reminded of the importance of beginning to explore, even at this early stage, options for practicing the liberal future trajectory confusing in their first several weeks of college, and how that exploration might help students to imagine their

While all three workshops entail students’ self-reflection on past and current educational experiences and their articulation of future aspirations and goals, each workshop has a slightly different focus. The first-semester workshop emphasizes exploration—exploration of what has been most exciting, surprising, disturbing, confusing in their first several weeks of college, and how that exploration might help students to imagine their future trajectory differently, and to explore areas they might not otherwise have chosen. Students are also reminded of the importance of beginning to explore, even at this early stage, options for practicing the liberal
arts in practice that can benefit from significant planning and forethought (study abroad, community-based learning, internships, etc.).

The second-semester workshop highlights agency, challenging students to articulate their own (more or less) nascent vision of their personal trajectory through the liberal arts based on the questions, approaches, and topics that they have found most provocative thus far. At this point, all students narrate, in writing, what they are most excited about exploring and achieving over the next three years, but are encouraged to express that vision in terms other than the completion of majors and requirements, even if those choices figure centrally in the narrative. Students make their course choices for the fall in light of this narrative.

The third-semester workshop facilitates more individualized engagement with what it means to practice the liberal arts through reflection and planning exercises. By the end of the workshop, students will have drafted an academic plan and a rationale for how it both fosters and exemplifies the liberal arts in practice. This plan is a working document that remains tentative and open to revision in light of conversations with major advisors and other mentors. When students declare a major (and many will have already done so at this point), they are expected to share this plan with their major advisor, and to revise it in light of ongoing conversations and changing opportunities (although different advisors will obviously engage with the document differently). It could profitably be revisited in the context of the capstone as a site for reflecting on the student’s experience over the past four years.

Prior to each workshop, then, students will complete assignments that provide both the starting point for the workshop activities and a basis for grading and program assessment. The assignments comprise a series of prompts that students respond to in writing. While some of the questions to be addressed in preparation for each workshop will vary according to the semester and to advisor preference, two prompts will be repeated each semester:

- Identify one learning experience this semester (whether inside or outside of the classroom) that was especially meaningful and memorable—something that you think will have lasting impact on you. Explain why it had such an effect on you, and how you think it might affect your educational choices and your life in the future.
- Identify two learning goals you have for the upcoming semester at Beloit College, and explain how you may be able to achieve them and what will be required of yourself and others in order to do so.

These questions are almost identical to questions that students reflect on at the beginning of their FYI seminar, and the responses will allow us to assess over time student development of a sense of agency and ownership over their own educational trajectory, one of the primary desired outcomes of the Initiatives Program. They will also allow us to correlate the development of agency with subsequent educational and life choices, thus providing a rich resource for assessment both within and beyond the Initiatives program. Assessment of the essays is completed by seniors who receive training in using a rubric to analyze the responses. (It is worth noting that in our pilot assessment of responses to such questions given in FYI seminars in fall 2010, the seniors involved found the experience quite interesting and rewarding, both in terms of the research experience they gained thereby, and in terms of the self-reflection the activity facilitated.)

In addition to these repeated prompts, each workshop will focus on a series of specific prompts. Some sample writing prompts follow.
Workshop 1 (Exploration):

1. When we talk about practicing the liberal arts, we often refer to a variety of things like values, skills, opportunities, experiences, obligations, and consequences. Identify one of each of the following, and explore its significance in your own education thus far:
   - One value or belief of a liberally educated student.
   - One skill of a liberally educated student.
   - One opportunity or experience of a liberally educated student.
   - One reason that—or way in which—any of the above are desirable to or valuable for anybody.

2. In your time at Beloit, has there been a choice that you made that you have regretted making? Explain why you regret making that choice.

3. As you imagine the next three-and-a-half years of your academic and personal journey, what (if anything) are you afraid of? What excites you most?

Comment [1]: This seems to work well as is if you think it will yield the sorts of responses you want.

Comment [2]: This is an interesting advising question; might help address extremes of student expectations/beliefs.

Comment [3]: As a possible way to get at these using language borrowed from the LAP rubric, maybe something like “Describe an academic or co-curricular strength or challenge that you have exhibited in the past semester, explaining how they are related to the contexts in which you experienced them and how you plan to address them to increase your effectiveness over the next 3.5 years.”

Comment [4]: Borrowing the “explain the reasoning, then ask the question” structure of the prompt above, you might add: “One of the key outcomes of the liberal arts in practice is the ability to draw meaningful connections between knowledge and experiences outside the classroom and the subjects and issues explored inside it. Explain some connections you have noticed between your knowledge and/or experience gained outside of the classroom and something covered in one of your courses over the past semester (and maybe: “How might someone disagree or offer a different perspective on this connection?”)

AND/OR

Another key outcome of the liberal arts in practice is the ability to transfer skills/abilities/theories/methodologies learned in one context in new contexts. Describe an opportunity outside of the formal classroom you have had to apply/use a skill/ability/theory learned in the classroom.”
Workshop 2 (Agency):

A Beloit education focuses on the practice of the liberal arts, where “practice” incorporates three interrelated senses: (1) repetition toward improvement; (2) cultivation of habits of mind and body; and (3) application of ideas, skills, and perspectives. All three notions involve the ongoing recognition of why a liberal arts education matters and has value (i.e., the “so what” question). In light of this notion of “practicing” the liberal arts:

1. How would you describe the customary or habitual patterns of thought, belief, feeling, or action that captures your experience of work, play, and life thus far at Beloit College? Share expectations, aspirations, observations, and suggestions about how “a day in your life” at Beloit typically demonstrates and/or develops a liberally educated person—or fails to do so.

2. What have you been able to improve at over the past year because you’ve had the opportunity to work at it over time? Consider academic skills, social relationships, personal traits, etc.

3. What would you like to improve at between now and graduation? What are the skills, experiences, routines, resources, motivators, etc. that will facilitate your success? What are the obstacles?

4. What would you like to make a regular part of your routine? What are some attitudes or values or “habits of mind” you would like to cultivate? What are some opportunities you would like to take advantage of more often? What are the obstacles?
Workshop 3 (Practice):
A liberal arts education at Beloit College develops strong intellectual and practical skills, the capacity to engage with complex and diverse communities, breadth of knowledge, and an interdisciplinary flexibility of mind—and above all, the ability to put these skills and perspectives into practice in a variety of different circumstances.

1. How have you been able to put your education into practice? Write about something you’ve participated in or observed in the last year that you might cite as a successful (or unsuccessful) “application” of the liberal arts.

2. Try to imagine one or two scenarios five years from now about which you might think or say, “This is my liberal arts education in practice!” Consider professional, social, intellectual, political, or personal elements in your life.

3. Imagine your remaining two-and-a-half years of college. What would you like those years to include? What sorts of opportunities, learning experiences, relationships, abilities, would you like to cultivate over those years? What sorts of educational and life choices (coursework, internships, off-campus study, community engagement, co-curricular activities) will be most conducive to fulfilling your vision, and why? Be as specific as possible:

After we have established a framework for each of the workshops and put faculty development in place, we hope to develop strong mentorship roles for more advanced students to play in the workshop.

Course goals/ objectives/outcomes:
Please see the attached draft syllabus template. The objectives of the Initiatives advising program in general are also the goals of these workshops, which constitute an integral part that program. While individual instructors will of course tailor their syllabi to suit their own approaches to advising, the objectives of the Initiatives advising program will remain constant, as will the criteria for evaluation of student work in the workshops.

Course structure. Check all that apply:
   _X_ Lecture/Discussion ___ Studio _X_ Lab/Workshop ___ Other (Specify)

If current library or equipment holdings are inadequate, estimate the cost of additional holdings required.

Current holdings are adequate.

Please attach names of a proposed text and/or core readings.
Readings (if any) will vary among different sections. Beginning in fall 2012, readings may include reflective writings by alumni.