

The Teagle Foundation

NEWSLETTER - SPRING 2009



FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dig, Baby, Dig!

It's a rapidly changing world in higher education, and I don't just mean the economic "downturn." At the [Teagle Foundation](#), we are seeing other changes that are long-run opportunities, and short-run challenges for institutions that want to improve student learning, even in financially difficult times.

One encouraging sign comes from the [Association of American Colleges & Universities](#) (AAC&U) whose [recent survey](#) of institutions shows that about [four-fifths of colleges](#) have stated learning outcomes for all students, most of which include the broad outcomes of a liberal education such as writing, critical thinking, quantitative reasoning, oral communication, intercultural skills, information literacy, and ethical reasoning (p.3).

But what happens when you drill down through the verbiage into actual educational practice? According to the survey, there is a sizeable gap between the number of institutions that say they have broad liberal education outcomes for their students, and those that are prepared to claim that "almost all" of their students actually understand these outcomes. As it turns out, only five percent make this claim, while 58 percent concede that a majority of their students do not *understand* the institution's learning outcomes (p. 6). These data make me wonder: how systematic are institutions in helping their students reach the goals they want them to achieve? The answer, I think, is that despite creative and determined efforts in many quarters, there is still a long way to go.

For our students, in other words, to benefit from a robust liberal education, we need to drill through to the department and course level. "Drill, baby, drill!" may not be quite our style at the Teagle Foundation, but its educational equivalent is something we have been trying hard to encourage.

Creative efforts along these lines show up especially among recipients of our "Systematic Improvement" grants that are using evidence to improve, and keep improving, student learning. A year or so ago--in collaboration with the [Spencer Foundation](#)--the Foundation made grants to [thirteen research universities](#) that wanted systematically to

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RECENT PUBLICATIONS

On Big Questions of Meaning and Value

Hampshire College
Working Group
The Liberal Arts as Preparation for a Life of Work

National Humanities
Center Working Group
On the Human

The University of Chicago
Working Group
What can I do to right the wrongs of the world?

The University of
Richmond Working Group
The Pedagogy of Belief and Doubt

improve their students' writing and critical thinking abilities. Teagle then followed up with analogous grants to [fifteen liberal arts colleges](#).

Although the work of these liberal arts colleges and research universities is still in an early stage, we were inspired by the commitment and enthusiasm of the faculty members leading these projects to make a [further series of grants](#), just approved at our May Board meeting.

Many of these projects are not only systematic, but *systemic*, that is, they look at the entire system of education at the institution and ask how it can be improved. That's ambitious, but we feel it is no time to be less than ambitious in advancing student engagement and learning.

To do so, of course, one needs to drill through to the departments and the major. That's where a lot of student learning takes place; it is also where there may be the greatest opportunity to improve that learning. But there is a troubling disconnect, still, between what goes on at the departmental and course levels and overall institutional goals. For example, in a recent Teagle White Paper on the [classics major and undergraduate education](#), Professor Kenneth Morrell reports that of 114 syllabuses surveyed, only one explicitly linked the goals of the course to institutional or even departmental educational goals (p. 13). It is no wonder then that students often don't see how their course work can help them develop their personal and intellectual capacities!

Six scholarly organizations--in classics, economics, English and foreign languages, history, religion, and biochemistry and microbiology--have taken a fresh look at the relationship between the undergraduate major in their field and liberal education goals. An overview of the White Papers they have prepared will appear in the spring 2009 issue of the journal *Liberal Education*, and are currently available on the [Teagle website](#). They are provocative and well-worth reading.

We plan to follow up on these projects in the coming year. At its May meeting, the Board of the Teagle Foundation also approved five grants for "[Big Questions in the Disciplines](#)," with the hope of invigorating students' learning experience through collaborative projects under our "Fresh Thinking" initiative. In addition, the Foundation has recently extended its funding of a special project organized by Rachelle Brooks of Northwestern University. This project juxtaposes the [work of two disciplinary groups](#)--classics and political science--with some shared educational goals, but often with very different ways of reaching those goals.

All of these are "ground-up, faculty-owned" projects, characteristic of Teagle's grantmaking. But an effective "theory of change" also requires dynamic leadership at both the national and institutional level. For that

**Vassar College Working
Group**
*On Secularity and Liberal
Education*

**On the Relationship of
the Disciplines and
Undergraduate
Liberal Education**

**American Academy of
Religion**
*The Religion Major and
Liberal Education*

**American Economic
Association**
*The Purpose and Practice
of Economic Education as
Related to Liberal
Education Goals*

**American Society of
Biochemistry and
Molecular Biology**
*Evaluation of the
Biochemistry / Molecular
Biology Major*

Center for Hellenic Studies
*The Classics Major and
Liberal Education*

**Modern Language
Association**
*Language, Literature,
and Liberal Education*

**National Humanities
Center**
*The History Major and
Undergraduate Liberal
Education*

reason, the Foundation continues its support of the [New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability](#), a coalition of national organizations committed to the principles of the [New Leadership for Student Learning](#) statement. The next generation of leaders in higher education is also very much in focus through the new [National Forum on the Future of Liberal Education](#), organized by Sarah Igo of Vanderbilt University and Peter Struck of the University of Pennsylvania.

The Foundation's Board has been determined to sustain the momentum toward strengthening liberal education. We know that however severely the economic downturn affects our endowment, our grant recipients are often much more vulnerable. That is why we have ramped up our support of [partnerships](#) between community-based organizations working in underserved neighborhoods, and colleges and universities in the New York City metropolitan area. These partnerships have helped students aspire to and get ready for a demanding college education. A very [promising model](#) for educational success is emerging through these collaborations. We don't want to skip a beat.

There is much more to write and argue about, and I invite you to join in on the conversation through the [Liblog](#), Teagle's liberal education blog. You might also be interested in a [recent talk](#) in which I discussed three major shifts affecting student learning in liberal education.

None of this would happen, however, without Teagle's dedicated staff and its bold and thoughtful Board of Directors. We are especially grateful to Sol Gittleman of Tufts University and Pat McPherson of the American Philosophical Society who have just completed their service on the Board, and to recent additions [Andrew Delbanco](#), [Barbara Friedman](#), [Grant Porter](#), and [Cornelia Small](#). I am also very pleased that when I step down as president in December 2009, [Richard Morrill](#), the Chancellor at the University of Richmond, will be my successor.

Bob Connor

GRANTEE SPOTLIGHT

Outcomes & Assessment

**Association of American
Colleges & Universities
*Engaging Departments
Institute***

**Bates College, Bowdoin
College, Colby College,
Middlebury College,
Smith College, Trinity
College, Wellesley
College, NEASC
*New England
Consortium on
Assessment and Student
Learning***

**Beloit College, Knox
College, Monmouth
College, Ripon College
*Assessing the Value
Added to Liberal
Education by Academic
Majors***

**The Five Colleges of Ohio
*Creative and Critical
Thinking***

**National Institute for
Learning Outcomes
Assessment
*Making Learning
Outcomes Usable and
Transparent***

**Social Science Research
Council
*Learning in Higher
Education***

RECENT GRANTS

Outcomes and Assessment

For the systematic improvement of student learning

- Five [collaborative grants](#) of up to \$150,000 over 48 months to Bates College and Bowdoin College; Bryn Mawr College, Haverford College, and Swarthmore College; Connecticut College, Allegheny College, Colorado College, and Franklin Pierce University; University of Colorado at Boulder and Colorado College; and Wittenberg University, Alma College, Augustana College, Gustavus Adolphus College, Illinois Wesleyan University, Luther College, and Washington and Jefferson College.
- Three [single-institution grants](#) of \$75,000 over 36 months to Colgate University, Trinity College (CT), and Randolph-Macon College.
- One ["first-step" grant](#) of \$75,000 over 24 months to Spelman College and Smith College.

For value-added assessment projects

- Six [collaborative grants](#) of up to \$300,000 over 36 months to Belmont University and Wagner College; College of the Holy Cross, Assumption College, and Saint Anselm College; Fairfield University, Fordham University, and Georgetown University; Rhodes College, Niagara University, and Franklin & Marshall College; Seattle University and Gonzaga University; and Ursinus College, Goucher College, McDaniel College, Washington College, and Washington & Jefferson College.

For additional assessment projects

- \$303,969 over 24 months to the [Association of American Colleges & Universities](#) to build faculty and departmental leadership for liberal education outcomes.
- \$284,960 over 42 months for a project led by [Augustana College](#) to examine and assess senior capstone experiences.
- \$214,863 over 37 months to the [Great Lakes College Association, Associated Colleges of the Midwest, and Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts](#) for the "Study Abroad Learning and Cost Alliance."
- Two grants of \$84,000 over 6 months and \$150,000 over 36

St. Lawrence University
*Assessment of Diversity
Goals and General
Education*

**St. Olaf College, Carleton
College, Macalester
College**
State Your Case!

Fresh Thinking

**Associated Colleges of the
Midwest**
*Collegium on Student
Learning*

**Great Lakes College
Association**
Pathways to Learning

Indiana University
*Collegium on Inquiry in
Action*

**SouthEastern
Pennsylvania
Consortium for Higher
Education**
*Creating Active
Pathways to Student
Learning*

**Williams College,
Barnard College,
Carleton College, Vassar
College**
*Teaching Big Science at
Small Colleges: A
Genomics Collaboration*

months to support the [New Leadership Alliance for Student Learning and Accountability](#).

- \$165,766 over 52 months to [Northwestern University](#) for supplemental support of the project, "Assessing Undergraduate Outcomes Within Disciplinary Contexts."
- \$150,000 over 36 months to the [Social Science Research Council](#) to investigate variations in cognitive growth as measured by the Collegiate Learning Assessment.
- \$300,000 over 36 months to the [Southern Education Foundation](#) to help its member institutions use outcomes assessment to improve student learning.
- \$150,000 over 36 months to the [University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign](#) and [Indiana University](#) to create a "go-to" site for assessment work being done at institutions across the country.

Fresh Thinking

For working groups on "Big Questions" and the Disciplines

- [Five grants](#) of up to \$75,000 over of 24 months to American Folklore Society; National Women's Studies Association, North Carolina State University, Davidson College, and Duke University; Samford University and the Birmingham Area Consortium of Higher Education; and Stanford University, Mills College, UC Berkeley, and UC Santa Cruz.

For additional Fresh Thinking projects

- \$40,000 over nine months for a project led by [Union College](#) to investigate the utility of high-performance computing at liberal arts colleges.

College-Community Connections

For partnerships between community-based organizations and colleges or universities in the New York City metropolitan area

- Twelve [grants](#) of \$240,000 over 36 months to Barnard College and Harlem Educational Activities Fund; Brooklyn College and CAMBA; Columbia University and Double Discovery Center; Cornell University and Henry Street Settlement; Drew University and Union Settlement Association; Fordham University and Citizens Advice Bureau; Manhattan College and Kingsbridge Heights Community Center; New York

College-Community Connections

Partnership for After School Education Supporting Afterschool Agencies in Turbulent Times

UPCOMING MEETINGS ON ASSESSMENT AND TEACHING AND LEARNING

[Association of American Colleges & Universities Meetings](#)

[Council of Independent Colleges / Collegiate Learning Assessment Consortium Annual Meeting](#)

[International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Conference](#)

[IUPUI Assessment Institute](#)

[Lilly Conference on College & University Teaching](#)

University (Polytechnic) and Urban Assembly Institute of Math and Science for Young Women; New York University (Steinhardt) and Children's Aid Society; Pace University and Groundwork; Skidmore College and Sponsors for Educational Opportunity; State University of New York at Old Westbury and Harlem RBI.

For support of college preparatory programs at community-based organizations

- Five [grants](#) of \$25,000 over 12 months to the Boys' Club of New York, East Harlem Tutorial Program, East Side House Settlement, Leadership Enterprise for a Diverse America, and Prep for Prep.

For additional College-Community Connections projects

- \$100,000 over 24 month to the [Metropolitan Center for Urban Education](#) at New York University for the "Adolescent Post-Secondary Exchange Scholars" program.
- \$75,000 over 12 months to the [Partnership for After School Education](#) for the "Supporting Afterschool Agencies in Turbulent Times" initiative.

Other Grants in Higher Education

- \$392,450 over 36 months to [University of Pennsylvania and Vanderbilt University](#) for the National Forum on the Future of Liberal Education.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

On Assessment

[Global Perspective Inventory](#)

[Higher Education Research Institute \(HERI\)](#)

[Learning from Study Abroad Survey](#)

[Mission Engagement Index](#)

[Valid Assessment of Learning in Undergraduate Learning \(VALUE\) Metarubrics](#)

On College Access and Preparation

[Advancement Via Individual Determination \(AVID\)](#)

[College Access Consortium of New York](#)

[Institute for Higher Education Policy](#)

[National College Access Network](#)

OUR WEBSITE

Visit our website for additional resources that can help improve student learning on your campus.

www.teagle.org

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