



It was more than 10 years ago when the Peace Studies idea began in earnest at Golden West College. As with many ideas, it started with discussions about the purpose of education. Not the obvious ones like transfer, career certification or remediation; these are obvious outcomes related to our mission. The purpose we were discussing was deeper and more profound; it centered on the notion that higher education ought to be about noble ideas and actions. That education is for something, beyond transfer and career preparation, which is why we require a breadth and depth in our general education pattern. Still, there is a sense that while these requirements help advance critical thinking and expose students to a higher level of information about history, science, arts, literature, social sciences and technology, they often lack a unifying idea, concept or set of values. They don't always provide a clear vision of what the world might be like, rather than what it has been. It was that kind of discussion over time that led some of us to ask what we want the education we provide to "really" be for. What grand idea do we want our graduates to embrace with energy and passion? What do our students desperately need to know?

Many of us around the table concluded that the idea worth our time and energy was to understand and embrace PEACE. We understood that it was the challenge of a lifetime. It was an idea that could unify all that we were teaching and learning in most any class across our curriculum. It would engage the critical and creative mind and require it to do some heavy lifting. Those conversations led to inquiry and explorations, trial and error, and discovery. We found more than a body of literature; we found hundreds of kindred spirits pursuing this ideal in multiple disciplines across many campus communities. Those encounters gave us the courage to launch our own efforts at founding a Peace Studies Program at Golden West College. It was an inclusive kind of curricular idea, in that this idea belongs to everyone, but is not owned by any one discipline. There is not territory to stake out; everyone can work at this idea, every day in every way. Everyone must agree that it is an idea of significant merit and an idea that has value added for every student.

Since those early discussions the program has continued to grow and mature. This process is much like the Olympic torch, which is passed hand to hand from one country to another to another on its way to light the next host nation. How it will emerge on each campus will be different, as will its shape, direction and flavor. The only common characteristic is that it requires a small group of individuals to embrace it and support it. Having dialog about how we can engage ourselves, our students and our college in the pursuit of peace is a good place to start – one I highly recommend.

Wes Bryan,  
President