

TO : Professor Simon SM Ho, Vice Rector (Academic Affairs)
FROM : Vat K.H., CTLE Representative
SUBJECT : Design Ideas for RC Reading Club Program
OCCASION : After your feedback received on 2010JUL26
DATE : July 28, 2010

I am writing to follow up with some design details, conceived on the part of CTLE, of our RC Reading Club, following the captioned feedback received on 2010JUL26, on CTLE's earlier ideas for First-Year Experience (FYE) (serving freshmen) and Servant Leadership programs (sustaining FYE, serving freshmen, sophomores, juniors and seniors), in the context of holistic student development. The contextual design of the RC Reading Club, presented in this memo has been tailored to meet the demands of what is entailed in the newly developed *House Life in Brilliance* project along the emergent RC philosophy of UM to be experimented at our Taipa campus (2-house pilot program from 2010 to 2013), to accrue experience for follow-up improvement to be realized in the RC program (12 houses) in our Hengqin campus starting from the fall of 2013. Please refer to the summary below:

Reading Club in the 2 Pilot RC's

Book learning alone might be got by lectures and reading; but it was only by studying and disputing, eating and drinking, playing and praying as members of the same collegiate community, in close and constant association with each other and with their tutors, that the priceless gift of character could be imparted.

■ *Samuel Eliot Morison, The Founding of Harvard College*

Mission

The mission of our RC Reading Club is not just to provide an opportunity for those of our student residents who are fascinated by books and love reading, to gather, to indulge in their reading hobby, and to participate in regular discussions about books they have read, but also to create a living and learning atmosphere for all of our student residents to experience our collegiate community, in close and constant association with one another, and with their tutors, advisors, coaches, and mentors, to experience our pastoral care in a trust and safe environment to grow into an all-round character expected of a college student in an elite undergraduate education environment. So, it is the aim of our RC Reading Club to provide, through thoughtfully designed academic and social activities, an enjoyable opportunity and environment to facilitate character development and lifelong learning in each of our RC student residents, to live up to the promise of holistic student development in the campus of our University of Macau.

Basic Activities

There are reading groups made up of individuals (typically 10 persons per group), who meet in person at regular intervals – usually twice a month – to discuss a specific book. Such gatherings tend to be more personal and intimate since members have the chance to meet often, face-to-face and they usually could develop a strong social dimension. Popular places for reading groups to meet include RC meeting rooms, library discussion

rooms, our emergent learning commons, café or even in restaurants over meals. In addition, each group tends not to grow too big (not more than 10 persons typically) so as individual members they have more control over the choice of reading matter. Usually, the title for each period (say, two weeks to a month) is voted from a list of suggested titles or the members may each take turns suggesting a book. However, the small size per group also means the views and perspectives involved in the discussion can be a bit limited. This could be compensated by bringing in two groups with the same title (or book) chosen during the same period since we have about 10 to 15 groups of student residents in each house, if we are to organize our student residents in groups of 10 each for various reading club activities.

- *Single-Title*: This is the most common method, where one title is selected at a time and all members read the same book in the same time frame. They then meet to discuss this book and this method works particularly well for those who like intensive discussion of books. Members are responsible for obtaining their own copy of each period's title, although they can either buy (new or second hand) or borrow from our library. In some instances, if buying a good number of copies of the same title from a book seller, our library could help order them at a negotiated discount.
- *Multi-Title*: In this case, members all read different books at the same time but the same group of books is rotated around the club so that each member reads each title in a serial fashion and ultimately, all members will have experienced each book. When they meet, individual members of the group share their learning and impressions after reading the designated title, and each member picks up something from one another, and each sequence of sharing, adds something new to the sharing of each title among the group. Interactive feedback during each sharing can then be based on how prepared each member has been in leading the book discussion, stimulating the next member who is to read the same title, and returning to the sharing of previous period responding to the sharing of earlier member who read the same title.

In each case, it is highly recommended that individual student keeps a Web blog of what they experience during the reading so as to induce the reading and sharing of their fellow students.

Enrichment Activities

- *Author Talks at RC Reading Club*: It is always a refreshing experience to meet with authors, the creators of some beloved books we enjoy. So, organizing meetings or outings involving authors is one of the most special and popular ways for our RC Reading Club to engage our students. While it may be difficult to get an international, best-selling author to come to one of our Reading Club meetings, we may be surprised what some authors are willing to do. Thereby, we must be ready to organize or line up our convocations for any willing author to match those opportunities, if our Reading Club has featured several of his or her books and particularly if they are local authors from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland.

- *Reading Club Field Trips:* Once our reading club is established (on track) and members have gotten to know one another, organizing a field trip can be a wonderful way of enhancing relationships within the club community, and adding another dimension to the discussions. The simplest trip is probably just to have regular meeting at an unusual place, like visiting a cinema to watch an adaptation of a recently-discussed book. This will often provide great fodder for further discussion as members can debate on the accuracy and quality of the adaptation, the suitability of the actors, how well the story translated to the big screen, whether the screenplay did justice to the original, and many others. Or, instead of a movie, we could visit a theatre to watch a play or musical adaptation of a book. Again, this could stimulate much additional discussion, particularly if the story was adapted in an unexpected way, such as the *Tuesdays with Morrie* episodes. Or, we could visit some historical sites as those in Macau, considered as cultural assets of our world heritage.

- *Reading Club Community-Minded Ideas:* While our Reading Club is initiated with the intention of discussing books, it is not uncommon that our club activities may evolve into enjoyable social gathering and as members get to know one another, many would become keen on the idea of other activities besides book discussions. Group outings and themed nights based on a particular title, are popular alternatives, where we could organize food and music, for some good cause (charity perhaps) to match the book content, such as serving food and music that have significant meaning in the book or are the favorites of the characters or events in the book. We may also surprise our fellow students (those not living in the RC) with our momentum (or gift) of a book that our Reading Club has read and enjoyed, and invite them to join our Reading Club activities, in preparation for their enrolling into our RC house the next school year. Or we could help organize some Reading Enhancement program for our high school community, through mentoring individual high school students to enhance their reading ability, to appreciate and to enjoy reading and learning.

- *Starting our Reading Club Blog:* Today, blogs are inexpensive; in fact, most of the popular blogging services offer free-of-charge hosting to bloggers. So, starting a blog will take very little time, though we should pay attention to the following questions before setting up our blogs in cyberspace:

What is the purpose of the blog? Many existing reading clubs have blogs on the Web with very specific purposes. Some are to review only new books and up-and-coming authors. Other blogs are devoted to talking any and all books, from ancient texts to the most modern rap song lyrics. In the context of our RC Reading Club, our blogs should serve the mission we earlier stated in the beginning. Accordingly, our design and organization, as well as the content, must be consistently in place to live up to our themes of holistic student development.

Who will have the ability to post on the blog? Because the blog is attached to our Reading Club, comprising a community of student residents, we are to allow more than one person to gain entry to the workings of the blog so everyone can post at

leisure. To maintain control of the process, it is possible to install an individual blog for each club member to post his or her own blog, and each reading group is also likely to be assigned a suitable group blog to manage the individual blogs. This is not a difficult task to accomplish, but requires some organization and setup.

Will we allow comments on our blog? Most blogs today allow visitors to post comments if they are so moved. However, this is not a cut-and-dry proposition, as some blogs simply are not meant to engage guests in discussion, like the group blog to manage group members' blogs.

Perceived Benefits of Reading Club Activities

- It is widely agreed that reading expands our horizons and our Reading Club helps to do this at an even greater level, with the in-depth discussions and assimilations of different viewpoints all contributing to increasing our students' knowledge and appreciation of the world around us.
- Joining our Reading Club can help to extend student reading, as they will be tempted to try different types of books that they might not otherwise have chosen by themselves. Many people can become accustomed to the comfort of reading in a favorite genre and may not realize how much they might actually enjoy an altogether different type of book, until they are persuaded to try by other members of the reading group.
- Despite not associated with a formalized classroom structure, our reading groups are actually a fantastic place to promote learning. Discussing books help reinforce things in our students' mind and enable them to retain information better. Moreover, the informal learning environment should mean there is less fear of failing or humiliation before classmates, while the urge to participate should mean people will be more motivated to read their books of choice and gain the information.
- Each newly selected title should allow our students the opportunity to start afresh and do better, whether it is with more participation, improved leadership of discussions, more commitments to reading or simply better retention of the information or knowledge learned.
- The Reading Club should enable our students to mentally travel in time and appreciate different cultures, past and present, not only through the books selected, but also through any members or stories told or discovered with different backgrounds, such as reading books set in certain periods should allow our students to learn more about history, and discussing these differences should help our students understand such figures and events by placing their learning within a larger context.
- Participating in reading group discussion should do wonder for students' communication skills, teaching them to listen to different points of views and different ways of expression, as well as rendering their own positions, even with

disagreement, without resorting to emotional arguments. It should teach our students how to be both honest and yet tactful, which is often considered as a difficult but extremely valuable skill, that is largely appreciated and sought after in such arenas as work and family.

- For those shy of public speaking, our reading groups represent a great way to start practicing expressing their opinions to an audience or summarizing information and presenting it in a coherent and engaging way. Reading groups with a rotating roster of leaders means that every member has a chance to practice his or her leadership skills and the coordination of a group of people, with different backgrounds and opinions.
- For those with writing aspirations, our reading groups can be a wonderful breeding ground for ideas and provide the motivation for group members to pen their own literary masterpiece. Listening to other people's assessment of a book and their discussion of likes and dislikes about plot, character and style, can help enormously in their quest to become a better and more successful writer.
- The RC Reading Club and its constituent reading groups are meant to be great social forums to meet and befriend new people from campus, and provide an enjoyable and meaningful addition to our students' social calendar, providing opportunities to realize a student's holistic development throughout the four years of his or her undergraduate studies and beyond.

Scenario Thinking of Reading Club Activities

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 our resident students, especially to bring forth the perceived Reading Club benefits as described in the earlier section. Students, after settling down in a specific RC, will be organized into different small groups (preferably comprising 10 students per group, with a specific group structure and identity), known as the reading groups. It is estimated that there could be up to about 15 to 20 groups in each RC.
4. Each of the RC reading 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. One of the important topics in leadership training is *Learn to Learn* among our resident students.
5. All resident 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 our Reading Club group discussions, individual assessment, and plausible service opportunities, designed into our Reading Groups 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 and learning experiences.
 6. Each of the reading groups under the Reading Club, is to meet once every two weeks for about two hours, preferably on 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 information specific enough for the group to work on throughout the fortnight, accommodating the flexibility of group-based, pair-based, and individual involvement. Discussion and sharing of specific themes around the selected works of literature is considered the lead in the two-hour gathering so as not to miss the boat of our reading experience.
 7. Each of the reading 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 subsequent 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, sharable for others' reading. Such personal blogs are considered as a means to share student living and learning experiences, as an important part of their RC 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 (<http://greenleaf.org>) context could fit right in. The overall Reading Club program together with any 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 RC-GE connection program to truly help students become active engaged citizens in their local and global communities. 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 if any, 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.

Some Possible Organizational Structure for RC Reading Club

To properly run the RC Reading Club, it is expected that each RC must recruit a good number of reading group facilitators, preferably one per group, selected from among our faculty members, playing a volunteer role to coach the development of the reading group, whose group structure includes such roles as group coordinator (like a leader), group scribe, group liaison member, and other group members, all of which are played by resident students.

To support the growth of each reading group, it is also desirable that one SAS-based student worker could be assigned to each group, and each such student worker could serve more than one group, say, from 2 to 4 groups; so, a total of 8 such workers is needed to take care of all reading groups in the two RC houses: about 30.

If we were to organize 10 to 15 students per group, there should be 14 groups in East Asia Hall (137 students), and 16 groups in Pearl Jubilee Hall (162 students). So, if each facilitator has to care for two groups, one in each RC house, we need a total of 15 facilitators, recruited from among our volunteer academic staff. The best case is one facilitator per group, meaning a recruitment of 30 volunteer academic staff. In the official RC organizational structure, the role of reading group facilitator is best played by our non-resident fellows. So, we need to take stock of how many non-resident fellows we have so far. It is expected that the role of Chief-of-Student in each RC should get

involved in the coordination of the reading group facilitators (non-resident fellow), to plan the use of RC spaces and schedule of other RC activities such as the Sports Club.

The ten to fifteen reading groups in each RC are the constituent of the respective RC community. It is important to conceive what kind of community we want to develop among these student groups. Overall, it is not too much to expect such a community of students to be a purposeful community with drive, dedication, determination, and discipline. But it must also be a caring community for the collective and the individual growth of each group, as well as each student member in each group, in the community.

Some Meaningful Reading Club Activity worthy of our Consideration

Reference to: http://lib.hku.hk/friends/reading_club/
The University of Hong Kong Libraries Reading Club

We could well organize something similar in our UM Library, using different locations such as the American Corner, Auditorium II, and STDM Auditorium.

Some Clarification of FYE Program in CTLE Memo dated 2010JUL25

- The First-Year Experience (FYE) Program is an initiative long missing in our university. It is not a course-based program, but is meant to be a support system for freshmen students experiencing transitions from secondary school to university. It lasts from a student's first day of orientation to the final day of the first year at UM. It is proposed to focus on two essential concerns of transitions: academic and social. This FYE program could be run completely independent of the RC program, but much better if taking into account the design context of our RC ideals. The two major components designed to reach out to our students include: First-Year Seminars and Common Reading Experience, both of which could be designed as flexibly as needed to incorporate the needs of our students. The idea is to create a comfortable setting for UM to keep in touch with our students, and help them learn to learn and to enjoy their college education so as to become a productive element in our local and global community.
- The FYE Program must be sustained from the sophomore year through the junior year to the senior year, to support our ideals in holistic student development (HSD). Hence is born the context of the Servant-as-Leader Program, which is meant to be a comprehensive, four-year HSD-type program needed to continue the care and whole-person development of our students. The philosophy of servant-leadership, attributed to Robert K. Greenleaf, has been one of the leading models to design residential colleges in many a North America university. For more details, please consult: a) <http://greenleaf.org>, and b) <http://collegiateway.org/>

- It has been noticed that under our GE initiatives, our SAS is to offer a new course named *University Life* in 2011-2012, to cater for the needs of our first-year students, which seems overlapping with the FYE Program described above. But, upon a deeper examination, it is not difficult to identify the installation of such a course, lasting for one semester most in the fall, is good enough to become part of the FYE Program sufficient to serve as a crash-course to identify the needs of our freshmen, and to clarify the goals of holistic care for our students throughout their years of study at UM, through the informal setting of our FYE activities, whose atmosphere is typically of small-group family-like rather than in the large class of several hundred students in a big auditorium.
- It is generally felt that the importance of our *House Life in Brilliance* project has paid less attention than expected of the four-year holistic student development in the RC. The impression is that our project this year is just the test-bed for more meaningful program (or substances) to come. And it is only after the RC leadership teams have taken office, in August (our pilot RC starts in September) that any further plans or initiatives could be developed to fulfill the demands of holistic student development as blueprinted by our visions and missions of what is entailed in developing an all-round character of our graduates – an important goal identified through UM’s General Education initiatives to be piloted tested also this fall and officially launched next September. The context of why we need to design different RC activities has not been sufficiently clarified at this point, with rationales clear and convincing enough to win over more buy-in from students and parents; yet, such questions must be 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. I fully share this burden with our UM leadership, and I hope such situation could really improve soon.
- It is my sincere hope that our SAS’s current services could be lined up or streamlined more adaptably 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 in order to get the most of our elite undergraduate education. So, it is here in this brief report (or proposal) that our Reading Club activities have been deliberated and an effort has been made to situate the same in a comprehensive, four-year servant-leadership program to demonstrate our institutional commitments in action, in order to provide the substances of an elite undergraduate education, unique in Macau, through installing a visionary RC (at present, Reading Club) development program.

Thanks for your reading and attention.

All the best,

Vat

2010JUL28

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)

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P.S. I will spend some time during my annual leave to work out some more granular details at the level of a selected title, and how best to conduct the bi-weekly reading group sessions, in a phase-by-phase approach. But, first, I need to iron out what basic leadership training in each reading group. Currently, I am cooking up a theme called “There is a leader in YOU!” to lead the student-centered reading group, so that each group is to be transformed into some type of self-directed learning team (SDLT) to further develop themselves through regular reading, thinking, and writing activities. You bet: This is exciting work in progress. Thanks for your RC initiatives!