The case for the residential liberal arts, Part II: Working alone versus working together

Michael Hemesath
College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, mhemesath@csbsju.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/admin_pubs

Part of the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation

This Blog Post is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Administration Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.
The Case for Residential Liberal Arts, Part II: Working Alone Versus Working Together

Nearly a year ago newly appointed Yahoo CEO Marissa Meyer banned telecommuting. Just recently Hewlett-Packard CEO Meg Whitman put a similar policy in place. Both policies were presumably designed to increase productivity and innovation in the workplace by having individuals working in proximity and in groups. A Marketplace interview with Harvard Business School Professor Nancy Koehn explores this hypothesis. Koehn argues that, "Not all work is meant to be done alone. A lot of work — the best work, often — is done with others in serious pursuit, and often in a place where everyone meets to do it."

If this hypothesis about the benefits of proximity and group work is correct, I think it makes a strong case for the benefits of a residential, liberal arts experience, which emphasizes learning together. Not only does a lot of learning take place in group settings like classrooms or labs, but also informally in libraries, learning commons, dormitories and study groups. And this list does not begin to touch on the learning that takes place in extra-curricular settings like athletic teams or music groups. Furthermore, in the process of learning academic content in a residential setting, students also learn skills like how to work closely with others, how to negotiate group dynamics and how to efficiently take advantage of different skill sets among individuals.

Can you tell I am a fan of the residential, liberal arts experience?

About the
Author:
Michael Hemesath

Michael Hemesath is the 13th president of Saint John’s University. A 1981 SJU graduate, Hemesath is the first layperson appointed to a full presidential term at SJU. You can find him on Twitter [at] PrezHemesath.