, University College Utrecht