

# Developing Belonging-Oriented, Growth-Focused General Education Curriculum and Two-College Collaborative Talent Cultivation: Postprint

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## Abstract

The competition of future comprehensive national power is ultimately a competition for talent. The key to enhancing the quality of talent cultivation resides in the reform of talent cultivation paradigms. The residential college general education model, as a novel paradigm for talent cultivation, has garnered considerable attention in recent years. Nevertheless, owing to the underdevelopment of China's residential college system, the residential college general education model still confronts numerous challenges. This paper, taking Yahe College of Harbin Institute of Technology (Weihai) where the author is affiliated as a case study, concretely analyzes several issues confronting the residential college general education model, and proposes four recommendations: constructing growth-oriented general education courses that foster a sense of belonging and identity; implementing comprehensive support measures to enable residential college general education to find its "home"; conducting diverse general education activities through student-preferred modalities; and promoting multifaceted cooperation and exchanges between the two colleges to construct a collaborative education system. These recommendations aim to enable residential college general education to contribute more substantially to cultivating innovative talents with sound personalities and comprehensive development, and to allow the residential college talent cultivation paradigm to gain greater recognition on the global stage.

## Full Text

### Practical Support Mechanisms for the "Shiguang Kitchen" Labor Education Program

The "Shiguang Kitchen" labor education practice comprises two integrated components: theoretical coursework and hands-on experience. The theoretic-

cal component leverages Xidian University' s SPOC platform, Chinese University MOOC platforms, and campus new media to incorporate nationally recognized excellent courses in nutrition science, food safety, and Chinese dietary culture. This approach helps students master fundamental nutritional knowledge, develop healthy eating habits, enhance culinary appreciation, and preserve Chinese food culture heritage. The practical experience component operates through the dedicated Shiguang Kitchen labor education base, which regularly organizes cooking workshops and kitchen assistance activities to cultivate sound work habits and independent living skills.

The Shiguang Kitchen base is jointly established by the one-stop student community college and the university' s logistics department, featuring specialized workspaces and supporting equipment. The program has assembled a hybrid faculty team comprising three full-time labor education counselors and a professional chef team of four members. The counselors oversee overall planning and coordination, while the chef team provides hands-on instruction. Additionally, the student community college has established a Shiguang Kitchen Studio to assist with operations and promotion, enabling student self-governance, self-service, self-education, and self-management. This structure allows students to "receive education, develop competencies, and contribute through labor."

### **Assessment Framework**

The program has implemented a process-oriented, multi-dimensional evaluation system incorporating four perspectives: student self-assessment, peer evaluation, chef instructor assessment, and labor education mentor evaluation. This comprehensive approach objectively reflects learning outcomes. Self-assessment emphasizes personal reflection, requiring detailed accounts of activities, processes, achievements, and insights. Peer evaluation focuses on tangible outcomes through sensory assessment of culinary creations. Chef instructors evaluate work habits and technical skills based on observed learning processes. Labor education mentors assess attitudes and work ethic through comprehensive evaluation of student engagement.

Zhuyuan No. 3 College integrates these evaluation results into its comprehensive quality assessment system as a key criterion for awards and honors. The college has established the Zhengliu and Chuncan Scholarships to recognize outstanding performance in labor competencies and physical-mental development.

### **Program Impact and Outcomes**

Operating within the one-stop student community and leveraging three platforms—Xidian' s smart teaching platform, the labor education base, and campus new media—Shiguang Kitchen has developed an innovative labor education model rooted in cultural heritage. The program has delivered notable results: 21 labor education sessions (14 offline), over 50 published articles (13 feature pieces) with 20,000+ campus views, 12 educational videos (5 instructional, 7

documentary), service to 1,000+ students, a community of 200+ followers, and 24 students achieving culinary proficiency. The initiative enjoys widespread acclaim as a student favorite and has been featured in Xidian University News, China Education Online, Shaanxi University Network Ideological Education, NetEase, Sina, and other media outlets.

Since its inception, Shiguang Kitchen has encouraged students to engage with society, serve selflessly, and pursue lofty ideals. During the pandemic, the program demonstrated its educational impact by preparing and delivering meals to frontline workers. Our goal is to foster spontaneous social concern and noble character through labor education. Direct experience in kitchen operations helped students appreciate staff hardships, achieving fulfillment and happiness through labor. In the post-pandemic era, Shiguang Kitchen continues serving the campus community through dietary habit development programs, meal-time check-in initiatives, nutrition knowledge competitions, and ongoing efforts to improve student health and wellness. The base now operates regularly, serving all colleges across the university.

## Summary and Insights on Labor Education

Labor education constitutes a vital component of university general education and an essential element in student development. Contemporary labor education must integrate ideological and political elements, cultivate public service consciousness, and develop committed, responsible high-quality workers prepared to contribute during crises. Universities should establish systematic, scientifically designed organizational frameworks, content systems, and evaluation mechanisms to institutionalize labor education.

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## Building Belonging in Growth-Oriented General Education: A Dual-College Approach

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The competition of comprehensive national strength ultimately centers on talent competition, with talent cultivation model reform being the key to improving quality. The collegiate general education model has garnered significant attention as an innovative approach, though China's implementation remains immature and faces numerous challenges. This paper examines Yaha Academy at Harbin Institute of Technology (Weihai) to analyze these challenges and proposes four recommendations: (1) developing growth-oriented general education courses that foster belonging and identification, (2) establishing comprehensive support systems, (3) delivering general education through engaging, diverse formats, and (4) promoting dual-college collaboration to build synergistic education systems. These measures aim to enhance general education's contribution to developing well-rounded, innovative talents and strengthen China's voice in global higher education.

**Keywords:** general education model; talent cultivation model; collegiate system

Talent represents the primary resource for national development, and China remains committed to its talent-strong nation strategy. The 20th Party Congress report emphasizes accelerating education, science and technology, and talent development to independently cultivate top-tier innovative talents. Globally, general education has become a critical topic as nations compete to develop globally competent innovators.

The collegiate general education model offers a viable pathway. As talent incubators, universities prioritize cultivation model reform. Recent years have witnessed widespread adoption of general education through various models: core curricula, broad-category instruction, and collegiate systems, with the latter gaining particular attention.

While research on the collegiate system as a general education model enriches theoretical understanding and promotes reform, China's underdeveloped collegiate system yields limited studies. Practical challenges persist: ambiguous academy-college divisions, insufficient understanding of general education, lack of top-level design, low-level curriculum development, and inadequate collaborative effects.

This paper analyzes the collegiate model as a general education framework, focusing on curriculum construction. Using Yaha Academy as a case study, it identifies problems in current general education curriculum development and proposes solutions for creating belonging-centered, growth-oriented courses and implementing dual-college collaboration. The goal is to integrate student development trajectories and agency into curriculum design, enhancing engagement

and identification to improve quality and achieve “human awakening” education.

### Overview of Collegiate General Education

**Current Development Status** To enhance higher education quality, Chinese universities have developed collegiate general education by drawing on traditional academy spirit, Western residential colleges, and Hong Kong/Taiwan management models. Institutions like Fudan University, Xi’an Jiaotong University, Soochow University, East China Normal University, Jinan University, Southern University of Science and Technology, and Harbin Institute of Technology (Weihai) have achieved preliminary success.

General education models have evolved from Peking University’s “Yuanpei Class” and elective systems to diverse implementations. Zhu Yihui’s research identifies five models: core curriculum, general electives, broad-category teaching, great books, and collegiate systems.

Collegiate models show promise in content breadth and credit integration. Growing participation from universities like Fudan College, Sun Yat-sen University’s Boya College, and East China Normal University’s Meng Xiancheng College has accumulated valuable experience. However, despite achievements, general education faces reform dilemmas: limited effectiveness, formalism, and failure to internalize the borrowed collegiate system.

**Characteristics and Challenges** Common features across institutions include student-centered approaches, professional boundary-crossing, second-classroom utilization, and tutorial systems. Yet persistent problems exist: Fudan College’s misalignment between management and educational models, Xi’an Jiaotong University’s coordination difficulties, and system-wide issues in content, form, and support.

Content-wise, insufficient understanding of general education’s importance, lack of top-level design, and inadequate institutional support lead to formalistic, homogeneous programs with low engagement and poor identification. Form-wise, over-reliance on classroom instruction limits diversity. Support-wise, unclear academy-college divisions, absent collaborative mechanisms, lack of dedicated faculty and facilities, research-oriented tutor selection, inadequate logistics, and ambiguous academy-dormitory relationships hinder effectiveness.

### Yaha Academy: Case Analysis

Established on July 21, 2016, Yaha Academy encompasses three female student dormitories within the one-stop community, dedicated to cultivating elegant, outstanding women through East-West cultural integration, artistic cultivation, and academic learning.

The academy offers a robust curriculum including Speech and Eloquence, Tea Ceremony, Incense Culture, Seal Carving, Vocal Music, Folk Dance, and Peking

Opera. Six dedicated rooms, including a lecture hall and discussion space, provide venue support.

However, implementation challenges persist:

**Faculty Deficiencies:** Despite fixed venues, the academy lacks dedicated faculty. Instructors, primarily college leaders or teachers, juggle dual responsibilities, treating the academy as secondary to their school positions. Underutilized tutor offices and absent resident mentors limit student interaction, preventing genuine tutorial system implementation and full educational effectiveness.

**Pedagogical Limitations:** While content-rich and culturally distinctive, delivery relies predominantly on classroom lectures. Integrated as cultural quality electives, these courses sometimes become “easy courses” with low engagement, lacking interactive methods essential for “whole-person” cultivation.

**Innovation Gaps:** The curriculum shows weakness in innovative and competency-based courses. Despite cultural distinctiveness, student growth trajectories remain invisible. Effective general education should integrate student development, balancing common competencies with collegiate characteristics through interest-based, interactive design.

**Logistical Isolation:** The academy operates outside university administrative and logistics systems, creating maintenance challenges and organizational isolation.

**Dormitory Disconnect:** Minimal integration with dormitories results in weak student belonging. The academy sign on dormitory entrances symbolizes rather than actualizes community.

**Identity Misalignment:** Students perceive Yaha Academy as a student organization rather than an educational institution. This organizational success paradoxically undermines the academy’s educational essence, suggesting that student governance and curriculum development should proceed together, with curriculum as the foundation.

## Recommendations

**1. Develop Growth-Oriented General Education Courses with Belonging and Identification Vertical and Horizontal Integration:** - *Vertical dimension* addresses developmental needs across four years: freshman adaptation (interpersonal skills, time management, cultural literacy), sophomore/junior development (career guidance, leadership, research skills), and senior transition (workplace readiness, postgraduate planning). - *Horizontal dimension* emphasizes broad perspectives, independent thinking, interdisciplinary learning, social responsibility, and global awareness through situation-and-policy courses and innovative, practice-based offerings.

**Cultural Sourcing:** Ground curriculum in distinctive collegiate culture derived from Chinese traditions while supplementing through external exchanges

and learning visits.

**Student-Centered Design:** Build interest-driven courses through two-way communication and interaction.

## 2. Establish Comprehensive Support Systems

- Create a general education research center for theoretical support
- Develop dedicated collegiate faculty requiring college as primary workplace
- Construct fixed teaching venues with specialized facilities
- Clarify administrative affiliation and logistics integration
- Forge close yet distinct academy-dormitory relationships, requiring student participation in collegiate activities and mandating general education credits to enhance belonging

**3. Deliver Engaging, Diverse General Education** Move beyond classrooms to develop multi-format courses using technology and multimedia platforms for youth-oriented innovation, boosting interest and participation.

**4. Promote Dual-College Collaboration** Establish clear yet complementary roles, with the college providing distinctive “second classroom” experiences that supplement school education. Reduce communication costs by appointing school faculty to college positions and conduct joint open courses. Center collaboration on student growth and educational vision to build effective synergistic mechanisms.

Ultimately, universities must recognize general education’s significance and strengthen top-level design to safeguard reform. As Mei Yiqi asserted in 1941: “General education is the foundation, specialized education the detail.” General education’s importance cannot be overstated. As a new component in China’s higher education, collegiate systems require continuous exploration to overcome bottlenecks and fulfill their potential in cultivating high-quality talents.

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## The “Seminar” Teaching Model in Dual-College General Education

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As the “college + school” dual-college system matures, collegiate general education courses—critical for developing comprehensive literacy—require effective teaching models. This paper examines the “seminar” model’s holistic, systematic, and interactive characteristics in cultivating composite talents with foundational, developmental, and exploratory capabilities. It addresses limitations such as formalistic presentation and limited effectiveness while proposing construction paths to optimize dual-college collaboration and talent development.

**Keywords:** dual-college collaboration; general education courses; seminar; teaching model

### **Connotation and Significance**

The seminar model, originating in 18th-century Germany, has evolved into a system for cultivating scholars with original research capabilities through focused thematic discussion.

**1. Connotation** Seminars employ small classes (under 30 students) with four key segments: host introduction, presenter exposition, discussion and debate, and summary comments. This structure prevents one-way teaching, develops student expression and organizational skills through rotating hosts, enhances engagement and creativity, and allows mentors to focus on substantive issues. The model transforms teaching into a vehicle for cultivating critical thinking and originality.

### **2. Significance**

**2.1 General Education Philosophy Carrier** General education, as liberal education practice, develops exploration enthusiasm, broad perspectives, analytical expression, interdisciplinary thinking, and lifelong competencies. The seminar's open environment and interactive format align with general education's "freedom" and "independence" ideals, making it an effective platform for teacher-student exchange and knowledge exploration.

**2.2 Dual-College Collaboration Expression** Dual-college collaboration integrates school professional education with college cultivation. Lee Shulman's "teaching understanding" concept emphasizes integrating pedagogical and disciplinary knowledge for true interaction. The seminar model's deep learning, discussion, and cross-disciplinary approach effectively combines professional and collegiate education, narrowing distances between teachers-students and college-school to advance collaborative education.

*Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.*

*Source: ChinaXiv –Machine translation. Verify with original.*