



ANNUAL REPORT 2023

# **A Contradictory Reality**



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# Mission and Strategy

The Teagle Foundation works to support and strengthen liberal arts education, which we see as fundamental to meaningful work, effective citizenship, and a fulfilling life. Our aim is to serve as a catalyst for the improvement of teaching and learning in the arts and sciences while addressing issues of financial sustainability and accountability in higher education.

The Teagle Foundation believes that all students, regardless of major, should have an opportunity to experience the liberal arts. Liberal education entails engagement with the most challenging ideas of past and present. It fosters humility, curiosity, empathy, and concern for others. It helps young people shape lives of meaning, purpose, and informed participation in the democratic process. We believe that the opportunity to experience such an education is part of the promise of our democracy, and that it must not be restricted to the privileged few.

# History

The Teagle Foundation was established in 1944 by Walter C. Teagle (1878-1962), longtime president and later chairman of the board of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), now Exxon Mobil Corporation. Mr. Teagle gave the Foundation a broad mandate, “to advance the well-being and general good of mankind throughout the world,” mentioning many areas of concern and possible recipients of its support. Over the intervening decades the Foundation has pursued many of these avenues, always, however, including among its grants the aid Mr. Teagle envisioned for “institutions of higher learning and research,” and assistance to family members of employees of his corporation who needed resources and were “desirous of obtaining some form of educational advantage.”

Walter Teagle graduated from Cornell University in 1899 and maintained close ties with the university throughout his lifetime. He served as a trustee from 1924 to 1954 and made generous contributions to it. Reflecting Mr. Teagle’s wish, the Foundation includes among its directors a person nominated by the president of Cornell and another nominated by the chair of ExxonMobil. The Teagle Foundation’s assets derive from gifts and bequests from Walter C. Teagle, his wife Rowena Lee Teagle, and their son Walter C. Teagle, Jr.

# From the Chair

As a member of the Board of Directors since 2014 and as Chair for the past two years, I have been very proud as the current Teagle-funded programs have evolved to meet the needs of American society and American higher education. We have been adapting our grantmaking to respond to the disruptions of the global pandemic and the epidemic of domestic strife. The need for broader access to a high-quality liberal arts education has never been more vital, and is fundamental to all we do at the Teagle Foundation.

Throughout my career in higher education, science, and philanthropy, I have become increasingly grateful for the liberal arts college I attended, for its purposeful curriculum (though we chafed then at many of the requirements) and for its dedicated faculty attuned to challenging us and supporting our learning. Teagle initiatives have consistently reinforced the enduring values that flow from “liberal education.” These values encompass subject-matter knowledge that is deeply connected to open-minded inquiry in all forms of human endeavor.

I’d like to offer a quotation from a gifted man to make the point about the need for and benefits of open-minded inquiry. His name was Jacob Bronowski, the Polish-British mathematician, philosopher, chess player, literary critic, and poet who was able to make technical and creative contributions across many fields as well as to communicate the ideas broadly and effectively. “*Ask an impertinent question,*” he wrote, “*and you are on the way to a pertinent answer.*”

As a senior academic administrator, I tacked these words on a bulletin board next to my desk for repeated reflection about how to move along efforts to deepen student learning and how to advance complex processes requiring significant change.

Bronowski was speaking of the “essence of science” but this focus on asking an “impertinent question” goes way beyond science -- into human inquiry of all kinds. While “impertinent” can have negative connotations, this tongue-in-cheek usage by Bronowski brings up the value he saw for out-of-the-box ideas, for a respectful contrariness, for an intentional “smart” or sometimes even a “smart alecky” provocation as a means to stimulate new ideas, new truths, new understanding.

Embedded in liberal education and the programs that Teagle supports are the principles of guided questioning, led by faculty who can model and support the development of ever-more advanced skills of inquiry in today’s students. Such classrooms are where students sharpen their abilities of argumentation and listening about the big ideas that have engaged people around the world and across time, including trust and deceit, altruism and betrayal, hope and fear. “Impertinent questions” are also useful in the vigorous contemporary debates, from the origins of the Dead Sea Scrolls to the promise and peril of unfettered AI. And speaking of AI, another quote from Bronowski applies: “*Knowledge is an unending adventure at the edge of uncertainty.*” Here he was in dialogue with those in the physical sciences working on the uncertainty principle of Heisenberg, and advancing the idea that the uncertainty principle should actually be called the principle of tolerance. Were he alive now he would certainly have prescient things to say about AI and the pressing issues of today. We must prepare our students, and faculty, for lives of vastly more uncertainty...and tolerance.

It is of course a tricky balance, especially in today's contentious times, to nurture the asking of "impertinent questions," and to wrestle with the fruits of these discussions in meaningful and productive ways. That is why Teagle grants supporting institutional efforts to expand humanistic inquiry also contain elements that equip the faculty to incorporate this guided questioning approach into their classes. That is why I am such a big supporter of Teagle's series "[How and Why I Teach This Text](#)" where recent interactive webinars, aimed primarily at current faculty in our funded programs but open to all, have delved into the teaching of texts such as [Lincoln's First Inaugural Address](#), George Orwell's [1984](#), [Plato and James Baldwin together](#), and Shakespeare's [Hamlet](#). I encourage you to view these programs and many others, whether you have read these influential texts in college – or want to encounter them now with a fine teacher.

What continues to concern us and our grantees are the emerging data on the impact of the pandemic on student learning. Reading and math scores have taken big hits, with the biggest negative change in underserved schools. There is time urgency about how to regain lost learning in these basic skills courses, as there is likely to be a long tail as students pass through to upper grades and approach graduation. And losses with respect to civic education are worrisome as the 2024 election cycle heats up and major constitutional questions arise. *The Washington Post* published a report in May 2023 by Shawn Healy and Louise Dubé that looks at the issue of civics education, based on data from National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). They lead with this conclusion: "The release of [NAEP data] in civics confirmed what we already know: The nation is failing to prioritize teaching civics." But they also stress that much is now known about how civics can be taught effectively, including through the use of primary source materials, role-playing, and debates or panel discussions. These proven teaching strategies for eighth-grade civic students, relying on primary sources and discussion-based learning, are the hallmarks of Teagle-supported programs across our grantmaking. Broader dissemination and adoption of these well-designed and effective interventions are urgently needed.

Our grantmaking in the four major initiatives—Cornerstone: Learning for Living, Knowledge for Freedom, Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts, and Education for American Civic Life—supports institutional programs from across the country, and of varying sizes, organizational structure, and sector. We foster various sorts of inter-institutional collaborations that capitalize on this diversity of institutional type and location. And importantly we expect to partner with the grantee institution on cost rather than pay the whole bill, a collaboration we believe is critical for the transition of programs to full institutionalization into the distinctive context of each college or university.

As Andrew Delbanco notes in his President's Report, "What all these programs have in common is a determination to make the classroom a civil and purposeful community." We start a new academic year committed to renewing our efforts and doing our very best to maximize the impacts of our grantmaking for the betterment of American society and American higher education.

--Elizabeth S. Boylan, Chair

# Letter from the President: A Contradictory Reality

Clouds have been gathering over American higher education for a long time, and the storm is now upon us. Colleges and universities are under assault from just about every quarter and for just about everything: admissions preferences; high cost; treatment of students (accusations run from coddling to indifference); protection of (or failure to protect) academic freedom; collusion with the purveyors of college rankings; putatively “woke” teaching of controversial subjects such as American history and human sexuality. And that’s a spare selection from a long list.

Whatever one thinks of the merits of the charges, these institutions are caught in the crossfire of an increasingly vicious culture war that is generating more heat than light.

At the heart of the conflict are the humanities—those fields of study in which students are asked to consider historical and aspirational ideas about individual and social life. Here, from just the last couple of years, is a random sampling of bad-news stories about the humanities, or, more broadly, the liberal arts:

- [“Catholic Colleges Cut Humanities Programs, Citing Student Interest in Other Fields”](#) (*National Catholic Reporter*)
- [“College Students and Universities Ditching Humanities Majors in order to Prepare for ‘In-Demand’ Careers”](#) (*Fox News*)
- [“The Suicide of the Liberal Arts”](#) (*Wall Street Journal*)
- [“The End of the English Major”](#) (*The New Yorker*)

Most recently, there’s been a spate of headlines about the [decimation of the liberal arts at West Virginia University](#)—an especially disturbing case because it signals the loss of support for liberal education in communities struggling with the effects of de-industrialization, and the consequent risk that such education will become a privilege restricted to sheltered elites.

Funereal stories about liberal education in general, and the humanities in particular, should come as no surprise at a time when the excitement of innovation belongs disproportionately to the STEM fields, and when more and more students, especially those from first-generation college families, cannot take for granted that a job, much less a career, awaits them. Those of us who defend liberal learning for *all* students can argue all we want that it builds skills for “the unknown jobs of the future,” but we’re up against a widespread conviction that this type of education represents an unaffordable deflection from preparing for the rough-and-tumble of the marketplace.

Yet while the bad-news stories about the state of the humanities are copious and clear, they are also insufficient and misleading. There is truth in the headlines—yes, majors in the humanities *are* falling; yes, humanities departments *are* contracting—but it is equally true that week after week, my colleagues and I at the Teagle Foundation are cheered by a contradictory reality, namely a growing commitment to liberal education in classrooms across the wide range of institutions with which we work.

So how to put these two facts together?

- at many institutions, the humanities are shrinking (as measured by major enrollments)
- at many institutions, the humanities are thriving (as manifest in student enthusiasm and faculty engagement)

Part of the answer is that while the numbers of departmental majors are declining, we are witnessing a revival of humanistic General Education as a vital part of the college experience.

The revival began in 2016 at Purdue University, a distinguished STEM-centric institution where, thanks to visionary administrative and faculty leadership, a program called [Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts](#) has [transformed](#) the liberal arts from a marginal—in some fields, moribund—sector into a thriving scene of innovative teaching and energized student engagement. I have elsewhere [described](#) how the seed planted at Purdue is spreading to campuses across the country, from [Stanford University](#), where faculty from multiple departments—including the sciences—have committed to a sequence of courses with common readings required of all first-year students, to [Vanderbilt University](#), where the faculty recently voted to launch a required first-year two-semester sequence of reading- and writing-intensive courses (the First-Year Core), in which students encounter a common set of key texts chosen collaboratively by faculty and drawn from various epochs and cultures.

Similar efforts to revitalize the humanities as part of general education are underway not only at research universities, but at a growing number of community colleges, where a large plurality of low-income and minority students begin their post-secondary careers; at Historically Black Colleges and Universities that continue to play an indispensable role in advancing the cause of racial equity; at regional public institutions, which, despite declining subsidies, remain drivers of hope for their local communities. The [rapid growth](#) across these sectors of the [Cornerstone: Learning for Living](#) initiative—funded in its first phase jointly by Teagle and the National Endowment for the Humanities—is a source of delight for me and my colleagues as we watch humanities faculty reach out beyond their home departments through Gen Ed to fledgling college students regardless of major field or career aspirations. We are also encouraged by the concurrent expansion of our Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts initiative, in partnership with the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, that is now supporting statewide transfer pathways for 170 independent colleges across 14 states. The promise of this initiative reflects the growing appeal of liberal arts colleges as destinations for community college transfer aspirants seeking to earn a bachelor's degree from an institution whose mission is to provide students with more than strictly vocational education.

Our *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* and *Transfer Pathways* initiatives are hardly the only sources of good news over the past year. I was thrilled to visit a class at the City College of New York to join a discussion of Melville's and Whitman's New York with the inaugural cohort of [New York City Fellows](#)—a spectacular group of young people aiming toward lives of public service in their great city. The Fellowship offers this group of highly motivated undergraduates both the academic study and hands-on experience they will need to become the next generation of civic leaders in New York. The Teagle Foundation supports



this work in coordinated funding with the Carroll and Milton Petrie Foundation, the Charles H. Revson Foundation, and Bloomberg Philanthropies.

It was also a delight for me to meet the inaugural class of “[Freedom Scholars](#)” at Elon University outside Greensboro, North Carolina, funded under our [Knowledge for Freedom](#) (KFF) initiative, which supports intensive humanities seminars for rising high school seniors in underserved communities, a program now hosted by nearly 30 colleges and universities. The Elon scholars, like their KFF counterparts across the country, are a dazzling cohort of talented young people who are bringing with them a keen sense of civic commitment as they head off to college.

What all these programs have in common is a determination to make the classroom a civil and purposeful community. As one of our grantees, Ted Hadzi-Antich Jr., founder of the “[Great Questions Seminar](#)” at Austin Community College, puts it, the genuine humanities classroom is “a small community in which everyone’s voice contributes to a collaborative pursuit of truth.” In what shows promise of becoming a sector-wide “best practice,” Austin Community College is providing students with the option of meeting the “Student Success” course requirement (prevalent at many community colleges) through the kind of course Hadzi-Antich and his colleagues have pioneered—a course organized around enduring works of literature and philosophy that speak to universal human questions. This is the kind of classroom the Teagle Foundation is committed to support—classes focused on primary texts and with enough commonality in the reading lists so that students across sections may discover mutual interests. These courses should be taught as much as possible by full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty who take seriously their calling as teachers and mentors.

All of Teagle’s work is designed to ensure that college classrooms remain places inhospitable to the rancor, suspicion, and cynicism that are poisoning America’s public life—places where reading and discussion foster historical consciousness, reflective listening, and the capacity for tolerance. Surely, people at all points along the political spectrum should be able to agree that these qualities are not only desiderata but necessities for a democratic society.

As I write, this work is progressing at a wide variety of institutions— community colleges, HBCUs, research universities, regional publics, liberal arts colleges— where young people of all origins and means bring to college a hunger for philosophical ideas and works of art, and for learning through literature and history about lives like and unlike their own. Their appetite for humanistic learning simply cannot be reconciled with the prevailing narrative that an entirely instrumental conception of college as job-training has triumphed in our country. To surrender to that narrative would be to cheat young people of something they not only need but want.

In short, reports of the death of the liberal arts are, as the phrase goes, greatly exaggerated. For me and my colleagues at the Teagle Foundation, it is a privilege to support the resilient faculty, far-sighted administrators, and hopeful students who are proving every day that those reports are dead wrong.

--Andrew Delbanco, President



# Grants

The Teagle Foundation works to support and strengthen liberal arts education, which we see as fundamental to meaningful work, effective citizenship, and a fulfilling life. The Foundation strengthens teaching and learning in the arts and sciences through grants that support concrete changes in curriculum, pedagogy, and faculty professional development that ultimately improve and enliven the educational experience of undergraduate students.

Grants in this fiscal year were made nationally to colleges and universities, higher education consortia, and other relevant organizations under our major initiatives: *Cornerstone: Learning for Living*, *Knowledge for Freedom*, *Education for American Civic Life*, and *Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts*.

The Teagle Foundation virtually convened our grantees to ensure that they have an opportunity to learn from each other. The virtual format also allowed the Foundation to hold workshops for prospective grantees to learn more about the work of the Foundation.

\*Note: The following grants reflect those issued during fiscal year 2023 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2023).

## **CORNERSTONE: LEARNING FOR LIVING** (with co-funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities)

California State University-Maritime Academy, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

California State University-Sonoma, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

Catawba College, Launching “The Pursuit” (\$75,000 over 24 months)

Houston Community College, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

Howard University, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

Lyon College, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

Marshall University, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

North Carolina State University, Practical Humanity: Integrated Humanities and Social Sciences (\$350,000 over 24 months)

Northern Kentucky University, Transformational Thinking for Community and Career: The STAR Program (\$250,000 over 24 months)

Rhodes College, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

Saint Louis University, Confluence: Where the Sciences Meet the Humanities (\$250,000 over 24 months)

Texas A&M University System, The Human Experience: A Humanities Initiative for the Texas A&M System (\$350,000 over 24 months)

Transylvania University, Encounters with Transformative Texts (\$250,000 over 24 months)

Trinity Washington University, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Traversing Difference with Critical and Creative Thinking (\$300,000 over 24 months)

University of North Dakota, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez, From STEM to STEAM: Developing a Shared Intellectual Experience through Humanities-Engaged General Education in Puerto Rico (\$300,000 over 24 months)

Vanderbilt University, Relaunching the Arts and Science Core (\$350,000 over 24 months)

Victoria College, Planning for *Cornerstone: Learning for Living* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

## **KNOWLEDGE FOR FREEDOM**

Dominican University of California, Planning for *Knowledge for Freedom* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

Hollins University, Power and Purpose, a Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$240,000 over 42 months)

Kennesaw State University, Planning for *Knowledge for Freedom* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

Kent State University, Planning for *Knowledge for Freedom* (\$15,000 over 12 months)

Loyola University Chicago, Speak Up Democracy, a Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$300,000 over 42 months)

North Central College, Civic Humanities Project, a Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$300,000 over 42 months)

Nova Southeastern University, One Person Can Change the World, a Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$300,000 over 42 months)

Queens Community House and Laguardia Community College, The Settlement Experience: A Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$250,000 over 36 months)

St. Joseph's University, The Citizen's Path, a Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$230,000 over 42 months)

The University of Texas at San Antonio, Planning for *Knowledge for Freedom* (\$25,000 over 12 months)

University of Massachusetts Amherst, Question Everything, a Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$250,000 over 42 months)

University of Rhode Island, Forgiveness is Freedom Academy: A Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$250,000 over 42 months)

Washington College, Visions of Freedom in America: A Knowledge for Freedom Program (\$126,000 over 41 months)

### **EDUCATION FOR AMERICAN CIVIC LIFE**

The City College of New York, The Daniel Patrick Moynihan Center, New York City Leaders Fellowship (\$200,000 over 24 months)

### **TRANSFER PATHWAYS TO THE LIBERAL ARTS (with co-funding from the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations)**

Iowa Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts in Iowa (\$350,000 over 36 months)

Southeastern Pennsylvania Consortium for Higher Education, Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges, Pittsburgh Council for Higher Education, and Association of Independent Colleges and Universities of Pennsylvania, Planning for *Transfer Pathways to the Liberal Arts* in Pennsylvania (\$50,000 over 12 months)

Virginia Foundation for Independent Colleges and Virginia Community College System, Expanding Transfer Virginia to Independent Colleges (\$350,000 over 36 months)

# Board of Directors

The Teagle Foundation Board of Directors is led by Elizabeth S. Boylan.

The chairs of the board committees for Program, Investment, Governance & Nominating, and Audit & Compensation are, respectively, Brian Rosenberg, Grant Porter, Pauline Yu, and W. Scott Essex.

The Teagle Foundation staff, led by President Andrew Delbanco, is privileged to engage in the work of advancing the liberal arts.

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Emerita  
Barnard College

Andrew Delbanco  
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The Teagle Foundation  
Alexander Hamilton Professor of  
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Sheryl Hilliard Tucker  
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Pauline Yu  
President Emeritus  
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Societies

# Board Transitions

## Board Retirements

### **Philip B. Pool, Jr.**

Philip B. Pool, Jr. retired from the Board of Directors after 19 years of dedicated service (2005-2023). Mr. Pool's career in investment banking has included leadership roles at Willis Stein & Partners, Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette, Merrill Lynch and Kidder, Peabody. He is a founder and former Chairman of iCapital Network and has served on the Boards of Cowen & Co., the Alumni Association of the University of Virginia, the Jefferson Scholars Foundation, and the Jefferson Trust. Mr. Pool received an M.B.A. degree from Columbia University Graduate School of Business and a B.S. degree from the McIntire School of Commerce of the University of Virginia.

### **Kate Shae**

Kate Shae retired from the Board of Directors after 6 years of dedicated service (2018-2023). She most recently served as Vice President, Corporate Financial Services at ExxonMobil. Ms. Shae's previous responsibilities include Assistant Treasurer of Exxon Mobil Corporation, Business Services Manager and Treasurer for ExxonMobil Australia, Chief Financial Officer of Aera Energy LLC, and Financial Reporting Manager for ExxonMobil's global Gas and Power Marketing organization. Ms. Shae earned her B.Sc. (Hons.) degree from the University of Melbourne, Australia, and a Master of Business Administration degree from The Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania.

## New Board Members

### **Sheryl Hilliard Tucker**

Sheryl Hilliard Tucker is executive director of The Board Challenge and Chief External Affairs officer of AFS Intercultural Programs. Tucker has been Chief Editor of three national publications—Black Enterprise, Essence, and Your Company—and was on the senior executive team that managed Time Warner's portfolio of more than 100 magazines and digital brands worldwide. Ms. Tucker is a Trustee Emerita of Cornell University and serves as a Trustee of Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan New Jersey. Ms. Tucker received a B.A. from Cornell University, an M.S. from Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism, and attended New York University's Heyman School of Philanthropy.

### **Mary Dana Hinton**

Mary Dana Hinton, Ph.D., is the president of Hollins University and president emerita of the College of Saint Benedict. In addition to the Teagle Foundation, she is a member of the Board of Directors for the American Association of Colleges and Universities, Interfaith Youth Core, Saint Mary's School, and the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. She chairs the AAC&U Presidents' Trust. Hinton's scholarship focuses on leadership and inclusion in higher education. She is the author of *The Commercial Church: Black Churches and the New Religious Marketplace in America* and is a frequent op-ed contributor across higher education publications.

Hinton earned a Ph.D. in religion and religious education with high honors from Fordham University, a Master of Arts degree in clinical child psychology from the University of Kansas, Lawrence, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in psychology from Williams College. She also holds honorary Doctor of Humane Letters degrees from Misericordia University and the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts. Hinton is a member of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences, was the recipient of the Bicentennial Medal from Williams College, and was recognized with Credo's eighth annual Courageous Leadership Award.

## Staff

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