

THE ANTEATER VIRTUES

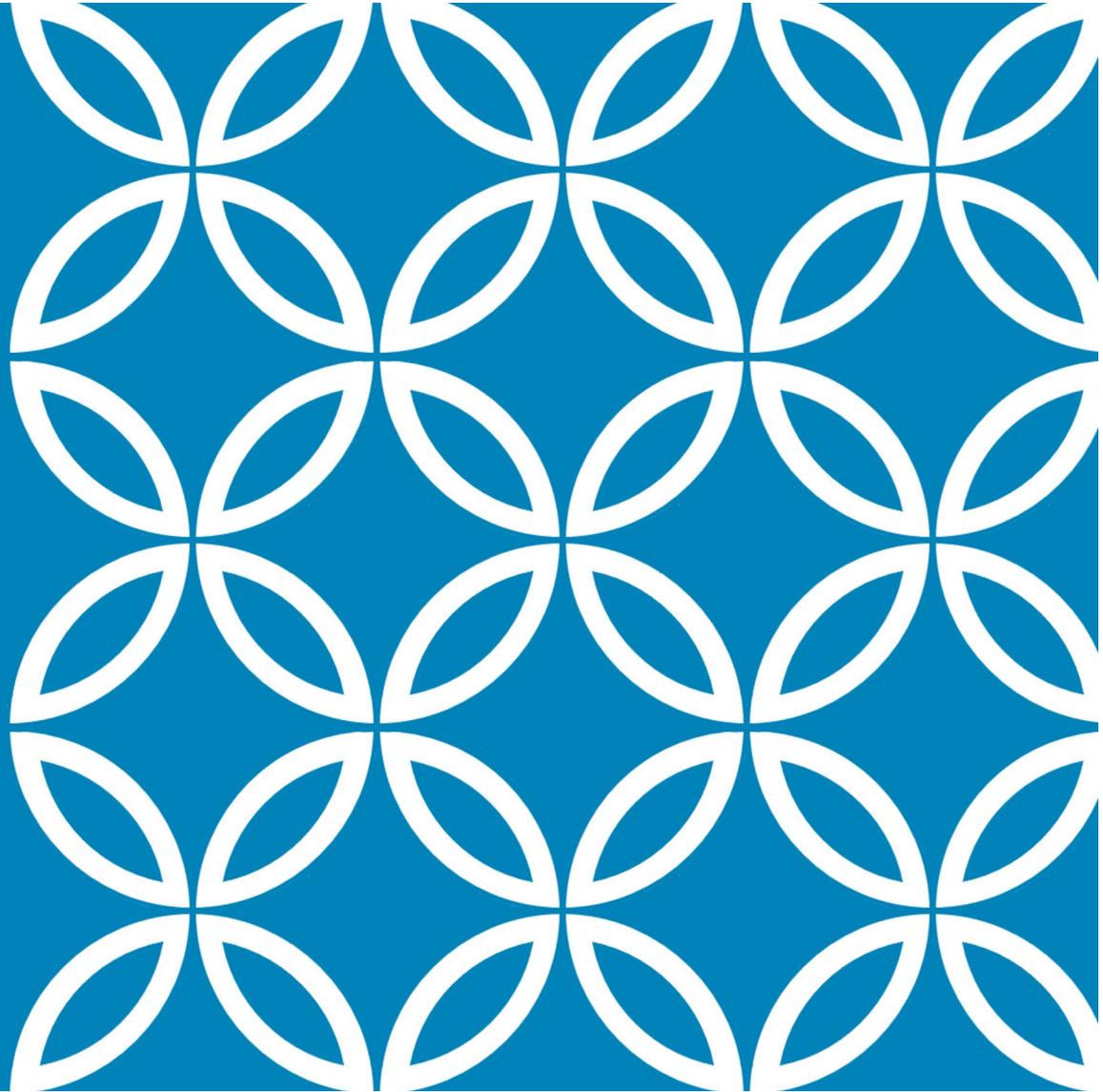
DUNCAN PRITCHARD



STRUCTURE OF THE TALK

- ❖ The background to the project.
- ❖ The project itself.
- ❖ What's distinctive about what we are doing.
- ❖ Why projects like this are needed.
- ❖ Future directions.

BACKGROUND





EDUCATION AS INTELLECTUAL LIBERATION

- ❖ There's a way of thinking about education, in its purest form, as concerned with the intellectual liberation of the individual.
- ❖ Done well, education does more than give someone knowledge and skills, it also helps them to think for themselves and so drive their own educational development.
- ❖ Education, so construed, recognizes the dignity of individuals and their self-realization.

EDUCATION AS INTELLECTUAL LIBERATION: THEORY

- ❖ Before coming to UC Irvine, and especially in my previous post at the University of Edinburgh, I simultaneously explored both the theory and practice of these ideas.
- ❖ The theory led me to the proposal that the overarching epistemic goal of education is the cultivation of *virtuous intellectual character*.
- ❖ This is concerned with the subject's integrated set of admirable intellectual character traits known as the *intellectual virtues*.



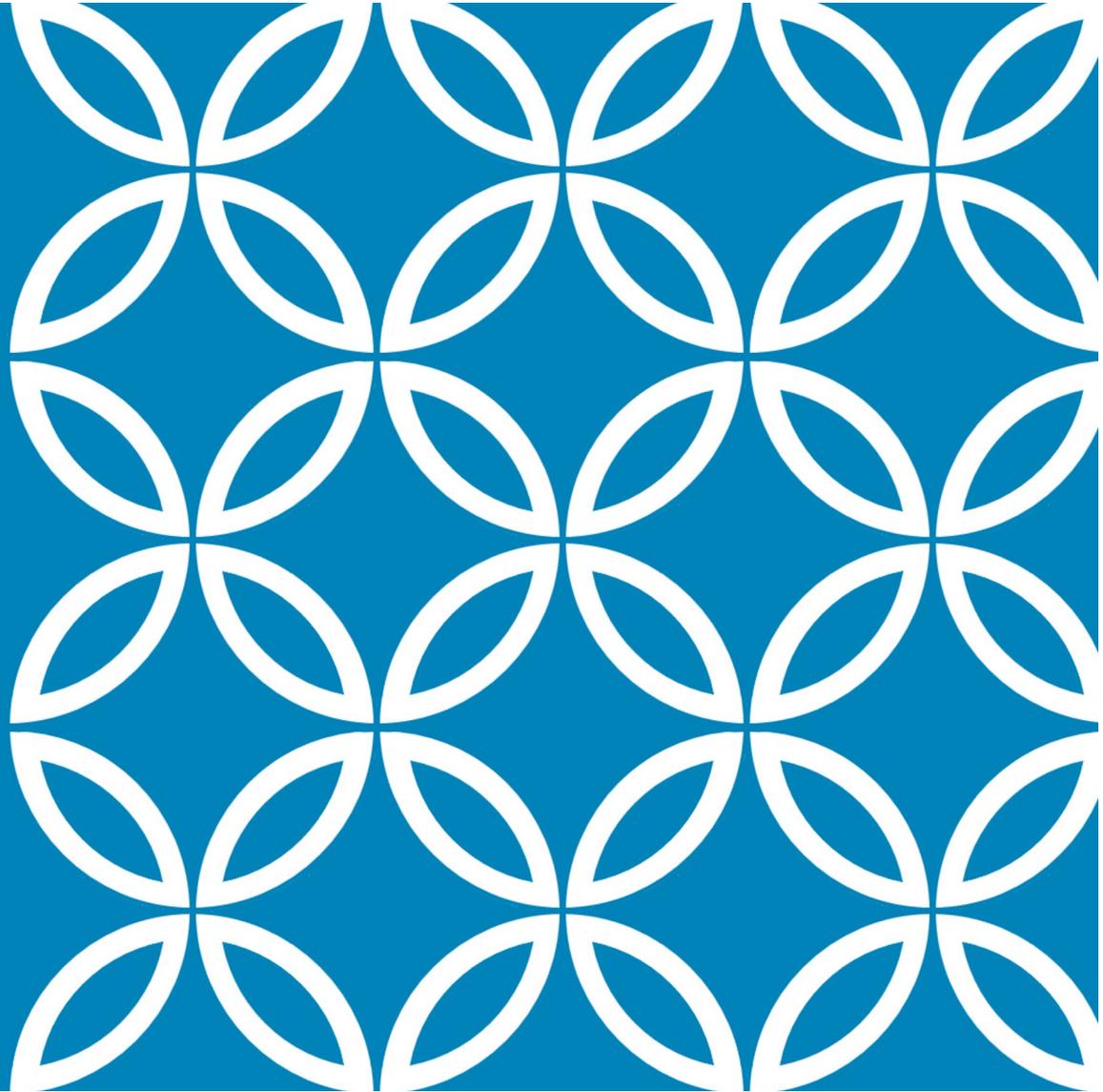


EDUCATION AS INTELLECTUAL LIBERATION: PRACTICE

Three Applications

- ❖ *Philosophy in schools.* Especially critical thinking for elementary-aged children.
- ❖ *Special needs education.* Especially with regard to how technology functions within such contexts as a form of extended cognition.
- ❖ *Prison education.* Long-term prisoners with limited educational backgrounds engaged in collaborative critical thinking activities.

THE PROJECT





TAKING THE PLUNGE

- ❖ Several contemporary educational establishments had embraced educating for virtuous intellectual character, with positive effects.
- ❖ But attempting this within a large public R1 university seemed far too ambitious.
- ❖ Fortunately, the stars aligned for us. In particular, we benefited from very strong institutional support, key educational collaborators, and local expertise.

THE ANTEATER VIRTUES

Main Objectives

- ❖ To be the first leading university to bring the intellectual virtues—and educating for intellectual character more generally—into the heart of its curriculum and wider educational culture.
- ❖ To run educational studies of the pedagogical effectiveness of this unique initiative.
- ❖ To provide freely-available resources for other educational institutions to use to implement their own intellectual virtue-based initiatives (e.g., other Universities, such as UCs and CSUs, community colleges, high schools, prisons, etc).

THE ANTEATER VIRTUES



THE FOUR ANTEATER VIRTUES

- ❖ The intellectual virtue of **curiosity** involves being driven by a desire for the truth to undertake inquiries into important matters.
- ❖ The intellectual virtue of **integrity** involves being open and honest in one's dealings with others and also being honest with oneself.
- ❖ The virtue of **intellectual humility** involves being aware of one's fallibility and hence being willing to learn from others and their expertise and experience.
- ❖ The virtue of **intellectual tenacity** involves having the intellectual 'grit' to continue your inquiries even in the face of obstacles.



*** THE STRUCTURE OF THE MODULES ***

INTRODUCING THE INTELLECTUAL VIRTUES

CURIOSITY

INTELLECTUAL
HUMILITY

INTELLECTUAL
TENACITY

INTEGRITY

ADVANCED MODULES

CAPSTONE MODULES

*** PROGRESSION ***

ORIENTATION



SAMPLE MODULES

LOWER-DIVISION
COURSES



INTRODUCTORY
MODULES

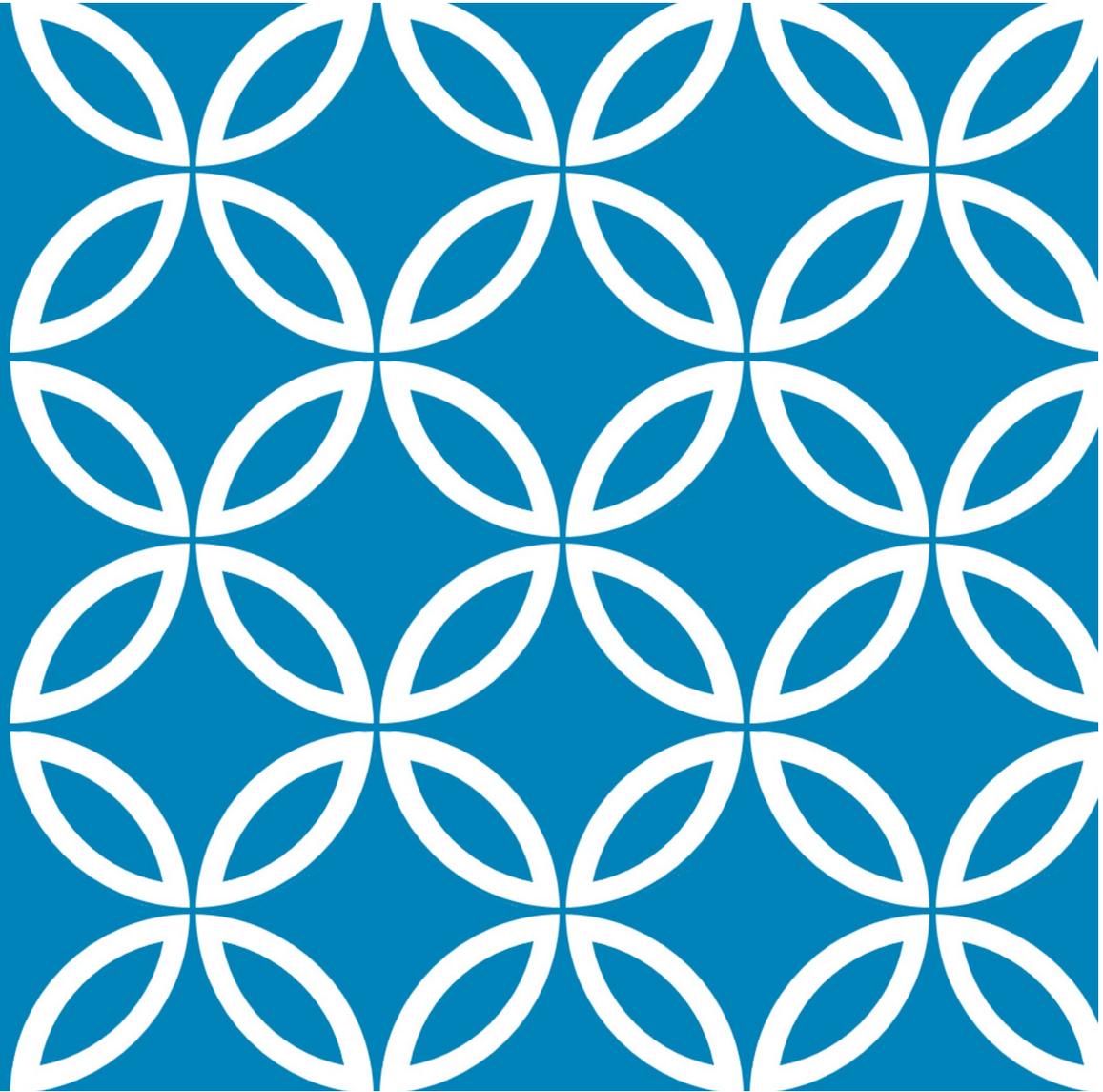
UPPER-DIVISION
COURSES



ADVANCED AND
CAPSTONE MODULES

VIRTUOUS LEARNER CERTIFICATE

**DISTINCTIVE
FEATURES**



DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE PROJECT

There are several features of the *Anteater Virtues* project that make it distinctive:

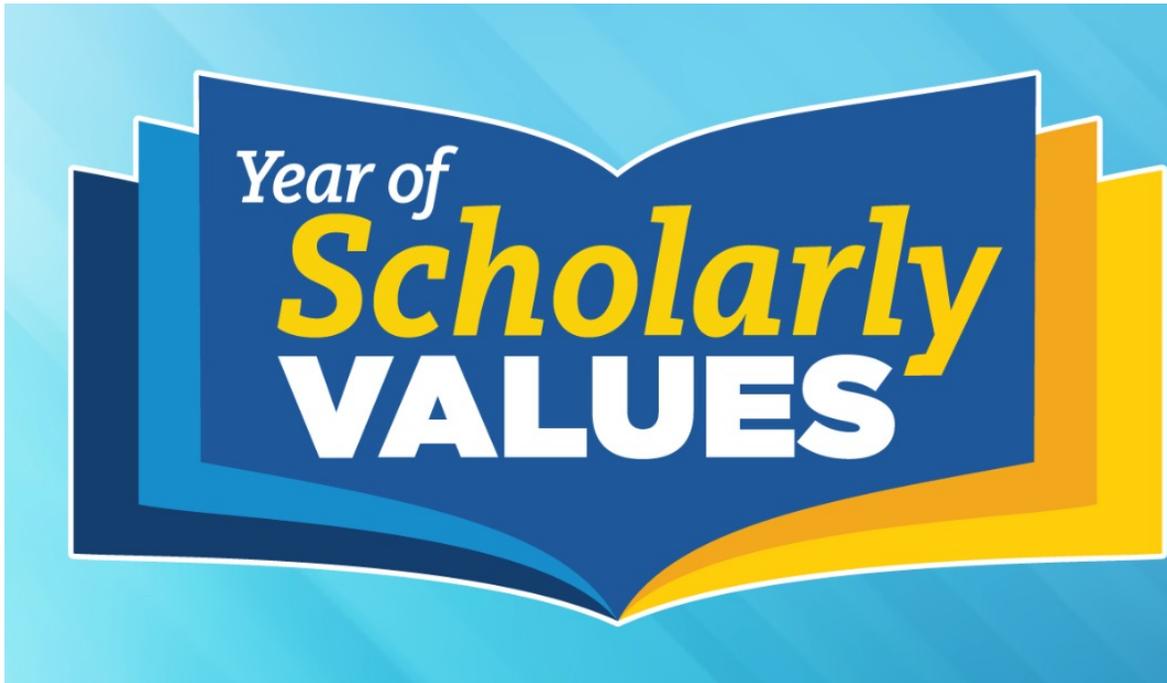
- ❖ It is fully embedded into the general intellectual culture of the institution.
- ❖ It is specifically focused on educating for virtuous *intellectual* character.
- ❖ It also teaches the theory behind the project.
- ❖ It is accompanied by a comprehensive series of empirical studies.

THE ANTEATER VIRTUES



INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT





INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

- ❖ We've been tremendously lucky to have such strong institutional support for our project, at the highest levels.
- ❖ Without it, it would've been very difficult to have such campuswide influence.
- ❖ Example: our module on educating for virtuous intellectual character is embedded into central pedagogical training.
- ❖ Example: UCI's campuswide theme for 2024-25 was 'The Scholarly Values'. This was specifically designed to promote the *Anteater Virtues* project.



THE FOCUS ON INTELLECTUAL VIRTUE

- ❖ It is important to distinguish between educating for virtuous character and educating for *intellectually* virtuous character.
- ❖ Both endeavors are valuable and have their place in education, and both have empirical support.
- ❖ But in a higher education context, and especially public HE, the focus on virtuous intellectual character has many advantages.
- ❖ Scholars have a shared set of intellectual values, even if they disagree on many other topics, such as morality and politics.

TEACHING THE THEORY

- ❖ One of the innovations of our project is the idea that, at least within higher education, we shouldn't just educate for virtuous intellectual character, but also educate students about the theory behind what we're doing.
- ❖ The guiding thought is that teaching the theory provides students with the means to conceptualize their educational development in virtue-theoretic terms, thereby enhancing that development.
- ❖ In addition to critically introducing the ideas behind educating for virtuous intellectual character to students, we also make available the training module we created for educators.



EDUCATIONAL STUDIES

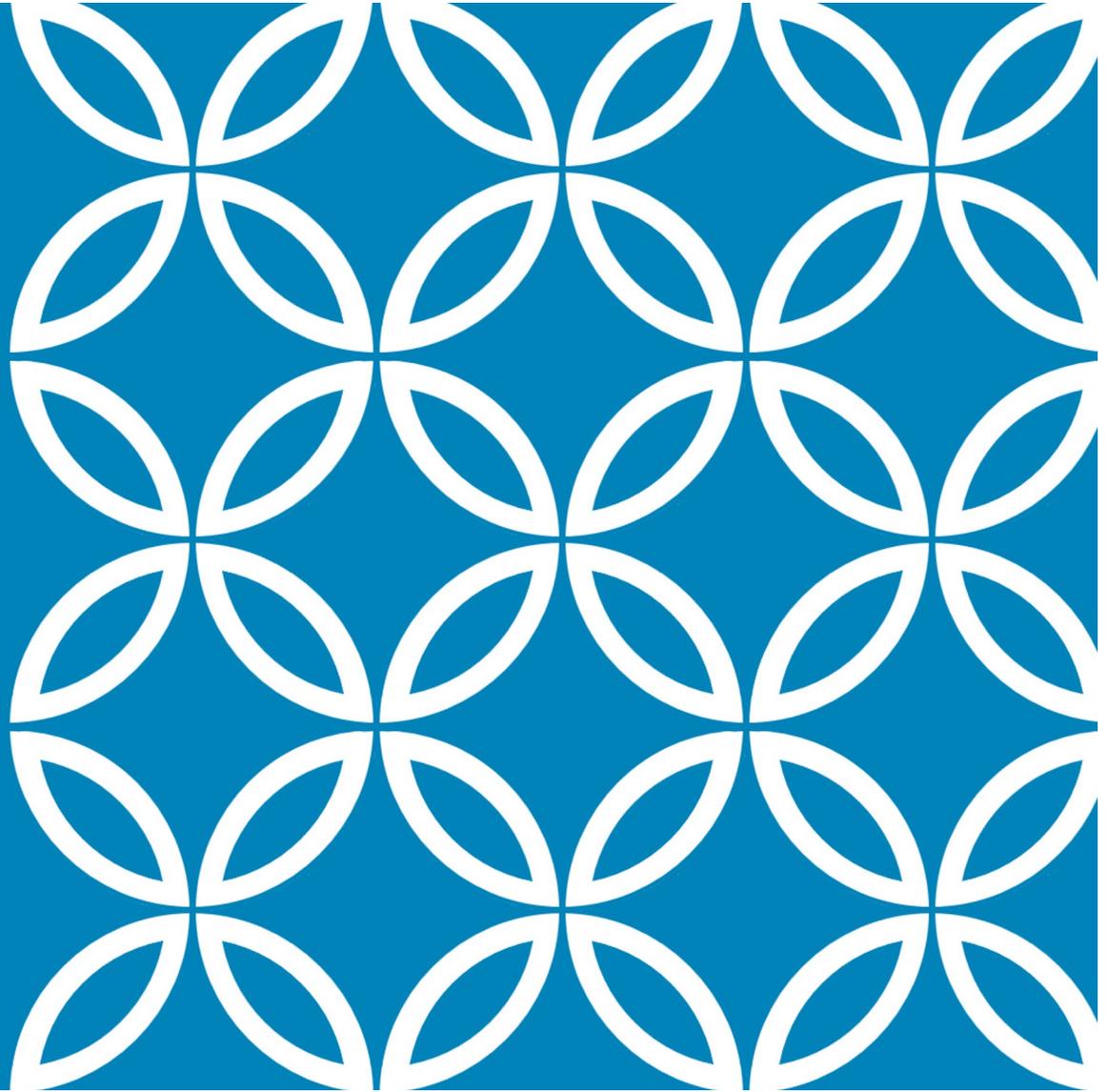
- ❖ We've already run several studies on the pedagogical effectiveness of our *Anteater Virtues* project.
- ❖ The positive results mirror the empirical work that has already been done in other educational contexts (e.g., in schools).
- ❖ We are now embarking on a major longitudinal educational study of the *Anteater Virtues* project.
- ❖ In addition, we are also looking at other factors, such as variations across disciplines, its effects on student wellbeing, and how it influences how students use AI.



UCI MUST PROJECT

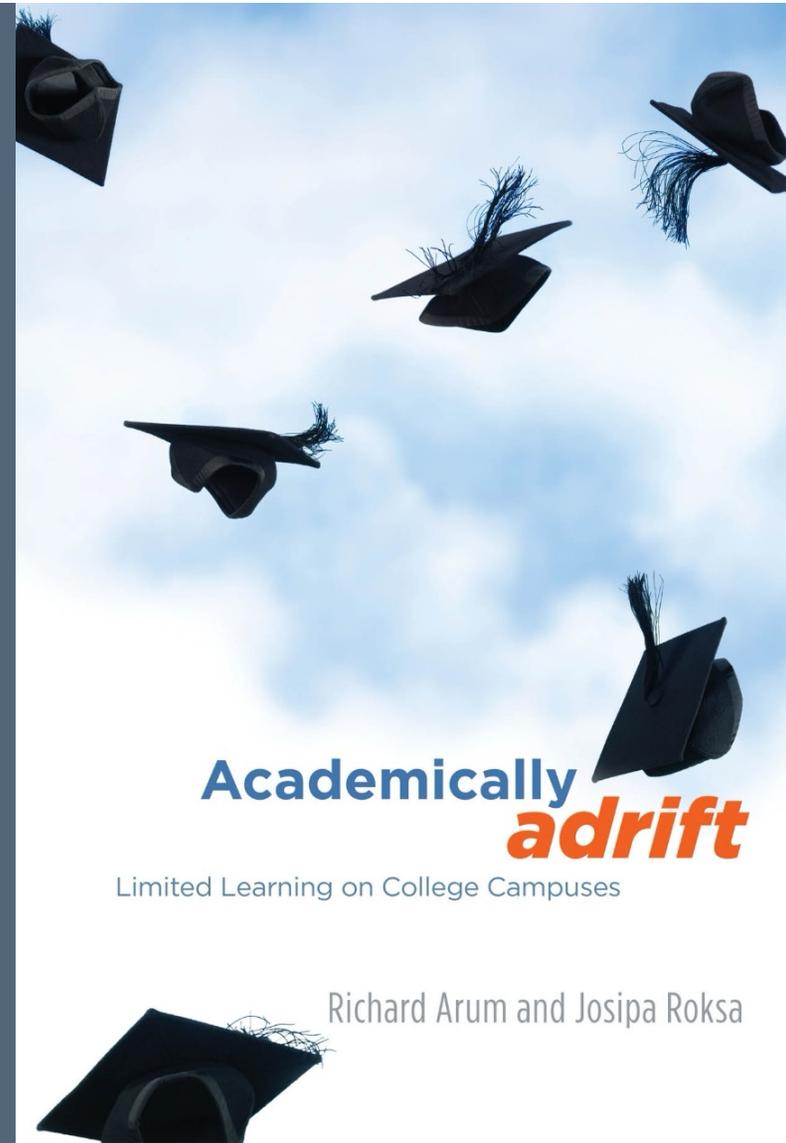
UCI Measuring Undergraduate Success Trajectories Project

BENEFITS



WHEN LEARNING FADES, INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER REMAINS

- ❖ There have been a lot of empirical studies that show that much of the knowledge and skills that students learn, including in higher education, is lost after a few years.
- ❖ On the 'bucket' model of education, whereby it's just about instilling knowledge and skills, that's a problem.
- ❖ But it's not a problem if one holds that education is really about cultivating virtuous intellectual character. This is because intellectual character is durable, even once a particular body of knowledge or specific skills start to fade.



AGAINST INSTRUMENTALISM IN EDUCATION

- ❖ Educating for virtuous intellectual character goes hand-in-hand with a view of educational development as an on-going life-long process.
- ❖ Relatedly, it counters a prevailing instrumentalist conception of education as piecemeal, task-focused, market-tested, and unrelated to one's wider personal development.
- ❖ We find that students who embrace this different way of learning don't just have better educational outcomes, but also have a greater sense of well-being.

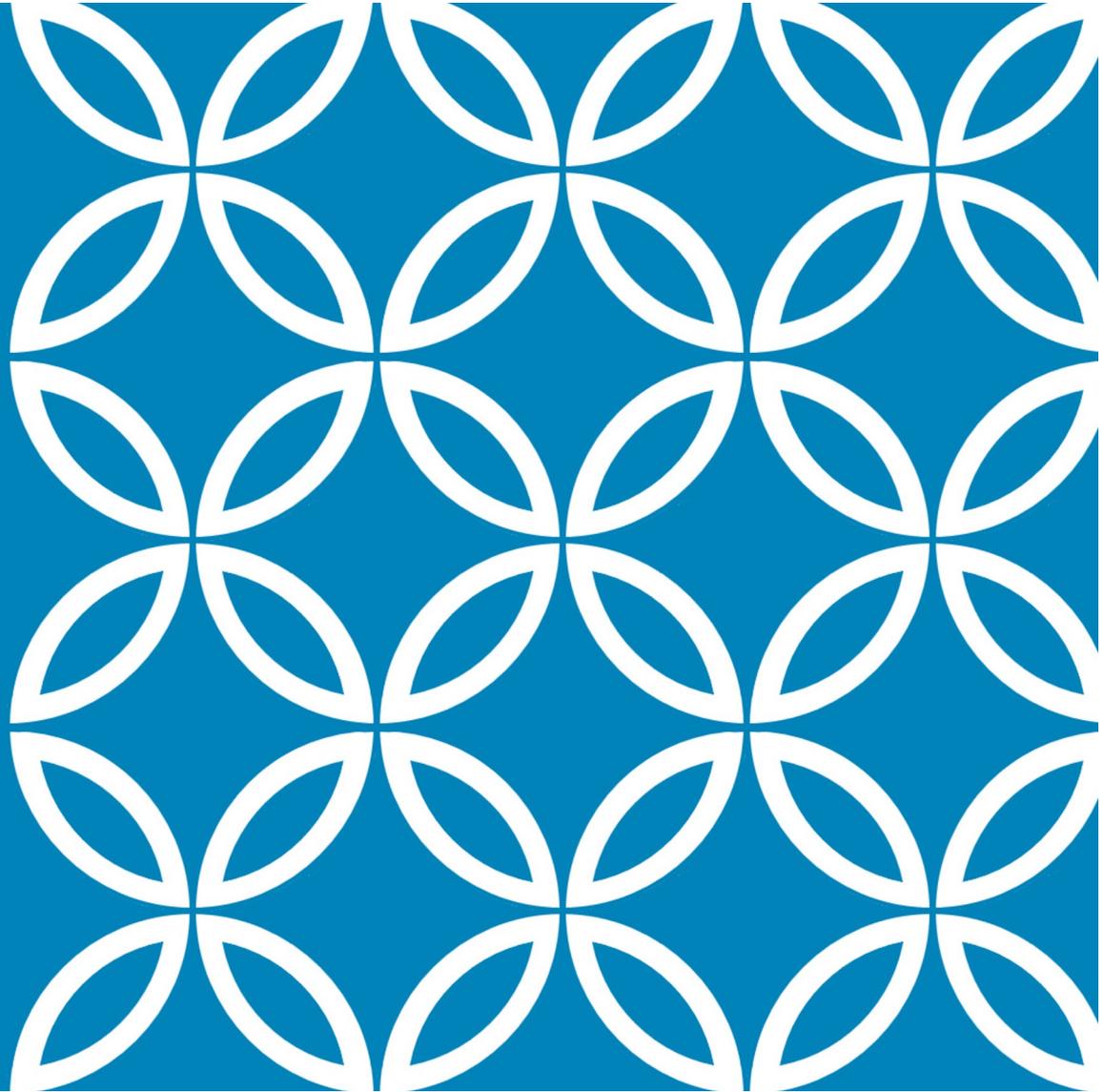




DISAGREEMENT IN THE INFORMATION AGE

- ❖ Disagreement has always created epistemic challenges, but these challenges have taken on a new form in the information age.
- ❖ How do we navigate epistemic environments with multiple sources of information, often involving conflicting viewpoints, where misleading information is rife and the experts aren't obvious?
- ❖ Part of the solution lies in educating for the intellectual virtues. Students need to learn how to think and argue virtuously.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS



FORGING CONNECTIONS

Thanks to a new grant from Wake Forest University's Educating Character Initiative, the latest phase of the project is focused beyond UC Irvine.

- ❖ *Prison education.* E.g., UCI Lifted.
- ❖ *Museum education.* E.g., Discovery Cube.
- ❖ *International Partners.* E.g., universities in UK, Australia, Argentina, Greece and Taiwan.
- ❖ *Community Colleges.* E.g., Saddleback Community College.
- ❖ *School education.* E.g., local high schools and middle schools.





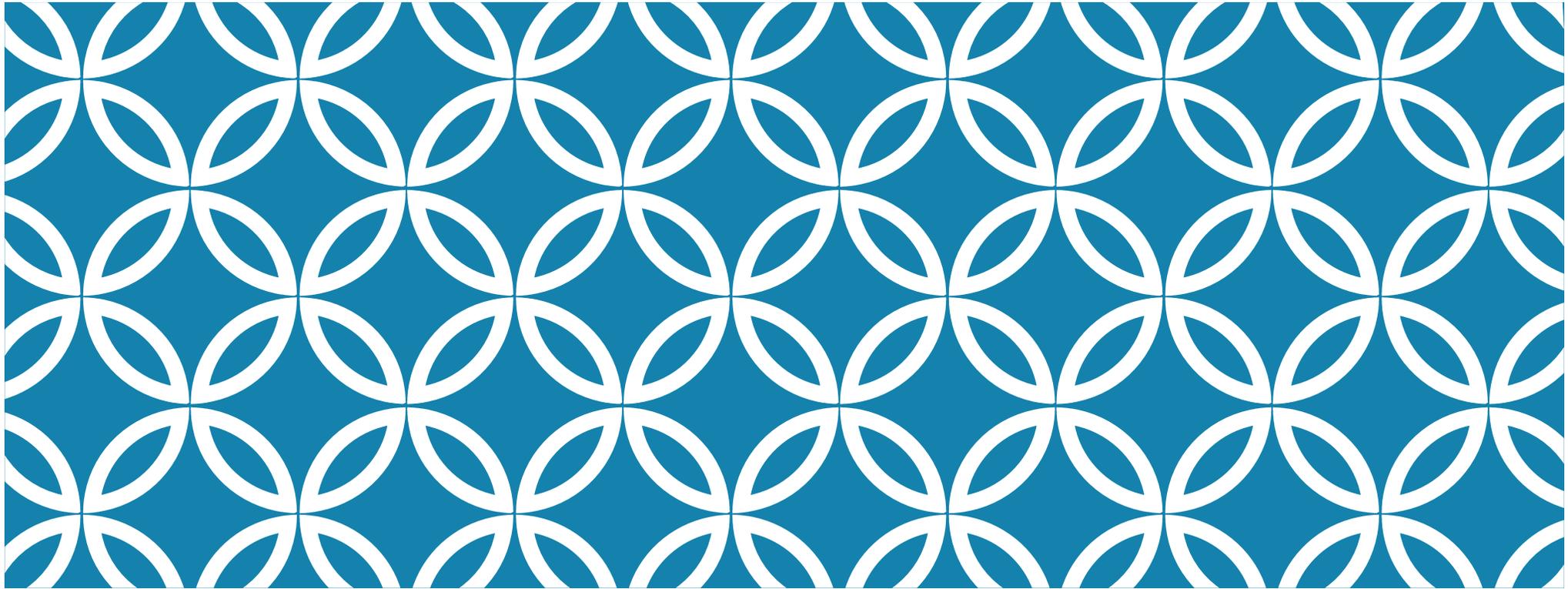
THE CHALLENGE FROM AI

- ❖ AI will have a transformative effect on education because much of the skills and knowledge that we currently expect of students will be off-loaded to the AI.
- ❖ But that only undermines education if we think that education is just about drumming knowledge and skills into our students.
- ❖ Educating for virtuous intellectual character is about honing our distinctive executive cognitive capacities, capacities that can only be mimicked by AI, not replicated.
- ❖ The challenge will be to find ways to use AI to enhance virtuous intellectual character.



THE CIVIC VIRTUES

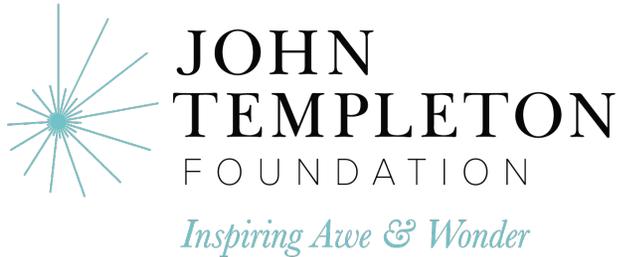
- ❖ There is clearly a pressing need to teach the civic virtues in our society.
- ❖ But this endeavor has become politically fraught. How do we navigate this issue?
- ❖ Our proposal: by centering the intellectual virtues.
- ❖ When education is centered on the intellectual virtues, then this creates the intellectual environment that scaffolds the teaching of the civic virtues.



THANK YOU

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MORE INFORMATION



General information about the *Anteater Virtues*:

<https://anteatervirtues.uci.edu>



To enroll in the freely available public version of the modules:

<https://canvas.instructure.com/enroll/9PJWFH/>



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