Globalization through Education

We are living in a global century; and while many people may acknowledge this fact, very few are prepared for what this new age entails. The world is no longer divided by vast oceans, impenetrable mountains, language and culture. Technology and the economy have transcended these “natural” barriers, connecting the most remote places on Earth with the most known. Perhaps the essence of the world is realized—a sphere of life that almost exists as one. The only missing element is us. It is now very clear to me, as a college student, that education is the vector through which future generations will be prepared for this new and ongoing global community. “From the American Century to the Global Century,” however, argues that the current policies employed in America’s schools and universities are not sufficient. Education systems must respond in ways to prepare graduates for the new global century. The aforementioned source, a recommendation written by universities across the United States, maintains that people need to be attuned with “the sciences and mathematics, social sciences, humanities, histories, languages, and the arts.” In order to “integrate” all of these together as part of a liberal and specialized education, divisions between disciplines need to be abolished and a reformation of curriculum is to be raised in their stead.

During my senior year of high school I experienced an unexpected dilemma. The word “major” made me feel uneasy as I filled out college applications in hopes of pursuing a
promising career. All the categories and names of different areas of expertise made me indecisive. My interests did not simply land on one major, but a collection of majors from various backgrounds: English, biology, philosophy, ethnic studies. I became frustrated at the partitions of knowledge. I did not know then, as I do now, that my desires for seemingly unrelated areas of study were answering the calls of the global century. While it is traditional to set boundaries between liberal arts and professional fields, tradition is not always the best (or correct) path. “Academic silos” have been created and providing “a more holistic and integrative approach to college learning” difficult to achieve. Perhaps it is not possible to completely destroy these divides or silos, but building bridges and connections between disciplines are tasks within reach. It might be a moral duty to do so, since limiting a student’s capacity for knowledge through narrow learning could be seen as immoral—students should not be forced to “choose either a liberal arts and sciences pathway or a professional pathway.” While the world has achieved globalization by surpassing physical and cultural barriers, students too must cross barriers that impede integrative education to achieve global citizenship.

The remapping of liberal education is an endeavor that will have far reaching benefits for the new global century. In years past, liberal education was thought to be an “elite curriculum” and an “option for the fortunate.” Today, while liberal education may not seem elite, I feel that many students turn their noses away from this path because they see it as being irrelevant to their goals. According to many employers and the authors of the “Global Century,” a liberal education is of the most relevance for inward and outward success. It will develop individuals who are ready for the changes that await them. From an economic perspective, those who take part in integrative and applied learning will be equipped for their careers, many of which will “require a working appreciation of the historical, cultural, ethical, and global environments.” Employers
such as Siemens, State Farm, and Raytheon are seeking individuals who “have an understanding of global integration.” Liberal education is also essential for civil society and social life. Science and technology are playing greater roles in our everyday lives, yet everyday these two elements change and progress. Decisions will need to be made on how science and technology can affect humanity, and such issues that arise will require careful examination. To address this, liberal education will help students “master the arts of inquiry, analysis, and communication” in preparation for the economy and for democracy. Inwardly, it will “enrich every [facet] of life,” such as environmental, cultural, and ethical aspects.