

TO : Professor Simon SM Ho, Vice Rector (Academic Affairs)
FROM : Vat K.H., CTLE Representative
SUBJECT : Design Ideas for RC-based Student First-Year Experience Program
OCCASION : After Meeting with SAS on RC Reading Club<2010JUL15>
DATE : July 25, 2010

I am writing here to report on some design ideas conceived on the part of CTLE, concerning students' first-year experience through RC, following the captioned meeting held on 2010JUL15, with our SAS colleagues, regarding the ideals of holistic student development related to our pilot RC program. The context of the meeting has been targeted to gather input from SAS on the progress of what is entailed in the newly developed *House Life in Brilliance* project along the RC philosophy of UM at our Taipa campus, together with some expected extension or improvement (or follow-up) of this pilot RC program in our Hengqin campus. Please refer to the summary below:

First-Year Experience (FYE) Program

The First-Year Experience (FYE) program focuses on first-year students and their transitions from secondary school to university. This program is to be designed to provide support and encouragement from a student's first day of orientation to the final day of the first year at UM. The FYE program should focus on two essential concerns of transition: academic and social development, and if sponsored later by some philanthropist, the program could be named so, such as The Simon SM Ho FYE Program.

- *Academic Transition*

Through the FYE Program, first-year students are introduced to the essence of general education in action (say, the liberal arts tradition in whole-person education), and the rigor of academic excellence. The FYE Program should help students establish habits of mind and patterns of decision-making that will ensure achieving optimal success through a student's four years of study at UM. It is conceived that the two major components of the FYE Program supporting first-year students' academic transition are the First-Year Seminars and the Common Reading Experience, both of which could be named after their future sponsors, such as The Rui Martins First-Year Seminars and The Alex Lai Common Reading Experience.

- *Social Transition*

Since our *House Life in Brilliance* project is meant for a four-year residential college, first-year students must be assisted with their social transitions by upper-class (or mature) resident assistants and student affairs staff members. Programming and activities through the first-year living environments (our houses) should preferably take place through some FYE residential program learning strategies, addressing such issues as study skills, time management, self-motivation, wellness, diversity, sustainability, and communications.

- *Other FYE Program Components*

Initially, these could comprise such items as: student orientation, advising, and registration (SOAR); first-year information (FYI), including the week-long Fall

Orientation Program; convocations tied to major themes within the First-Year Seminars; academic and career planning.

First-Year Experience (FYE) Seminars

All entering students are required to enroll in a First-Year Seminar as part of UM's or residential college's core requirement for graduation. There should be a First-Year Seminars booklet or website prepared every semester or every school year, which contains information on each seminar. Students are required to read through the seminar descriptions and identify their preferred choices among the offerings per semester, and they are required to complete a registration process to confirm their seminar participation. CTLE in coordination with SAS could help facilitate this seminar registration and organize the subsequent seminars. It is expected that each of these seminar sessions should last not more than two hours, preferably within 90 minutes, and they are to be offered throughout the first year of student study, suitably distributed in each of the fall and spring semesters.

Common Reading Experience

The RC-related first-year Common Reading Experience (CRE) is to be designed with several goals in mind: a) to establish the ideas of scholarship and academic expectations through a common learning experience; b) to enable student understanding of differences in the context of UM community; c) to provide an entry for students into the ideas of global citizenship – we are living in a global village of digital age. This CRE program is meant to be an integral part of the First-Year Experience at UM. All first-year students are given a selection of literature and asked to read selected numbers of them, and participate in discussions about the work, be it through face-to-face or online occasions such as through our Reading Club gatherings and through our virtual social networks. It is also possible for the authors of some works to be invited to visit our campus, to speak with the first-year students through our First-Year Seminars, or through a specially arranged convocation presentation. Intentional events could also be scheduled through the year, which are related to the common reading experience, such as planning First-Year Seminars along the works of literature selected by different batches of first-year students, so as to enhance students' common learning experiences.

Reading Club as the conduit to Develop Learning in Communities

It is conceived that running in tandem with the First-Year Seminars and Common Reading Experience, is the FYE residential Reading Club. This club is prepared to organize sessions geared to helping first-year students succeed at UM, through introducing students to various campus support services and skills such as time management, self-motivation, and decision making. The club is also prepared to assist with academic and personal goal setting, and help students learn what is expected of them as a student. Throughout the first year on campus, students will meet with other first-year students in their residential college, to participate in learning activities, especially reading and discussion of their selected literature works. Through the Reading Club, student affairs staff and residential assistants, together with the club facilitators (mostly played by volunteer academic staff), should also have individual guided discussions with first-year students to assist in their transition to college. Most importantly, through pinpointed

discussion and sharing sessions of the related readings through the Reading Club, first-year students will meet for both academic and social events during their first year at UM.

Servant Leadership Program to Sustain Reading Club

It is believed that our RC needs such a program to develop the talents of UM students through the mission and values of our General Education initiatives integrating the tradition of a quality liberal arts education. It is supposed to be a comprehensive, four-year servant-as-leader program offering our graduates the opportunities to make significant and meaningful contributions to our local community and a global society. It is expected that the structured leadership and service experiences of this program should allow our students to develop skills and knowledge to be used for the betterment of themselves and others, in a meaningful and deliberate way. The immediate benefits gained from such a program include concrete skills one can begin using in his or her everyday life and access to opportunities and resources. It is conceived that the activities and opportunities offered through the program will help each young man and woman discover their own unique leadership style and prepare them to be leaders in our society. The distinction of completing the program is meant to be recognized through special college-wide acknowledgement, a reflective digital portfolio, and the legacy each student leaves. So, this program could be named after its future sponsor, say, The Daniel CW Tse Servant Leadership Program.

Recognition Aspects

- Recognized on campus as a student leader
- A comprehensive and reflective digital portfolio of academic and co-curricular experiences at UM RC
- Participation in a college-wide symposium presentation
- Presentation of one's legacy to members of the UM RC community

Benefits Aspects

- *Skills* – Learn concrete skills that will increase one's effectiveness in future endeavors, including: decision making; conducting effective meetings; communication; group dynamics; goal setting; diversity awareness and skills; public speaking; time management; overcoming procrastination; publicity and promotions; and many others
- *Self-Reflection* – An opportunity to learn about oneself through extensive or in-depth self-reflection and become a better leader while reflecting on strengths when faced with challenges during the program
- *Experience* – Access to experiential activities and service opportunities
- *Mission* – Development of a personal and career mission statement that guides direction in life pursuits
- *Campus* – Competitive candidacy for leadership positions on campus
- *Community* – Become a member of a community of campus leaders and develop friendships with new people
- *Support* – Support of professional staff members to assist while working through program challenges, with different resources

Scenario Planning of Reading Club Activities (to be completed)

1. The RC provides opportunities for students to integrate the academic mission of UM with a community living environment. Our RC staff assists students in creating a living and learning environment. This includes attention to cross-cultural differences, personal and community responsibility, and life planning.
2. The RC staff should work hard to provide a supportive, involving and safe atmosphere within each residential college. A variety of activities and programs are scheduled during the year within each house to meet social and educational needs of students. Students are encouraged to discuss with the RC staff their ideas about programs and their living environment.
3. The installation of RC Reading Club is meant to be an important means to meet the social and educational needs of first-year students, especially to bring together the strength of our First-Year Seminars and Common Reading Experience. Students, after designating their preferences in seminar topics and selected works of literature to finish, will be organized into different small groups (preferably comprising 10 students per group, with a specific group structure and identity). It is estimated that there could be up to about 15 to 20 groups in each RC.
4. Each of the RC groups must receive leadership training to manage themselves in terms of our RC living and learning rules (or expectations) of the house, and be assigned a facilitator to advise and coach their living and learning activities. Let us say this is part of our larger RC Servant Leadership program, which is supposed to be a comprehensive, four-year progressive leadership program, modeled after Robert K. Greenleaf's (<http://greenleaf.org>) *The Servant as Leader* context. One of the important topics in leadership training is *Learn to Learn* among first-year students.
5. All first-year students in each RC are invited to participate in this exciting *Learn-to-Learn* opportunity to gain immediate concrete skills, such as identifying one's own strengths and how to utilize that knowledge to begin planning college experience. Through First-Year Seminar group discussions, individual assessment, and service opportunities, designed into our Common Reading Experience in the RC, it is expected that students will lay the foundation for involvement as servant leaders at UM and beyond, during and after the four years of living, loving and learning experiences.
6. Each of the servant-leader groups under the Reading Club, is to meet once a week for about two hours, preferably every Friday evening, including (or after) dinner or Saturday morning, including (or before) lunch. The gathering must be informal and family-like, with a simple agenda, to blend social interaction with learning in action through community-based involvement. The atmosphere is largely sharing-based, with singspirations (sing-along), with information specific enough for the group to work on throughout the week, accommodating the flexibility of group-

based, pair-based, and individual involvement. Discussion and sharing of specific themes around the selected works of literature is also considered a lead in the two-hour gathering so as not to miss the boat of our Common Reading Experience, also collaboratively sustained through pinpointed content and context design in our First-Year Seminars.

7. Each of the servant-leader groups under the Reading Club is to be equipped with an electronic group space, with individual electronic personal space for each group members, to facilitate intra-group and inter-group communications. And the whole Reading Club should also be supported with an electronic portal space to facilitate any community-based announcement and activities. Through the personal e-space, students are expected to keep their individual learning portfolios in the form of their own blogs. Such personal blogs are considered as a means to share student living and learning experiences, as an important part of their first-year habits of learning. It is through students' blogs that their gains of common reading experience, could be made visible – it is an opportunity to learn to read, to think, to experience and to write – some concrete skills valuable throughout their four years of study and beyond.
8. There must be some kind of leading educational philosophy behind our Reading Club, and the Servant-as-Leader context fits right in. The overall FYE Program together with our subsequent Servant-Leadership Program (comprehensive, four-year long, if any) must strive to develop a capacity and commitment of service and leadership to others. This can only be accomplished by helping students critically reflect on their experiences and sharing those experiences, rather than merely engaging in activities. We might be familiar with the learning pyramid (<http://homepages.gold.ac.uk/polovina/learnpyramid/index.html>) which states that students remember 10% of what they read, 20% of what they hear, 30% of what is demonstrated to them, 50% of what they discuss, and 75% of what they practice. That same pyramid also states that students retain 90% of what they teach others.
9. There must be some electronic portfolios to keep track of individual students' development. Through active engagement, critical reflection and mentoring of others, the Reading Club activities can truly become the fiber of one's character. It is expected that students could retain at least 60% of what they do, 80% of what they do with guided reflection and 90% of what they teach or give to others. This model forms the basis for our Servant Leadership program to truly help students become active engaged citizens in their global community. Throughout their four years, our RC participants will reflect on their learning opportunities and service experiences through their electronic portfolios. Such reflections will be guided and responded to by peers, faculty and administrative staff (SAS and AAS).
10. If we need any motto to guide the development of our RC Reading Club and our subsequent Servant Leadership program, the *4D* context could be a timely touch for our general education (GE) themes: *Determined + Dedicated + Disciplined +*

Drive. And the themes along the four-year holistic student development could be designed as follows:

First-Year Participants will: Self and Others

- Complete a Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® and Strong Interest Inventory® as part of their First-Year Seminar Group
- Participate in inventory group assessment with First-year Seminar class
- Begin students' digital portfolios
- Complete some hours of volunteer service
- Reflect on student assessments and volunteer experience in their digital portfolios

Second-Year Participants will: Ethical Servant Leadership

- Sophomore students should begin to focus on larger issues of leadership including ethics, communication, and teamwork. Making connections and building relationships are key focal points during this year
- Participate in some kind of summer Sophomore Leadership Camp
- Engage in regular discussions with small groups focusing on topics of ethics, critical thinking, diversity, and service projects
- Have opportunity to complete the StrengthsFinder® assessment in the spring semester if they are interested in applying for some kind of a Peer Educator position
- Begin developing a career plan, including seriously thinking of his or her declared major.
- Update reflections and co-curricular experiences sections of their digital portfolios

Third-Year Participants will: Global Citizenship

- Junior students should engage more in their role as Peer Educator (if any), and should be serving others through their active involvement on-campus. It is a year with a focus on continuing personal development, while engaging themselves as leaders in a larger community.
- Continue service to others through their peer roles, leadership roles or other volunteer experiences
- Update the reflections and co-curricular experiences sections of their digital portfolios

Fourth-Year Participants will: Legacy for the Common Good

- Senior students are largely transitioning into active, engaged, global citizens who are role models of service and leadership within their RC communities.
- Participate in more frequent (say, monthly) reflections related to their transitions
- Design, implement, and assess a service project for First-Year students
- Serve as a mentor during the, say, Sophomore Leadership Camp

- Finalize career plans and steps to find their first professional job or gain entrance to graduate school
- Update reflections and co-curricular experiences sections of their digital portfolios
- Present their legacies to other members of the UM RC community.

Impression and Observation during the Meeting on 2010JUL15

- It is generally felt that our SAS colleagues have been quite willing to share their deliberation of what is entailed in the RC-based holistic student development in the pilot RC program in our current campus and in the new campus of UM at Hengqin.
- It is discovered that SAS has originally planned to provide more deliberations only after the necessary RC staff have taken office. To this, I have already provided my own deliberations in terms of some scenario planning details of “what if’s” in the context of remodeling our current residence halls, in support of different RC activities that could be accommodated or constrained in the process of rolling out our *House Life in Brilliance* project.
- It is nonetheless felt that the importance of our *House Life in Brilliance* project has not paid the due attention that is expected of the four-year holistic student development in the RC. The general impression is that our project this year is just the test-bed for more meaningful program (or substances) to come. And it could be entertained independently of what is needed to fulfill the demands of holistic student development as stipulated by our visions and missions of what is entailed in developing an all-round character of our graduates through UM’s General Education initiatives to be piloted tested this fall and officially launched next September. The context of why we need to design different RC activities has not been sufficiently clarified with rationales clear and convincing enough, when the questions were raised of how best to blend our current GE initiative with RC arrangement in the Taipa campus to fulfill the best possible elite education in teaching and learning.
- It is promised by SAS colleagues that they will try looking up enough space-related information in the two to-be-renovated houses to support some more scenario-based planning of different RC-based student activities before next meeting, presumably set on 2010AUG05. And this initiative is most welcomed and hopefully, we could really locate enough space in the two pilot RC houses to realize how best we could plan and launch our desired Reading Club activities. I am to follow up if these issues could be resolved in our next meeting.
- It is my emphasis during the meeting that our SAS’s current services must be lined up properly in support of our RC-related student development activities so as to demonstrate our UM’s institutional commitment to do the best possible to engage our students in holistic growth through their RC-based living and learning to get the most of our elite undergraduate education. So, it is here in this brief report (or proposal) that our Reading Club activities must be situated in a comprehensive, four-year servant-leadership program to pursue our institutional

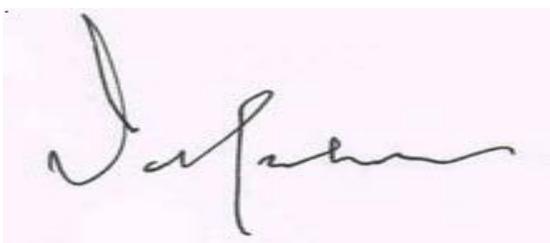
commitments in action, in order to provide the substances of an elite undergraduate education, unique in Macau, through installing a visionary RC development program.

Thanks for your reading and attention.

All the best,

Vat

2010JUL25

A handwritten signature in black ink on a light pink background. The signature is cursive and appears to read 'Kam H. Vat'.

Kam H. Vat (Mr)

Tentative CTLE Representative in the Working Group of RCs

Coordinator of E-Learning and Educational Technology

Centre for Teaching and Learning Enhancement (CTLE)

e-mail: fstkhv@umac.mo

Mobile: 66501747