December 15, 2008

Dear Colleague,

The enclosed document is the latest draft of the Learning Programs Working Group’s (LPWG) proposal for a new general education program at Simpson College. It represents hundreds of hours of research and discussion by more than two dozen members of the Simpson College faculty, staff, and student body.

The LPWG now seeks the input of the wider Simpson College community.

You will note that the Table of Contents in the enclosed document lists sections labeled A and B. The complete document has three sections. In order to provide the community as much information as possible without overburdening the reader with detail, sections A, B, and the Appendix have been attached. The full document, including Section C, will soon be available on the LPWG’s Web site at: http://www.simpson.edu/academicdean/committees/lpwg/index.html.

In order to facilitate our conversation, division heads will be scheduling meetings during January to seek your thoughts about the proposal. Student and staff leaders will also be asked to hold discussion meetings. The LPWG hopes that you will be as excited as they are about the proposal. LPWG believes that in its current form, the proposed curriculum speaks to the outcomes of the recent strategic planning process, responds to the latest thinking about the essential outcomes for liberal education, and provides a solid, challenging foundation for Simpson College students.

After the January discussions, LPWG will make any revisions to the document it feels necessary and send it to EPCC for review and eventual vote by the full faculty.

The LPWG would like to thank all of the faculty, staff, and students who have participated in the development of the proposal and look forward to the upcoming discussions.

Sincerely,

The Members of the Learning Program Working Group
The New Curriculum Proposal for Simpson College Brief Document

December 10, 2008
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Section A: An Introduction to the Proposal

Background
Roughly 12 months ago, the members of the Learning Programs Working Group (LPWG) turned its attention to the general education program at Simpson College. It understood its role to be to work on behalf of the faculty in the development of a proposal for the possible revision of the Cornerstone Program. LPWG has spent hundreds of hours working together and in small groups reviewing the current Cornerstone Program, seeking ideas from other institutions and developing what it believes is an exciting proposal for discussion by faculty.

The process began with the development of a series of principles. These principles, along with definitions and three examples of possible general education programs were shared with the faculty in the spring of 2008. In August of 2008 at the faculty retreat, the LPWG shared with the faculty an early draft of their ideas for what the LPWG is calling the New Curriculum. Feedback from faculty was used to refine the basic components. This document is the latest and final draft of the proposal.

Two documents proved to be of key importance in the development of the New Curriculum. Of significant importance to the LPWG was the outcome of the recently completed strategic thinking/planning process as described in Re-Shaping the Simpson Experience (see Appendix A). A second document of importance was the research on essential learning outcomes completed by the American Association of Colleges and Universities (see Appendix B). The ideas in these two documents were important in that they provided a framework for discussion and also validation for the Working Group’s consensus view that the current Cornerstone Program, although designed appropriately to address the concerns of its day, contained shortcomings that are significant enough to warrant change.

The Shape of the New Curriculum
The LPWG proposal for the New Curriculum is composed of four interlocked components. The first component is a course designed to introduce the student to college and the life of the mind. In reviewing the success of our current LAS program and first-year programs at other institutions, the LPWG found that the experience provided first year students would be substantially improved if their entry course was specifically designed for the purpose of acculturating them to college life and the expectations of faculty. The LPWG envisions a revised LAS course that includes a set of agreed upon embedded skills necessary for college success.

The second component of the New Curriculum focuses on the development of our students as engaged citizens. Eight areas have been identified for focused attention. It should be noted that the LPWG has provided a description, rationale, criteria, support and a list of potential courses for each area in the comprehensive documents for each area.

Rather than organizing required courses around the principle of “ways of knowing” as does the current Cornerstone Program, the LPWG proposal uses the term “engaged citizenship” as the framework for the new general education program. In the New Curriculum the answer to the often asked question, “Why do I have to take all of these courses?” becomes, “Because they will
help you grow as an informed and engaged citizen” rather than the more general “Because they show you different ways of knowing and they will help you to be a well-rounded person.” The New Curriculum also differs from the current Cornerstone Program in that it allows and encourages all disciplines to participate in all of the components it identifies as important to the development of an informed and engaged citizen. It is believed that certain disciplines will find a natural home in certain areas, but the required courses will be approved on the basis of the criteria rather than the courses location in a discipline. So too, the New Curriculum assumes many courses above the introductory level will be used to engage students in the big questions of citizenship. This will likely decrease the number of introductory courses used to fulfill general education, and provide students with the opportunity to grapple with the questions of citizenship within the context of content-oriented courses at any level. The LPWG believes this approach will allow more faculty across the campus to participate in fulfilling the objectives of the general education program than is currently possible.

The third component of the New Curriculum is a set of six skills that have been identified by the college’s strategic thinking/planning process, the AAC&U research, and the ideas LPWG believe are important for all liberally educated persons.

The final component is a senior seminar. After much discussion about the effectiveness of the current Senior Colloquium program, the LPWG recommends that it be replaced with a senior capstone class within the major.

A Criteria-based General Education
The LPWG proposal assumes that criteria will be developed for each of the four components. Courses to fulfill the component parts of the curriculum may be offered by any department, but must be designed to meet the specific criteria established by the faculty. The LPWG has included in this document, a brief description of the component parts (Section B: The Brief Documents) as well as a more complete description (Section C: The Comprehensive Documents) which includes more specific information including other institutions that have similar requirements and courses currently in the curriculum that may with some adjustment be suited to the particular area requirement. In both cases, the LPWG understands that, should the New Curriculum be adopted by the faculty, specific criteria for each component area will need to be finalized. The information contained in Section B and Section C will serve as guide for the development of the final specific criteria. The LPWG anticipates temporary committees will be established to refine the criteria and vet proposals from departments for area courses.

The Apparent Complexity of the New Curriculum
On first glance, it may appear that the LPWG proposal for the New Curriculum is larger and more complex than the current Cornerstone Program. The LPWG believes that, upon closer examination, faculty will come to agree that the New Curriculum is actually quite simple to understand both in description and purpose.

As stated earlier, the New Curriculum consists of four parts. The proposed first-year course is a revision of the current LAS. The second component (required courses from specified areas) is similar to the existing Cornerstones, but the areas of study are based on the ideas and issues determined to be valuable to the engaged citizen, rather than by discipline. The third component (embedded skills) consists of specific and intentional skills that LPWG believes are important to
engaged citizenship and success in life after college. A case could be made that the identified embedded skills are for the most part visible manifestations of existing expectations of the current Cornerstone program. The existing Senior Colloquium is refashioned into a capstone in the major.

The total number of courses required for the New Curriculum will vary from student to student, but is likely to be a minimum of nine. Nine courses are within the proposed general education program (new LAS + eight area courses). The LPWG believes that most if not all of the required embedded skills will be met within other courses (general education, majors and electives.) If this does not happen, the total courses required of most students for general education will be increased but will still likely be about a third of the 32 courses required for graduation discussed last year with the faculty. The computer degree audit program within Datatel can track which course has been approved for which area and/or embedded skill so LPWG believes the fear that the multiple areas and embedded skills will be difficult to track is unwarranted.

What about the Ways of Knowing and the Well-Rounded Person?
Although it does not mandate exposure to a variety of academic disciplines, the practical reality is that most students will be exposed to a variety of disciplines through the courses required for the New Curriculum. It is expected that all disciplines will participate in one or more of the required areas of study. All departments will be asked to contribute to the LAS program. In addition, LPWG believes that advisors will work with students to make sure that students don’t intentionally narrow their experience. The LPWG suggests that this be monitored and limiting factors be put into place if it is the case that a large percentage of students graduate without the breadth expected of a liberal arts graduate.

Assessment
The LPWG recognizes that the general education program at Simpson College must be regularly reviewed to make sure it is meeting the goals set for it by the faculty. If the New Curriculum proposal is approved by the faculty, it will be important to put into place not only a timeline for its regular review, but also assessment instruments for each of its component parts. It is likely that pre-test and post-test instruments will be used for the embedded skills, for example. Having specific criteria for each element of general education will lend itself to regular assessment.

Summary
The LPWG believes it has met the charge of the faculty. The proposal is based on the very best practice in general education and is focused on the essential learning outcomes identified in our on-campus strategic plan and through research conducted by AAC&U. LPWG looks forward to discussing its proposal with EPCC and the full faculty.
The Purpose of the New Curriculum at Simpson College

The New Curriculum provides students with a liberal education that combines an integrative program of general education and a rigorous program in the major with complimentary electives and a range of special opportunities.

The general education program prepares students to be engaged citizens by exploring enduring questions about ourselves, civilization, and the world and by developing the skills necessary to create and shape a diverse and just community.

The skills students acquire in the fulfillment of the general education program complement and enrich their majors and minors, while the content areas broaden and contextualize the more focused work in their chosen academic discipline.

As an organizing principle, citizenship encourages an emphasis on issues of personal integrity, moral responsibility and social justice.
Brief Outline of the New Curriculum

I. Simpson Seminar (1 Course)
An autonomous seminar for all students that is focused on a big question and in the interest area of the instructor.

Purpose: To provide an entry into the academy and a solid foundation for future work. The course will meet the criteria for the following embedded skills.
- Written Communication
- Critical Thinking

II. OURSELVES, CIVILIZATION, AND THE WORLD (8 courses)
Purpose: To prepare students to be engaged citizens by exploring enduring questions about ourselves, civilization, and the world.
- World Language (WL)
- Global Perspectives (GP)
- Diversity and Power (DP)
- Ethics and Moral Reasoning (EM)
- Civic Engagement (CE)
- Scientific Reasoning (SR)
- Historical Perspectives (HP)
- The Arts (AR)

III. EMBEDDED SKILLS
Purpose: To provide an opportunity for students to work on important life and professional skills throughout their college experience.
- Four Written Communication experiences (WC)
- Two Quantitative Reasoning experiences (QR)
- Three Critical Thinking experiences (CT)
- Two Information Literacy experiences (IL)
- Two Oral Communication experiences (OC)
- Two Collaborative Leadership experiences (CL).

IV. SENIOR CAPSTONE IN THE MAJOR (1 Course)
Purpose: To afford the student opportunity to reflect on the ideas and skills experienced during the college years within the context of the major. All departments will be asked to provide information on how the important issues and skills present in the general education program are addressed within the senior major capstone.
NOTES:

Required courses in Component II (Ourselves, Civilization and the World) may carry an Embedded Skills designations. For example, a Global Perspectives (GP) course might carry a Written Communication (WC) designation. An Ethics and Moral Reasoning (EM) course might carry a Critical Thinking (CT) designation. It is the hope that students will fulfill the majority, if not all, of their Embedded Skill requirements through courses that they plan to take anyway.

Although faculty would be encouraged to include the various ideas and skills expressed in the embedded skills criteria in all courses, an individual course will not be allowed to receive designations for more than two Embedded Skills experiences. The Simpson Seminar will receive the designations of Written Communication (WC) and Critical Thinking (CT).

All courses receiving an embedded skills designation (both in the area titled Ourselves, Civilization and the World and as Embedded Skills) will meet specific criteria established by faculty.
Section B:
Brief Overview of the Curriculum
New Curriculum Graphic Representation

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Embedded Skills:

- Written Communication (WC) (4 experiences)
- Quantitative Reasoning (QR) (2 experiences)
- Oral Communication (OR) (2 experiences)
- Critical Thinking (CT) (2 experiences)
- Collaborative Leadership (CL) (2 experiences)
I. SIMPSON SEMINAR

Brief Document

All students will be required to take one course as an introduction to the academy and Simpson College. This course will be called the Simpson Seminar.
Simpson Seminar

Description

This student-centered course provides new students with an introduction to the academy during their first semester on campus.

This course provides a solid general foundation for future academic work.

This course enhances student engagement and student sense of purpose in college.

Together, these elements provide an authentic and organic set of opportunities for students to acquaint themselves with various campus resources.

Criteria for Approving Proposals

The Simpson Seminar focuses on an interest of the instructor that allows students to examine a “big question” and relate it to their lives. In proposing and teaching the course, the instructor would agree to meet the criteria for the following non-content goals:

1. The embedded academic skills:
The Simpson Seminar will satisfy the criteria for the designation of the following embedded skills.
   - Written Communication (WC)
   - Critical Thinking (CT)

2. Student engagement:
These course components aid in achieving three goals: personal development, satisfaction with the college experience, and student retention.

Structure
The academic and student development co-directors of the FYE in consultation with the registrar, the office of career services and the Center for Vocation and Integrative Learning shall facilitate a number of options for achieving this objective each year. Faculty members may select the options that work best for them and their courses. Possible options may include but are not limited to the following:

- Service Learning
- Wesley Scholars program
- Career planning
- FYE seminars that are clustered together
- FYE seminars that are thematically linked to other courses
- FYE seminars that are linked with housing
- Joining students for social opportunities
Alternatively, an instructor may opt to deal with these issues through extensive in-class content-driven discussions of vocation and engagement.

**Staffing**
These courses provide multiple opportunities for new students to have regular interactions with Simpson faculty, staff, and students.

- The instructor shall be a full-time member of the faculty who serves as an academic advisor for all of the students in the seminar. Among other things, this provides the opportunity to acquaint students with the general education curriculum.
- The course shall be staffed with a student Destination Leader (DL) who has received training in various aspects of student development including academic advising.

Instructors may opt to draw upon a variety of staff members in order to integrate student engagement and sense of purpose in college into the course.

- With the assistance of the DL alone
- By inviting members of the faculty and staff to visit with the class
- By co-teaching select elements of the course with a member of the student development staff. This option provides the students in the class with an opportunity to get to know another professional member of the campus community.

*Note:* Faculty teaching Simpson Seminars for the first time shall partner with a member of the student development staff.

**Format**
These courses shall emphasize regular, sustained, and authentic face-to-face interactions. Thus, they should be smaller, seminar-sized classes that meet often. In addition to meeting outside of class with students for formal academic advising, instructors may opt to arrange informal advising appointments or opportunities for informal socializing. DLs may organize study groups or writing workshops. Members of the student development staff may organize activities in their area of expertise as well.

No departmental designation can be attached to these courses. They will be designated at “SIMP” or “FYE” or something similar.

**Possible Courses**

**What is my carbon footprint?**
There is a growing concern about the impact of each individual and organization on our resources and the future of our planet, and one measure of that impact is a person’s or organization’s carbon footprint. This course will investigate both the reality and the hype of carbon footprint measurements and will try to address the following questions. There are many carbon footprint calculators out there, but what do they measure, how do they measure the footprint and are those measurements valid? What does the carbon footprint mean, and is it the only measure of our impact on the earth? If we know our carbon footprint, what can we do to decrease it? How can we make changes in our community to reduce the footprint of other organizations we belong to?
Ethnomathematics

Ethnomathematics is the study of the relationship between mathematics and culture in order to better understand and to appreciate the connections between the two. Here are some examples of topics from this course. Girls in India often decorate prayer rooms, courtyards or thresholds with designs built around grids of dots (Kolam). Drawings with similar features (Sona) are drawn in the sand during storytelling in the Angola and Congo regions of Africa. What is the mathematics represented by these figures or used in the creation of the figures and how do the figures represent cultural ideas? Three-in-a-row games such as Tic-Tac-Toe are well known, but there are many such games in Africa and from Europe. What are the common strategies of these games, and what cultural influences are demonstrated in the games and their development? In general, what do mathematical games, art, relationships and structures tell us about various cultures and vice versa?

Reacting to the Past: Asia

This course is an introduction to the rich traditions of two of the oldest cultures on the planet, so rather than attempting to grasp China and India in their mind-boggling totality, we will explore a few key aspects through the eyes of the participants in two important historical events.

We will play two long games that simulate periods of crisis. The first is set at the imperial court of Ming China. It is focused on a struggle over succession to the throne. The second game explores the issue of nation-building; its setting is the Simla Conference of 1945. In these games, students will play roles that range from the immensely powerful emperor of China and the august Grand Secretaries of the Hanlin academy to the leader of the Indian “untouchables”, advocates of non-violence, religious zealots, and potential terrorists.

Each game is structured around primary texts. The China game is centered on Confucius’s Analects, while the India game addresses a wide range of writing including the literature of Hindu revival and Islamic nationalism, parts of the Koran, and the writings of modern Indian statesmen like Ambedkar, Nehru, Jinnah, and Gandhi. Students will read the two game manuals, which include extensive background reading that provides necessary context for the primary texts. In addition, they will complete a research project to flesh out their positions.

All of these readings provide good reference points for discussion, but the role-playing aspect of this course allows for an especially high degree of student engagement with the texts, their historical context, and with one another. In each game this engagement features the composition and presentation of two speeches.

This course includes a traditional Chinese tea ceremony and at least one good Indian meal.

Irish Art and Culture: A Terrible Beauty

Irish Art and Culture: A Terrible Beauty is designed to fulfill the objectives of a Simpson Seminar course while introducing students to the art and culture of Ireland. The course focuses on the link that exists between culture, history and art, and also explores the role of the artist in society. During the semester we will read plays and other literature, view art and architecture, and listen to music. We will discover the threads that wind themselves through the art and culture of Ireland and use what we find as a lens to look at our own cultures and the role art plays in our lives.
II. OURSELVES, CIVILIZATION, AND THE WORLD

Brief Documents of the Eight Courses

All students will be required to take one course in each of eight different areas. The following information describes the eight areas, provides potential criteria and a list of existing courses that may fit the area, or may be altered to fit the area. It should be noted that the LPWG believes these area areas are crucial to the development of engaged citizens and ask students to explore enduring questions about ourselves, civilization, and the world. It should be noted that although specific disciplines will be more likely suited to one or two areas, all departments and disciplines will be encouraged to submit courses to fulfill all areas. The decision to include a particular course in a particular area will be based on the course achieving the objectives of the criteria. More in-depth information about the areas may be found in Section C, which contains more comprehensive versions of these documents.
WORLD LANGUAGES (WL)

Description

To be engaged global citizens, students need some experience with a language other than their own. Second language learning helps students decrease ethnocentrism by accessing insider viewpoints on cultural products and practices. Using language to gain entry into another cultural world gives students first-hand experience with the importance of language in understanding another culture on its own terms. Students also need to be able to show respect for people from another linguistic and cultural background by initiating communication in their language, even if, depending on the students' level, the interaction subsequently shifts to English. Attempting to communicate in a second language opens doors to building global relationships.

Courses in this area focus on language as an expression of culture. Students gain communication skills in a language other than English while interacting with natives of a culture where that language is spoken and with their cultural products. Through culturally rich language use, students also experience new ways of thinking and encoding ideas.

Students coming to Simpson with previous language study have the option of taking either a level-appropriate course in that language or an introductory course in another language. Students can also opt to fulfill the world language requirement while participating in a semester-abroad program in a non-English-speaking country.

Criteria for Approving Proposals

A course fulfilling the requirement for World Languages (WL) is a course that
- Focuses on the development of language skills in a nonnative language,
- Enhances students' communication skills by having them interact with native speakers of that language, and
- Uses that language as a means of accessing and understanding cultural diversity.

Possible Courses

Current courses include language offerings in French, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Spanish, and Thai that meet the above criteria. Courses in other languages may be added in the future.
GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES (GP)

Description
Global Perspectives courses are designed to introduce students to other countries and cultures beyond their own. Through this introduction students will gain new perspectives on and appreciation for other cultural traditions. Students will also be challenged to reflect and look more deeply at their own culture and see how their culture fits within a larger world context.

In order to be prepared for responsible citizenship in a global context, students must deepen their understanding of the world beyond their home country and their familiar way of life. Addressing major societal issues of the future will require not only an international perspective but the ability to understand other cultures on their own terms.

The process of realizing that one’s own cultural norms are not universal generally requires direct instruction. Through both factual information and opportunities for cultural analysis, courses in this area increase international awareness in ways that lead to tolerance and respect for differences.

Criteria for Approving Proposals

A course fulfilling this requirement of Global Perspectives (GP) is a course that
- Focuses on discovering and analyzing the cultural perspectives of one or more societies outside the U.S.,
- Encourages reflection on students’ home culture within the context of studying other norms, and
- Seeks to increase cross-cultural understanding and decrease ethnocentrism.

Possible Courses
ANTH 110 Cultural Anthropology
ART 201/202 Art History courses
ART 204 Non-Western Art
British literature courses
COMM 340 Intercultural Communication
European history courses
MGMT 336 International Marketing
PHIL 121 Ancient and Medieval Philosophy
PHIL 245 Ethics of Globalization
PHIL 255 Ethics of Development and Consumption
POSC 240 World Politics
POSC 340 Politics of a Changing World
REL 120 Intro to World Religions
REL 233 Islam
REL 320 Ethics, Religion, and Conflict
Semester abroad programs or May Term courses with cultural experiences
WLCS 120 Analyzing cultural perspectives
World language courses focused on cultural content
**DIVERSITY AND POWER (DP)**

**Description**

The diversity that exists in societies around the world is often characterized by a power differential. By taking up the perspective of groups which have been systematically denied power to shape social institutions, students investigate both the conflicts arising from these power differentials and the cultural contributions of those who are isolated by social inequities.

This requirement is designed to engage students in recognizing and analyzing the perspective of a less powerful (often minority) group and understanding the differences of experience this power differential engenders. In addition this course encourages students to understand and empathize with the perspectives and experiences of another group.

From the curriculum mission statement:

*The general education program prepares students to be engaged citizens by exploring enduring questions about ourselves, civilization, and the world and by developing the skills necessary to shape and create a diverse and just community. As an organizing principle, citizenship encourages an emphasis on issues of personal integrity, moral responsibility and social justice. The skills students acquire in the fulfillment of the general education program complement and enrich their majors and minors, while the content areas broaden and contextualize the more focused work in their chosen academic disciplines.*

**Criteria for Approving Proposals**

A course fulfilling the requirement for Diversity and Power (DP) is a course that

- Focuses on the power differential between two or more groups within one or more communities,
- Analyzes the social inequities resulting from such power differentials, and
- Encourages students to understand and empathize with the perspectives and experiences of another group.

**Possible Courses**

All existing Minority Perspective courses would fulfill this requirement, but other existing courses may fill it as well since DP courses need not focus exclusively on the US. Since it is an option to include courses that deal with cultures outside of the United States, it is likely that a number of existing courses (particularly courses that are currently offered during the May Term or as part of semester abroad programs) could fulfill this requirement as well.
ETHICS AND MORAL REASONING (EM)

Description
Lickona (1991) states, “Character so conceived has three interrelated parts: moral knowing, moral feeling, and moral behavior . . . habits of the mind, habits of the heart, and habits of action” (51). He claims that “all three are necessary for leading a moral life; all three make up moral maturity” (51). Moral knowing is described as involving moral awareness, values, perspective taking, moral reasoning, and decision making. Moral feeling includes the conscience, self-esteem, empathy, and humility. Finally, moral action is founded on moral competence (the ability to turn moral judgment and feeling into action), moral will (the uaction to do what’s right), and moral habit (an unconscious proclivity to do what’s right). Lickona views moral action as an “outcome” (61) of both moral knowing and moral feeling, and the moral environment in which individuals are situated as a key factor in whether people behave morally. According to Rest, moral behavior is the outcome of the four characteristics below:

- **Moral Sensitivity**: the ability to see an ethical dilemma, including how our actions will affect others
- **Moral Judgment**: the ability to reason correctly about what “ought” to be done in a specific situation
- **Moral Motivation**: a personal commitment to moral action, accepting responsibility for the outcome
- **Moral Character**: courageous persistence in spite of fatigue or temptations to take the easy way out

So ethics and moral reasoning consists not just of how we think, but also what we do. And what we habitually do shapes the kind of people we become. This growth occurs in a “community of practice” with a shared mission or values [Wenger].

The Center for the Study of College Student Values uses curricular benchmarks to assess “Principles and Practices for Promoting Character Development in College,” such as: (1) courses have in-depth opportunities for students to reflect on core values and ethical issues, (2) the liberal arts program integrates core values, (3) the institution’s core values infuse all academic majors, (4) the institution takes deliberate steps to help students act upon the core values, for example by giving students structured opportunities to develop and practice ethical leadership.

Criteria for Approving Proposals
A course fulfilling the requirement for Ethics and Moral Reasoning (EM) is a course will

- Investigate ethical ideals (justice, human rights, equality, and “the good life”) in light of either religious ethics or moral philosophy (virtue ethics, natural law, utilitarianism, duty),
- Identify and critically evaluate real-world ethical issues and discuss the individual and societal effects of various choices based on a vision of the good life,
- Ask students to articulate and defend (in oral or written form) a conception of ethical action on an issue, and
- Provide students an opportunity for engaged action in the larger community, consistent with the idea of the common good expressed in the college’s mission.
Possible Courses

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