

**Gallagher, C. W. (2019). *College made whole: Integrative learning for a divided world*. Johns Hopkins University Press.**

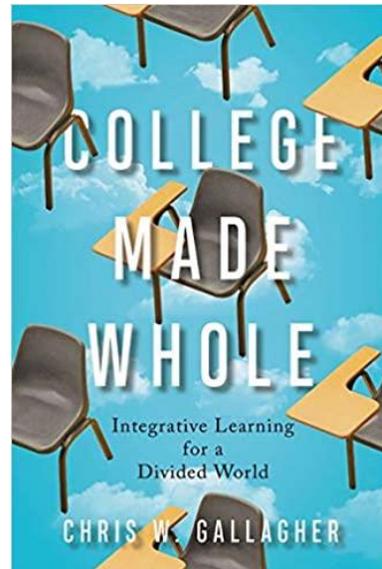
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Today many traditional views of higher education are being called into question. The purposes and practices of higher education are debated by educators, policymakers, and other stakeholders. Is the primary purpose of higher education for students to acquire knowledge for the sake of intellectual growth or to prepare them for a career? Or is it both? In *College Made Whole*, Chris Gallagher provides a plan to make higher education a whole product that takes the traditional processes and integrates them with newer ideas to achieve a higher level of

education. He states early on that the basics of a solid liberal arts education should be combined, or integrated, with some of the newer concepts of delivering quality education. *College Made Whole* offers his blueprint for a new and improved system of higher education.



My first reaction to this book was that it would be yet another book about how the old structure was out of date, and how higher education needs to embrace change and nontraditional methods of instructional delivery and reject the common liberal arts approach. However, I discovered that Gallagher also disdains the somewhat popular trend of “unbundling” and promoting job-specific training that could be packaged into various methods of specialized delivery. While he defends some of the ideas about liberal arts education, he does not completely dismiss the new ideas. Instead, he believes that together they could create a stronger system of higher education. He believes a mixture of the two, in which traditional classroom instruction is

combined with hands on applications, will lead to a better form of higher education – a “college made whole.” Gallagher’s book centers around several themes he believes are useful for creating a more efficient and productive method of instruction. Before laying out his plan of integrated education, he draws a roadmap showing where we started and where we are today as he examines what we are supposed to be teaching in higher education. While he holds fast to his belief in the value of a liberal arts education, he does not dismiss the benefits of some of the newer delivery methods. He proposes a mixture of the classic liberal arts education with newer methods that help prepare students for a career. Gallagher also laments what he views as the erosion of quality public education, namely, that successful education is now viewed solely as a matter of the student’s “return on investment” (p. 24).

Gallagher examines the themes of where and why students learn. He maintains that while schools claim to be offering different opportunities for learning, such as study abroad, internships, and online learning, these opportunities are not adequate in themselves. Gallagher does not dispute their worth, but he believes that alternative methods like these need to be integrated with the educational system. They should not be stand-alone substitutes. He also examines the *why* of the argument, or more specifically, the fact that many want to pit the concept of a liberal education and a professional education against each other. He points out that the concept of a liberal arts education is being attacked and being referred to by some as “a luxury we no longer can afford” (p. 99). Gallagher strongly disagrees, saying that instead the two types can strengthen each other. This strength can be achieved by integration. He defines *integrative learning* as “what happens when learners connect and synthesize ideas, knowledge, and skills across contexts and over time” (p. 15).

Another theme centers around whom students will be learning from and when this learning takes place. Gallagher takes a hard look at issues such as online courses and part-time instructors. He laments that many in power, such as college administrators, see technology as a quick fix for the financial problems in higher education. He discusses the increasing disappearance of full-time liberal arts instructors who are being replaced by instructors who produce assembly line teaching in large virtual classrooms. He asserts that these measures are only cost cutting in nature and do not always improve our education system. Yet, Gallagher does not attack technology. Instead, he questions why technology cannot be integrated with quality instructors to produce top-notch education.

The final chapter examines life-long learning and the wave of alternative certificates, badges, and credentials in higher education. Gallagher is a supporter of non-traditional students, or the learners who return for a specific reason such as a job requirement. However, he again questions why it has to be an either-or issue. He claims “unbundlers” are taking advantage of the rising number of people with these needs and citing this as evidence that traditional education is on the way out. To combat this mindset,

Gallagher offers sound suggestions, such as to “develop a suite of learning opportunities beyond but potentially connected to degree options” that champion integration instead of black-and-white choices (p. 170).

One of the strengths of Gallagher’s work is his use of real-life examples to begin each chapter. These examples bring the issues to life and show the reader that the decisions being made in higher education truly impact students and faculty. For example, he shares Elizabeth Zane’s story when discussing the importance of integrating classroom learning with other types of learning. He relates how Elizabeth felt good about her knowledge of business and entrepreneurship. However, a co-op opportunity in Mexico showed her that the classroom did not prepare her for this type of work. She realized the importance of learning outside the walls of a classroom, and consequently, stated that she was no longer just a “sponge for information” but instead saw herself as a “sponge for information with a critical eye” (p. 73). Gallagher shows us through these glimpses into the experiences of others that he believes education should not be one-dimensional, but a combination of different types of experience. His real-life accounts demonstrate the impact of educational integration on learning in higher education.

*College Made Whole* could be a beneficial resource for higher education administrators and faculty. Importantly, Gallagher not only pinpoints the problems, but also has a plan to address them. Too many researchers readily point out weaknesses, but few are bold enough to offer realistic solutions. In each section, Gallagher proposes many ways that faculty, administration, and others can create a system of integrated education. In Chapter 2, with its focus on integrating specialized expertise and generalized understanding, he claims that to get a quality integrated education, students should have courses and assignments that can cross all boundaries. They should be able to synthesize skills and knowledge within their majors, within their general education courses, and between major courses and general education courses. He believes that all courses, whether they be within a major or separated by different subjects or majors, should be adaptable and able to integrate skills and knowledge from other courses. It could be as simple as a literature instructor including a book that is required reading in a Western civilization class. There should be a connection with courses and assignments that enables the student to gain an integrated education. Gallagher believes this is an achievable goal. In Chapter 4, he discusses the concept of integrating liberal learning and professional learning and suggests that faculty can “arrange for career design professionals or alumni to visit the classroom to talk about professional applications of the skills and concepts associated with the course or major” (p. 118). This example goes to the heart of why many students are in college. They want what they learn to be applicable to a career. This method of integration could have a positive impact on the school, instructor, and student. It stands to reason that students may be more interested in a subject if they can see how it relates to their future.

*College Made Whole* could be viewed as a textbook or workbook on how to “fix” higher education. However, Gallagher’s mix of personalized stories and straight-to-the-point advice makes this book a valuable choice for those in higher education, particularly decision makers in curriculum and instruction. Moreover, faculty can use these ideas to influence policy makers to make decisions that are more than simply finance based and help them see the long-term benefits of an integrated model for both student and institution.

Gallagher describes integration as combining two or more things so that they become a new whole. As an educator who has played many roles, I see the benefits of his methods. I have seen students suffer when higher education becomes too “cost effective.” Gallagher believes this “new whole” is both a return to traditional methods and a way to a bright future for higher education.

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### About the Reviewer

**Cliff McCain** is a learning specialist at the University of Mississippi. He also serves as an online instructor for Grand Canyon University, Holmes Community College, and Southwest Tennessee Community College. He spent two decades working as an instructor and administrator at the secondary education level. He holds an EdD in higher education and master’s degrees in history and educational administration.



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