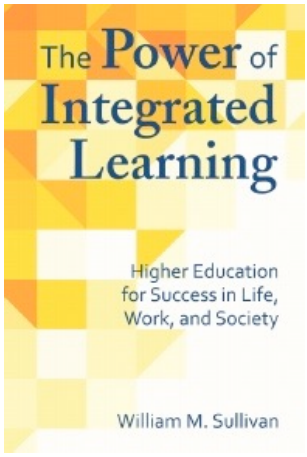


The Power of Integrated Learning: Higher Education for Success in Life, Work, and Society

Sullivan, William
Stylus Publishing, Llc., 2016

Book Review

Tags: civic engagement | integration | student learning

Reviewed by: C. Hannah Schell, *Monmouth College*
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Habits of the Heart (Bellah et al., U C Press, 1985) was required reading in my first-year seminar in the late 1980s. That book, and the liberal arts education into which I was being initiated, changed my life profoundly. It introduced me to new modes of thought (sociology, philosophy, religious studies), instilled a critical sensibility (concern about individualism in American culture), and planted a seed about the importance of religion within a culture (and why it is worthwhile to study it). When I saw the name of one of *Habits*' authors attached to a new book on integrated learning, something my own institution takes very seriously, I was intrigued.

Sullivan is a senior scholar at the New American Colleges and Universities consortium, and on one level this book merely reports on distinctive activities and programs at some of the member institutions. Those brief descriptions can be helpful and inspiring, especially if your school is embarking on similar programmatic development. A sizeable appendix offers short campus profiles of the twenty-five institutions. In the introduction, Sullivan addresses his readers as people (parents, prospective students, future faculty) who may be "looking for a college that seriously tries to integrate the liberal arts, professional studies, and civic responsibility" (1). There is a dizzying array of initiatives, but the book succeeds in its agenda of persuasion: that the ideals of integrated learning are significant and worthy.

Yet, there is a second aspect to Sullivan's agenda, and at that level the book is a lot more interesting to those already situated in higher education. Woven throughout the book, Sullivan offers insightful commentary on the significance as well as the effectiveness of integrated learning. For example, at the end of the first chapter Sullivan connects the importance of service learning with emerging research in developmental psychology. Drawing on the work of

William Damon who writes about the importance of forming a sense of "life purpose," Sullivan argues that "growing into a mature, educated person committed to significant purposes requires living in a community where values are taken seriously and structure behavior in everyday life" (27). That is precisely what our more innovative programs can do: cultivate that needed sense of purpose, which in turn fosters resilience. But in Sullivan's hands, resilience is not just about retention and graduation rates – it is part of a larger mission to produce a healthier civic culture with an engaged, proactive citizenry. Later, Sullivan posits, "the key factor is that the members of such societies share a sense of membership in some larger whole. This gives them an ability and willingness to recognize that the well-being of each group depends on cooperation with the others. Such shared expectations and bonds are the prerequisite for a functioning, pluralistic democracy" (60).

For those in theology and religious studies, this book offers a larger context in which to understand the work of instilling the virtues of tolerance and understanding. Those involved in service learning, study abroad, civic engagement, or vocation-related programming will appreciate that such initiatives are celebrated in these pages. At this level, the book can be a needed tonic for beleaguered faculty. If you share Sullivan's ideals and his sense of the role liberal learning can play in that vision of a pluralistic, democratic society, then this book serves as a reminder of how your work contributes to that mission.

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