

Research-based Education for Character at Universidad Austral



UNIVERSIDAD
AUSTRAL



Prof. Claudia Vanney, Philosophy Institute
Flourishing Student Series 3
November 18, 2025

Universidad Austral in numbers



- 5,000 undergraduate students.
- 6,000 graduate students.
- 800 Faculty.
- 23 undergraduate degree programmes.
- 67 graduate programmes.
- 7 PhD programmes.

Research-based education for character at Universidad Austral



Contents

1. Antecedents and theoretical framework.

2. Strategy and planning.

3. FLCs at Universidad Austral.

4. Discussion and future studies.

Antecedents

Scientia et Fides 10(2)/2022

ISSN 2300-7648 (print) / ISSN 2353-5636 (online)

Received: October 4, 2022. Accepted: October 10, 2022

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.12775/SetF.2022.015>

The Intellectual Character of Interdisciplinary Researchers

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Abstract. The study and understanding of fundamental questions cannot be addressed by a single discipline. A plurality of insights needs to be integrated or co-

COGNITIVE SCIENCE
A Multidisciplinary Journal



Cognitive Science 47 (2023) e13348
© 2023 The Authors. *Cognitive Science* published by Wiley Periodicals LLC on behalf of *Cognitive Science* Society (CSS).
ISSN: 1551-6709 online
DOI: 10.1111/cogs.13348

Intellectual Virtues for Interdisciplinary Research: A Consensual Qualitative Analysis

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Received 10 April 2023; received in revised form 31 August 2023; accepted 12 September 2023

Abstract

PLOS ONE

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Measuring qualities needed for interdisciplinary work: The Intellectual Virtues for Interdisciplinary Research Scale (IVIRS)

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Abstract

Previous work has suggested that the problems hindering the success of interdisciplinarity could be overcome by fostering certain intellectual character strengths in scholars. However, how to assess and cultivate the specific virtues required for interdisciplinarity among researchers is still a matter of inquiry. The general objective of this paper was to develop a

OPEN ACCESS

An interdisciplinary approach to character education

Philosophical foundations

- What are character, virtues, and human flourishing?

Psychological constructs

- Describe phenomena that are studied scientifically

Measurement tools

- Assign numerical values to meaningful variations of a construct

Applied research

- Finding ways to cultivate students' character

Teaching for intellectual virtues

Curiosity: Ask good questions

Autonomy: Think for yourself

Humility: Admit what you don't know

Attentiveness: Look and listen

Carefulness: Get it right

Thoroughness: Go deep

Open-mindedness: Think outside the box

Courage: Take risks

Tenacity: Embrace struggle



Jason Baehr

The Inquiring Mind (2011)

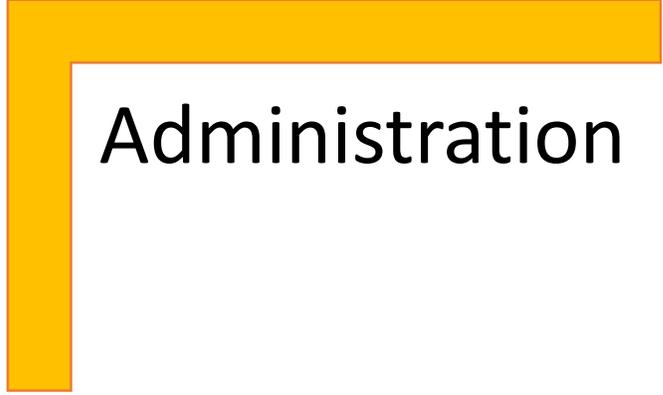
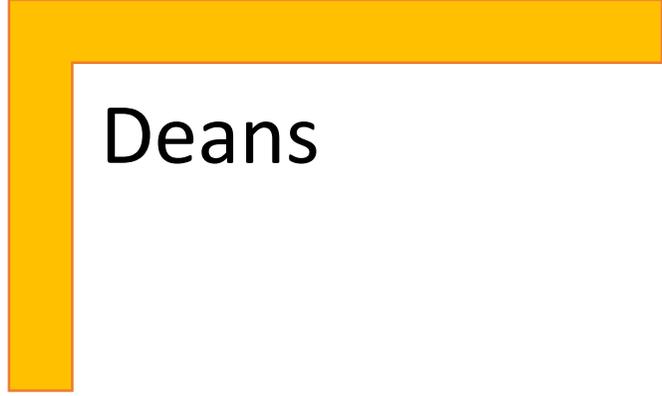
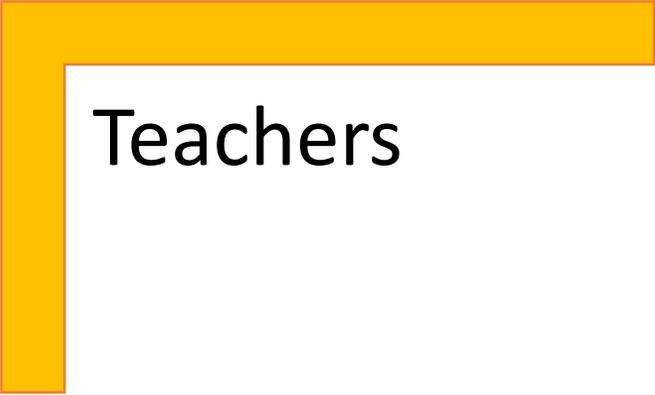
Deep in Thought (2022)

Inquiry and Agency (2025)

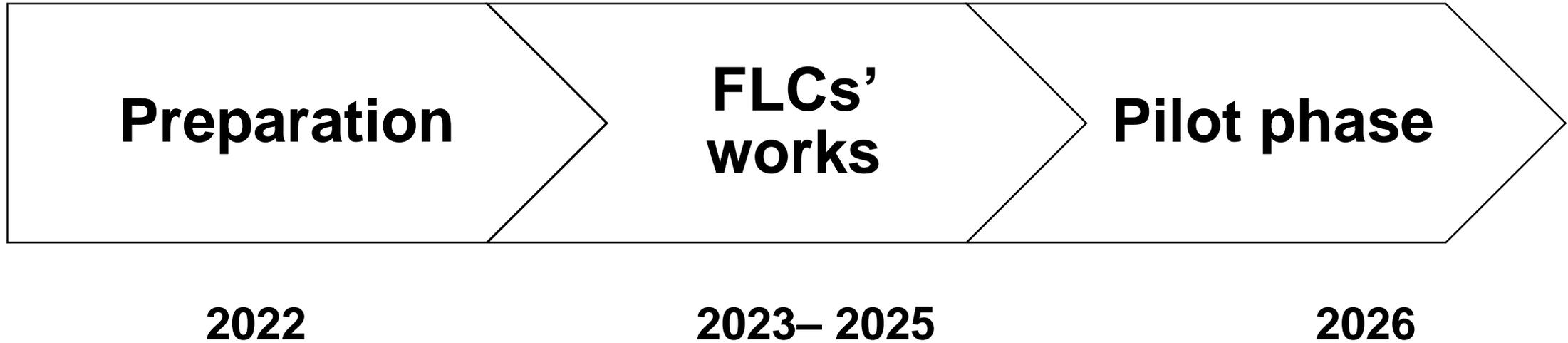


Strategy

1. Research at the base.
2. Teaching staff at the heart of the initiative.
3. Bottom-up process.
4. Institutional support.
5. Cooperation among universities.



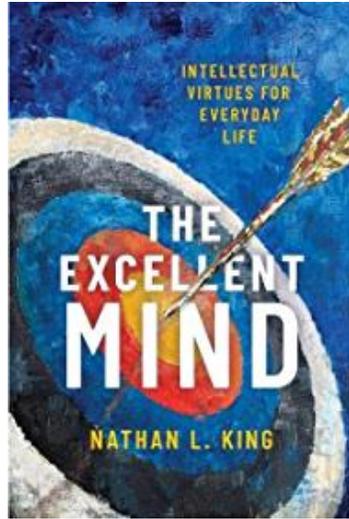
Project planning



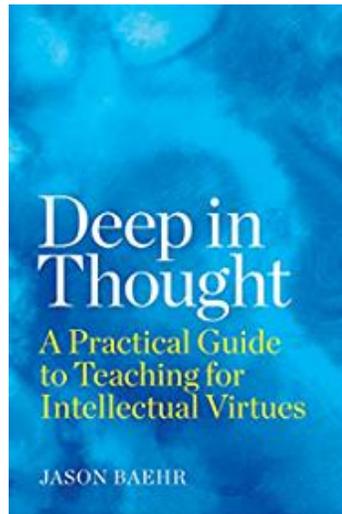


Preparation (2022)

1. **Resources:** Translating bibliographic material into Spanish
2. **Evaluation:** Validating a scale to evaluate intellectual virtues
3. **Motivation:** Studying empirically the correlation between intellectual virtues, flourishing, and academic engagement.
4. **People:** Sharing the project idea with key UA professors



2021



2021

Nathan L. King

LA MENTE EXCELENTE

Virtudes intelectuales para la vida cotidiana



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2022

Jason Baehr

PENSAR CON PROFUNDIDAD

*Una guía práctica para la educación
en virtudes intelectuales*



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2022



Assessing Intellectual Virtues: The Virtuous Intellectual Character Scale (VICS)

Belén Mesurado^{1,2,3} · Claudia E. Vanney²

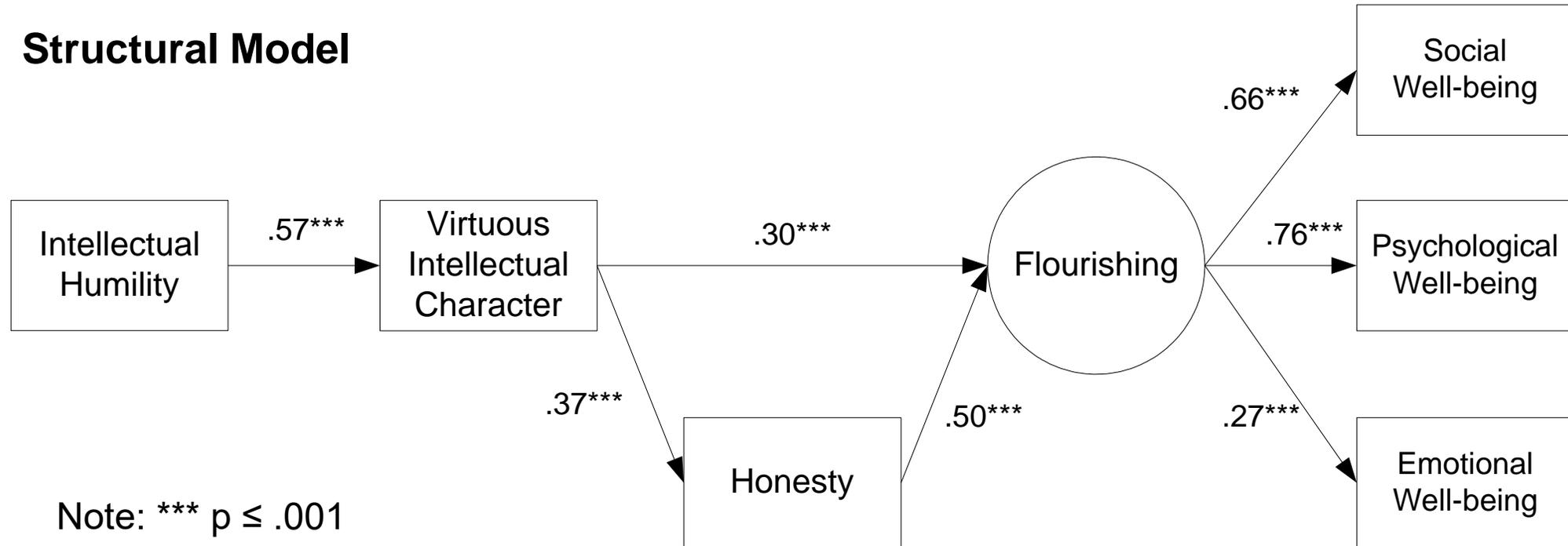
Accepted: 29 August 2024 / Published online: 16 September 2024
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Abstract

The main objective of this paper is to develop a scale that can facilitate a comprehensive assessment of intellectual virtues. To our knowledge, no instrument has been designed to assess virtuous intellectual character as a global construct, and this article aimed to fill this research gap through two studies. The first study aimed to investigate the construct validity and reliability of the scale, while the second study aimed to confirm the factorial structure observed in Study 1 and to analyze the convergent validity of the new scale. Study 1 included 545 college students (mean age=19.57 years, SD=1.41) enrolled in 33 undergraduate degree programs at Argentinean universities. Study 2 included 700 college students (mean age=18.07, SD=0.95). The EFA carried out in Study 1 identified five dimensions of the VICS (attentiveness, open-mindedness, curiosity, carefulness, and intellectual autonomy), and the CFA carried out in Study 2 validated the five-factor structure. A bifactor model indicated that each group of items was related to a specific virtue while simultaneously loading on a bifactor global construct in the instrument.

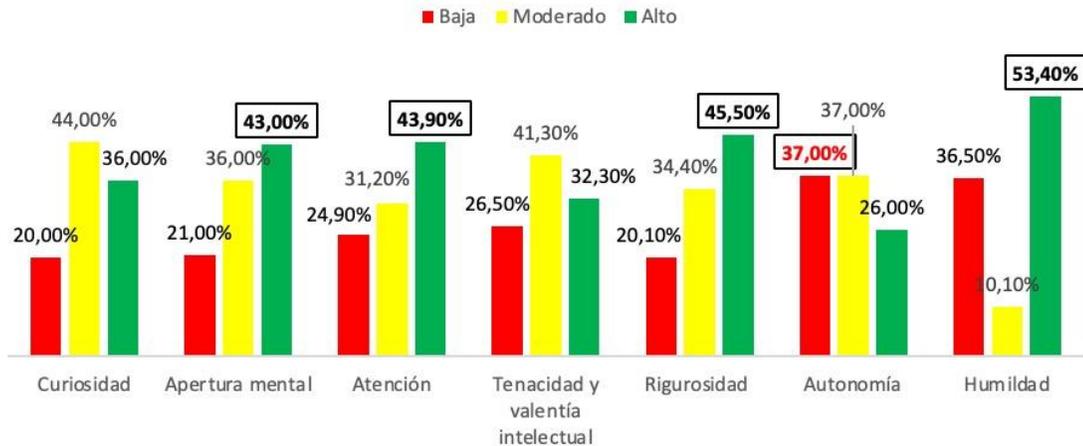
Motivation: correlation with human flourishing

Structural Model

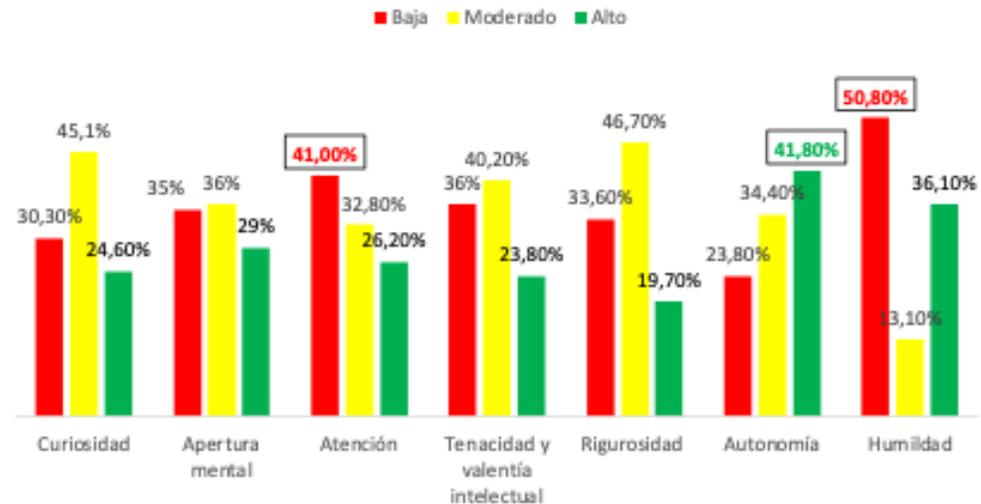


Mesurado, Belén, and Claudia E. Vanney. 2025. "The Role of Intellectual Character and Honesty in Youth Flourishing." *Research in Human Development*: 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15427609.2025.2524297>.

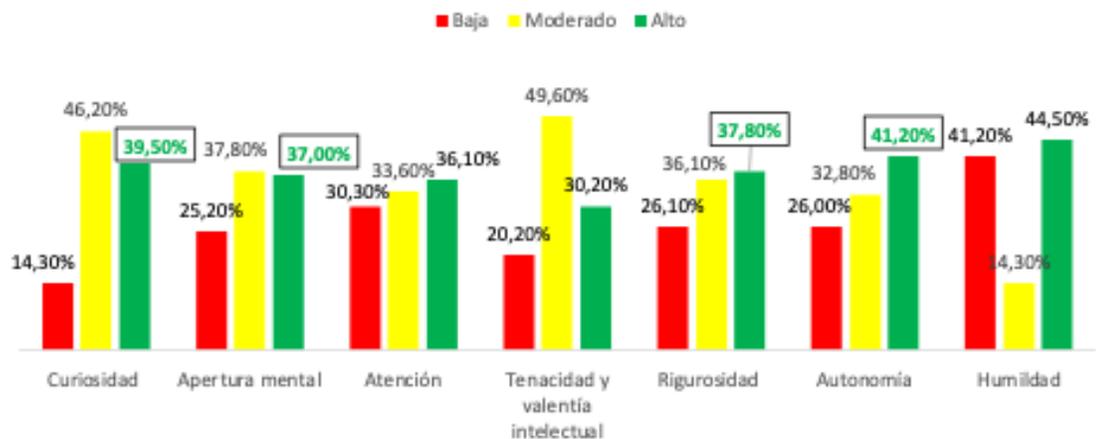
Facultad de Ciencias Biomédicas (n= 189)



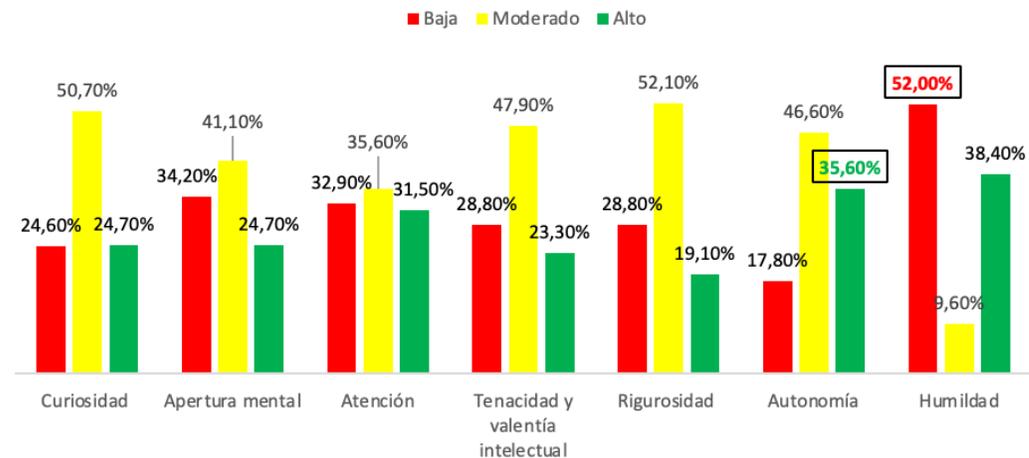
Facultad de Ciencias Empresariales Buenos Aires (n = 122)



Facultad de Ingeniería (n = 119)



Facultad de Comunicación (n = 73)



Working in FLCs (2023-2025)

Communicate the intellectual virtues framework to faculty members associated with all degree programmes at the UA.

Design ways of improving the curricula used for these subjects to allow students to practice virtues in the classroom.

2024

2023

2025

Identify intellectual virtues whose development should be prioritized in each degree programme.



Motivating faculty to foster character education across the university: The experience of Universidad Austral

Claudia E. Vanney, Julieta Laudadio & Cristina B. Carriego

To cite this article: Claudia E. Vanney, Julieta Laudadio & Cristina B. Carriego (24 Jul 2025): Motivating faculty to foster character education across the university: The experience of Universidad Austral, *Journal of Moral Education*, DOI: [10.1080/03057240.2025.2528806](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2025.2528806)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240.2025.2528806>



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Percentage of teaching staff incorporated into the FLCs

Schools	FLC	# members FLC	# Faculty	% Faculty
Law	Law	6	215	7%
	Government	9		
Communication	Communication	15	81	19%
Biomedical Sciences	Medicine	7	197	12%
	Nutrition & Nursing	6		
	Psychology	11		
Engineering	Engineering	11	97	11%
Business Science Buenos Aires	Management Buenos Aires	17	42	40%
Business Science Rosario	Management Rosario	17	78	22%
Business School	MBA	8	43	19%
Family Sciences	Family	8	15	53%
Education	Education	6	39	15%
Philosophy	Core team of researchers	9	17	47%
Total	12 FLC + CTR	130	807	16%

Evolution of FLCs in the period 2023-2025

Schools	FLC	2023	2024	2025		
		# members	# members	# members	# degree program	# syllabi in revision
Law	Law	11	6	6	1	8
	Government	10	9	9	2	7
Communication	Communication	13	15	28	3	31
Biomedical Sciences	Medicine	9	7	7	1	8
	Nutrition & Nursing	9	6	8	2	13
	Psychology	10	11	9	1	10
Engineering	Engineering	18	11	12	4	10
Business Science Buenos Aires	Management Buenos Aires	14	17	17	5	23
Business Science Rosario	Management Rosario	17	17	16		14
Business School	MBA	12	9	12	1	8
Family Sciences	Family	9	8	8	2	8
Education	Education	11	6	5	1	5
Philosophy	Core team of researchers	8	8	8		
Total	12 FLCs + CTR	151	130	145	23	145

Different approaches in each FLC

Analysis of one-degree study plan.

Analysis of various degrees study plans.

Global analysis without distinguishing degrees.

Global analysis + analysis of each degree study plan.

Focus on professional profile.

Focus on the university studies.

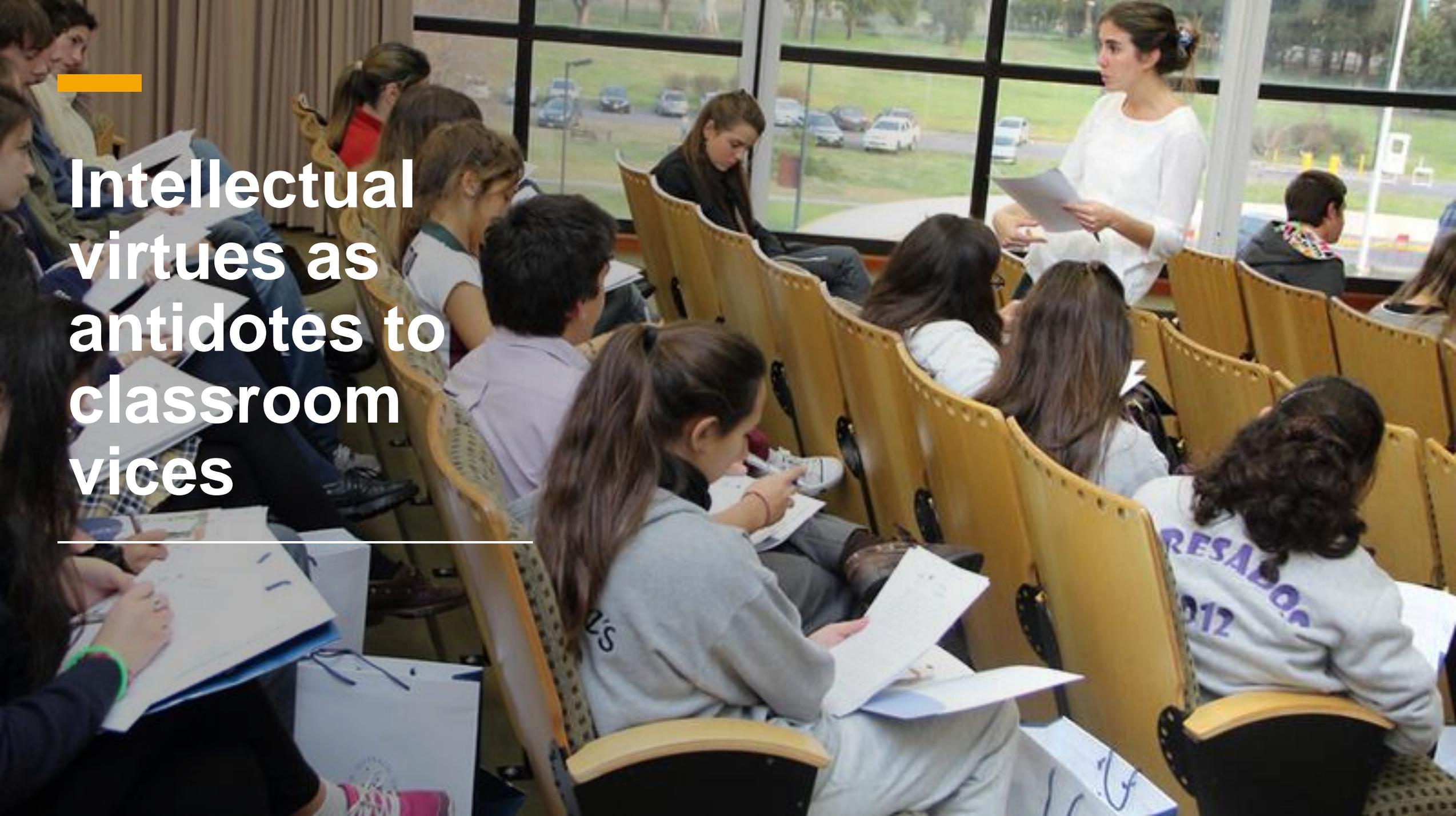
Relevant virtues for the professional profile

LAE: Business Administration
CP: Public Accounting
LND: Digital Business
LEE: Business Economics
LMCD: Marketing and Design
LCD: Data Science
TUP: Programming

	LAE	CP	LND	LEE	LMCD	LCD	TUP
Curiosity			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Carefulness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Autonomy	✓			✓			
Humility							
Honesty		✓					
Perseverance		✓					
Courage							
Open-mindedness	✓					✓	
Fair-mindedness							
Creativity			✓		✓		✓

COMPETENCIAS	SUBCOMPETENCIAS INSIGNIAS	VIRTUDES INTELLECTUALES								
		Curiosidad	Rigurosidad	Autonomía	Humildad y autoconfianza	Honestidad	Creatividad	Perseverancia y valentía	Apertura mental y firmeza	Ecuanimidad y caridad
Cognitivas	Pensamiento crítico									
	Innovación									
	Formulación de problemas									
	Capacidad analítica									
	Autorregulación									
	Metacognición									
Comunicacionales	Pensamiento sistémico									
	Expresión escrita									
	Expresión oral									
	Alfabetización digital									
	Gestión de la información									
Colaborativas	Capacidad dialógica									
	Trabajo en equipo									
	Interdisciplina									
	Negociación									
	Retroalimentación									
Del aprendiz	Liderazgo Positivo									
	Flexibilidad									
	Empatía									
	Afrontamiento del estrés académico									
	Gestión del tiempo									
Orientadoras (disciplinares)	Grit									
	Uso de técnicas de OF									
	Desarrollo de proyectos de OF									
	Posicionamiento en el rol profesional									
	Gestión de la entrevista de OF									
Globales	Observación									
	Interculturalidad									

Virtues and competencies



Intellectual
virtues as
antidotes to
classroom
vices

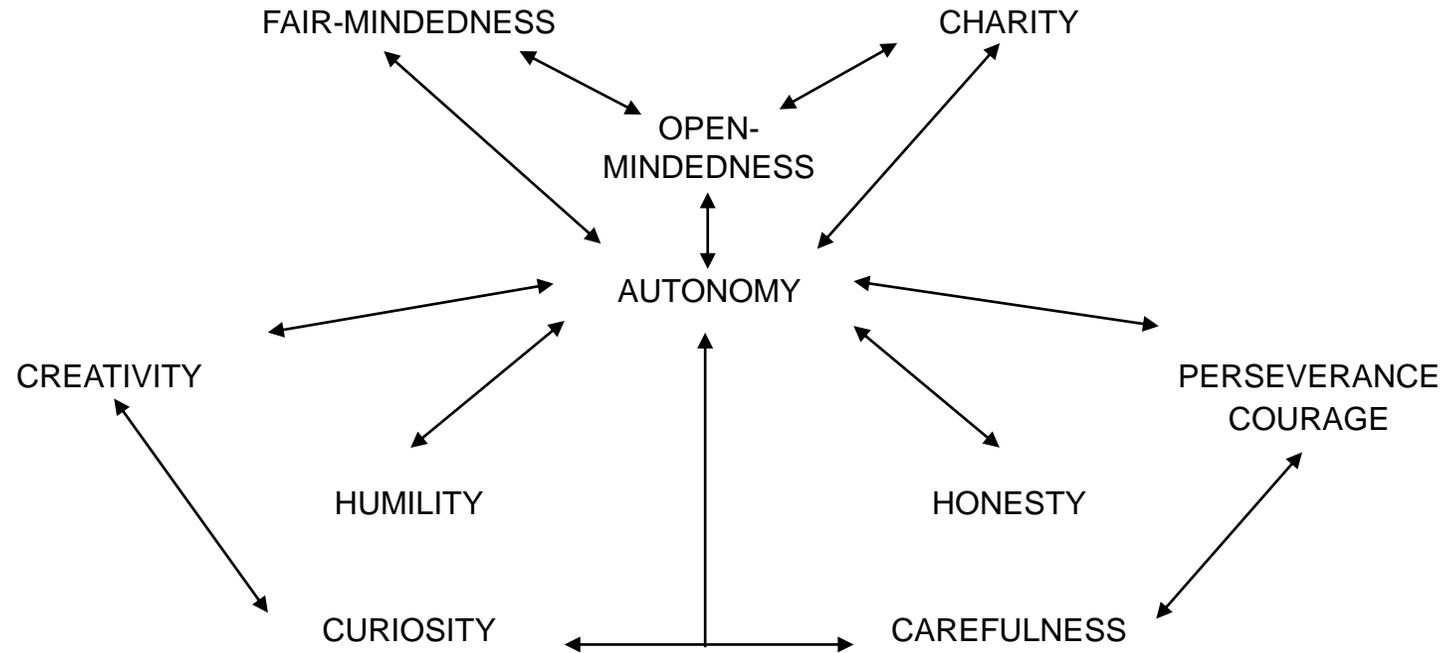
Intellectual virtues integrated into the nursing curriculum

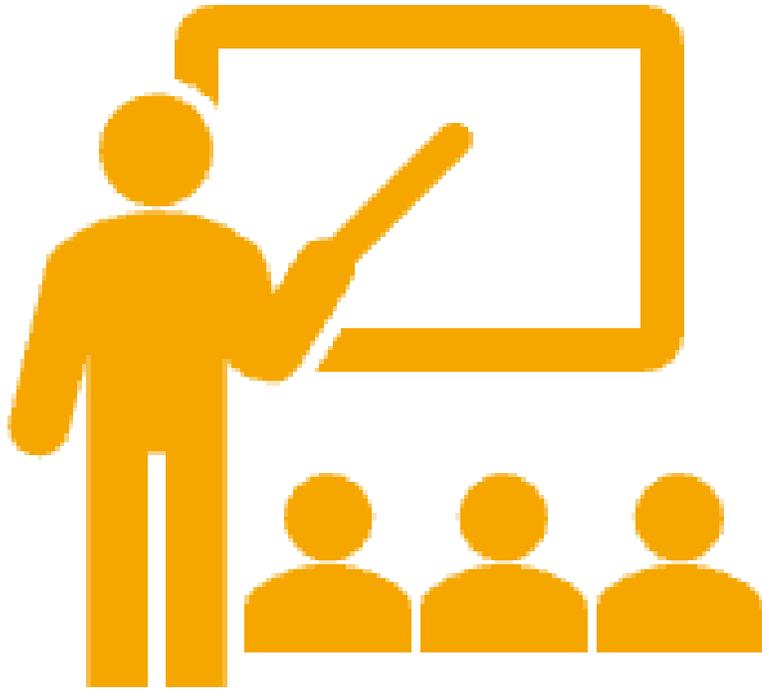
Year of Study	Virtues	Courses
1st year	Curiosity	Fundamentals of Nursing and Patient Safety 1
	Perseverance	Anatomy and Physiology
2nd year	Humility	Fundamentals of Nursing and Patient Safety 2
	Honesty	Ethics
3rd year	Carefulness	Maternal and Child Nursing
	Autonomy	Integrated Practice 1
4th year	Creativity	Research
	Courage	Adult Critical Care Nursing
5th year	Open-mindedness	Leadership and Management – Community Practice
	Autonomy	Integrated Practice 2
	Courage	Pediatric and Adolescent Critical Care Nursing

Syllabi objectives and identification of teaching opportunities



Virtue rankings and virtue maps



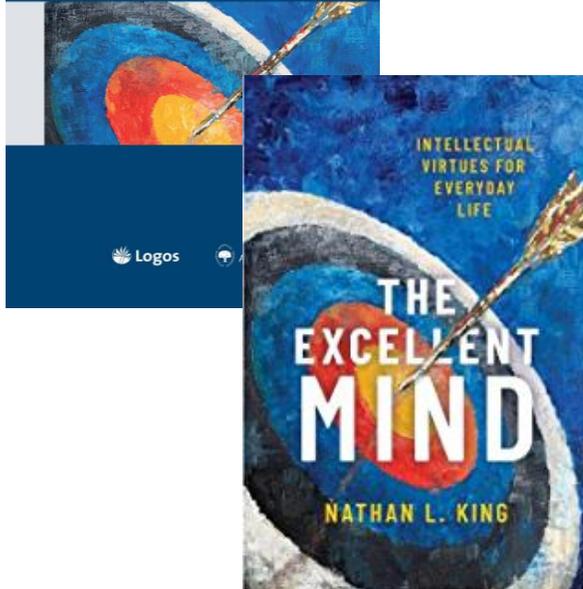


Curriculum design

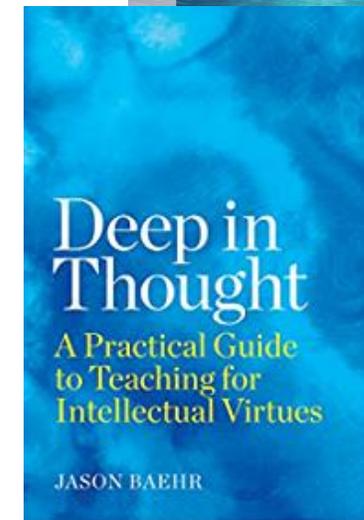
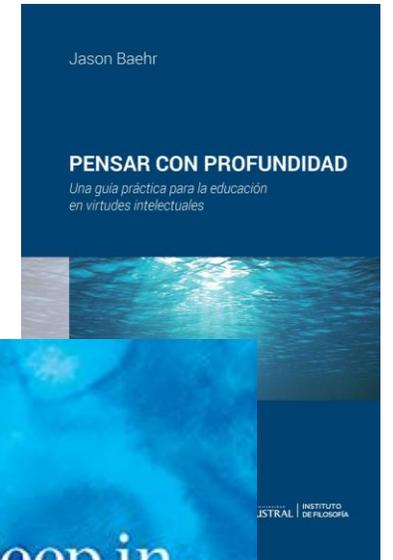
Each instructor answered key questions about their chosen virtue and course content:

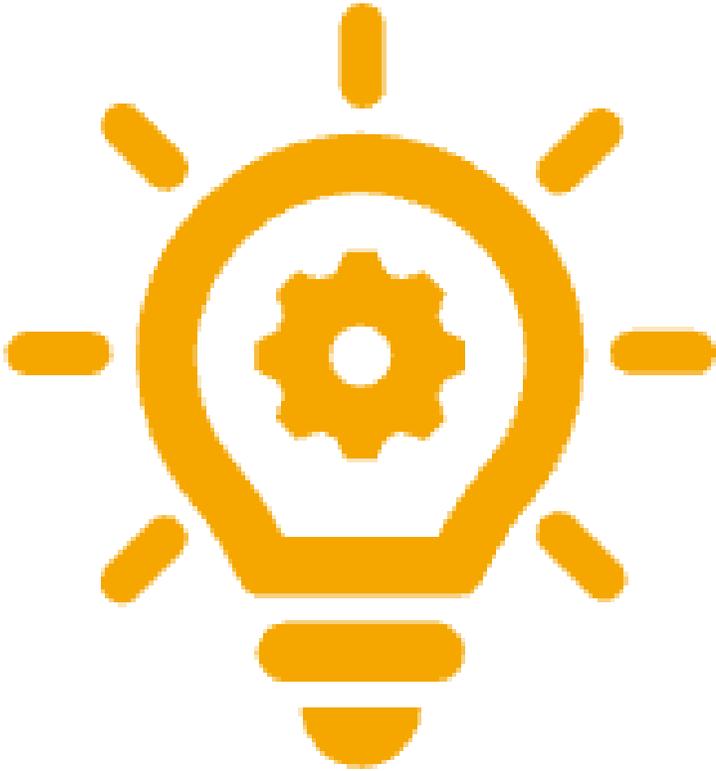
- What do we want students to achieve?
- How will we know they have achieved it?
- What tools help us see that evidence?
- What strategies will support the virtue's development?
- What sequence of activities will help reach these outcomes?

Discussion: Why focus on intellectual virtues?



- It was a meaningful entry point to character education.
- Aligned with shared epistemic goals: teaching and learning.
- Practicing virtues in class: a feasible and valuable challenge.
- Virtue-oriented teaching is becoming more natural for faculty.
- Potential bridge to civic and moral character education.





Future studies

- The initiative grew from research on intellectual virtues and emerged as an unexpected outcome of interdisciplinary research in philosophy and psychology.
- Faculty Learning Communities: faculty lead, researchers facilitate.
- Qualitative analyses & faculty interviews underway.
- Redesigned courses next year to study student impact.

Thank you!

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