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Butler 2020: Integrate. Exemplify excellence in the liberal arts, professional education, and their effective integration.

Written by: Katelyn Breden

A low, contented buzzing grows more audible every time I bend down towards the bees. They busily buzz around the flower of the squash while I harvest the fruit. Later in the day, my body will be sore and the sweat will run freely. For now, a morning breeze staves off the sun's heat while the bees and I work together.

Farm work is generally not the vision inspired by the words "liberal arts." We picture academics hunched over exciting papers, or geneticists analyzing DNA. A destructive piece of folk wisdom tells us that farmers are, generally, uneducated. Spend a day with a farmer, however, and you will observe the scientific analysis of crop planning, philosophical awe and frustration at Mother Nature, and lyrical understanding of the connections between it all.

These farmers are part of a much larger food system. Systems, by their nature, are integrative. In recent years, food activists have been working to improve both local and national food systems. Faced with looming threats from hunger, obesity, and climate change, these individuals and organizations must integrate their efforts. They build bridges and connections between nonprofits, businesses, governmental organizations, farmers, and everyday consumers, resulting in an impressive force that can meet the failures of an unsustainable food system with strong solutions.

My work at Butler University has been preparing me to enter this network of food visionaries. Already, I have participated in a year-long food fellowship through the Indy Food Council. I worked with Green BEAN Delivery, an organic produce and natural grocery delivery service, to communicate farmers' stories to consumers. Meanwhile, I represented Butler among my other fellows as we engaged in the community. During this fellowship, I found myself documenting the lives of farmers while experiencing the work for myself. This immersive experience complemented the strong liberal arts foundation I was, and still am, building.

As a double major, my experience at Butler has been necessarily integrative. I have combined my two academic disciplines in order to better understand the world. My education is multifaceted not only through my double majoring, but also through the interdisciplinary nature of both majors. Strategic Communication in the College of Communication combines the fields of public relations and advertising. In the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences exists a major very close to my heart. Science, Technology, and Society (STS) is not the most well-known major, but we are gaining traction. We are a

unique group of individuals who are fascinated by the connections between the scientific and social realms.

I could choose to specifically pursue a degree in agriculture, biology, business, environmental science, history, philosophy, psychology, political science, or urban planning. However, through STS, I am gaining an invaluable liberal arts education that allows me to forge connections between different areas of thought and understanding. My professors and peers have consistently cultivated an environment where moving beyond the facts on the page is not only welcomed but absolutely necessary.

In a word, we integrate. We integrate ideas and knowledge from multiple fields in order to gain a more robust education. Butler 2020 has chosen the word "integrate" to describe the envisioned relationship between liberal arts and a professional education, in recognition that excellence is achieved through holistic experience. My experiences at Butler have been teaching me how to effectively integrate varying skills and knowledge. They have also solidified my passion for enacting this vision in my pursuits outside of academia, not only after graduation but in the present as well.

In my very first semester at Butler, I enrolled in an Indianapolis Community Requirement course called Humans and the Natural Environment. Dr. O'Malley taught us about psychology as well as environmental conflicts, challenging us to integrate the two areas as we learned about conservation psychology. Our class divided into groups, choosing to work with different community organizations. My group worked with the Unitarian Universalist Church of Indianapolis (UUI). Interestingly, UUI is integrative in itself as the church is open to individuals of all faith backgrounds, and identifying as both Unitarian Universalist and another faith (or lack thereof) is seen as completely normal.

We were tasked with aiding UUI in surveying the surrounding neighborhood to understand residents' needs and wants in relation to a more environmentally friendly community. We engaged the congregation with educational tools to help them assess their own carbon footprints. My individual contribution was an online collection of healthy and earth-friendly recipes. This experience is but one example of the ways that Butler has allowed me to integrate multiple areas of knowledge.

My liberal arts education at this university will propel me forward, armed with these skills. I am thrilled at the opportunity to join the sustainable food system movement, where progress is only achieved through integration of all areas of the community.