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# INSTITUTE FOR A SUPERIOR LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION

*2013 Summary Report*

*Prepared by Carolyn Haynes*

## OVERVIEW

The Miami University-Walnut Hills High School Institute for a Superior Liberal Arts Education is dedicated to creating superior and seamless secondary and post-secondary liberal arts education for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The second annual meeting of the Institute took place on October 11-12, 2013 on the Oxford campus of Miami University.

The goals of the Institute are to:

- Articulate the value of a liberal arts education in providing students with a broader perspective for learning as well as career and lifelong success.
- Identify ways to combine classical or liberal arts education with the best and most innovative curricula, technology, and pedagogical practices.
- Form sustaining and reciprocal partnerships among colleges and high schools to prepare students for college.
- Ascertain specific problems and challenges of participating schools and utilize partner talents and resources to address them.
- Model schools and colleges that have demonstrated success with diverse students.

In addition to the goals, the Institute pursues these objectives throughout its work:

- Assist schools and colleges in defining foundations for superior liberal arts education and in communicating those values with the wider community.
- Address deficiencies or gaps in education of incoming college students to improve preparation and readiness for rigorous studies.
- Develop effective methods for integrating distance learning, technology and innovative pedagogy to promote liberal arts education.

Faculty, administrators and other leaders of college preparatory and higher education institutions interested in defining a superior secondary and post-secondary liberal arts education were invited for the two-day institute. In addition to representatives from Miami University and Walnut Hills High School, participating individuals and schools and colleges included:

High Schools	Colleges & Universities
Academic Magnet High School, Judith Peterson and Carol Hurt	Bard College: Peg Peoples
Boston Latin School: Lynne Mooney-Teta & Beth McCoy	Beloit College: Charles Westerberg and Catherine Orr
Clayton High School: Dan Gutchewsky	College of William & Mary: Lu Ann Homza and Joel Schwartz
DuPont Manual High School: Bryan Crady and Dennis Robinson	Gallaudet University: Leslie Rach
Indian Hill High School: Antonio Shelton	Oberlin College: Elizabeth Hamilton & Steve Wojtal
Mother McAuley Liberal Arts High School: Eileen Boyce	Otterbein University: Wendy Sherman-Heckler and Denise Shively

Mother of Mercy High School: Heather Wagner & Shannon Smock	University of Chicago: Abel Ochoa
Signature School: Jamia Dixon	University of North Carolina-Asheville: Amy Lanou and Susan Reiser
St. Louis Priory High School: Joe MacDonald and Jared Rashford	Wake Forest University: Jennifer Burg
St. Xavier High School: Tim Reisert, Sean Cahill, and Liz Heile	Western Michigan University: Nicholas Andreadis
Thomas Jefferson High School: Monte Bourjaily and Jill Burdick-Zupancic	Xavier University: Janice Walker and David Mengel
Ursuline Academy: Mary Bender, Tom Barhorst, and Jill Hallahan	
Wyoming High School: Aaron Marshall and Ashley Whitely	

In addition to representatives from these institutions, the Institute participants included Carolyn Gasiorek, Ohio Director of AdvanceED.

The focusing theme of the 2014 Institute was “The Future of Liberal Arts Education.” Rather than provide a series of lectures, the Institute operated as a think tank forging intellectual dialogue, showcasing exemplary models of liberal arts/classical education, and collectively addressing common problems. The best practices of liberal arts pedagogy and curricula were promoted and reshaped at the Institute. Participants gained: new admission and curricular models for advancing secondary and post-secondary liberal arts education; tangible ideas for incorporating digital technology and writing into the liberal arts curriculum; and strategies for communicating the value of a superior liberal arts education.

Schools and college leaders were invited to network and share expertise, generate strategies for addressing common challenges, and construct new curricular or administrative models to implement.

In addition to an opening and closing session, the Institute included presentations using the “IGNITE” approach, an interactive poster session, two case studies, think tanks on three key topics led by expert moderators, and a working session for participants to generate action plans for implementing change at their school, college, or university. All participants were invited to share their action plans and report on progress and results in the Institute e-newsletter or at a future Institute meeting.

## INTRODUCTION TO INSTITUTE

The Institute commenced with Bill Kern, Institute co-coordinator, who offered a warm welcome to the delegates from 30 high quality liberal arts schools, colleges, and universities to Oxford, Ohio. In addition to explaining the origin, mission, and purpose of the Institute, he provided an overview of the Institute schedule, particularly emphasizing the culminating goal for each participating institution to create an action plan for advancing liberal arts education.

Kern ended his introductory remarks with a quotation from the September 16, 2013 issue of the *Christian Science Monitor Weekly* which underscores the importance of liberal arts education in advancing professional success:

"Today's employers want graduates who come with a tool kit of cognitive skills useful for a fast-changing global economy. These skills - dubbed competency-based learning - include **critical thinking, problem solving, quantitative reasoning**, and the **ability to critique arguments**. In short, graduates must know how to ask the questions that need to be asked for creative solutions in competitive businesses."

## IGNITING IDEAS

The next session of the 2013 Institute featured stories of promising liberal arts practices using a new approach called “IGNITE.” IGNITE is a fast-paced method of presentation which requires speakers to “use 20 slides, rotated automatically with each shown for 15 seconds.”<sup>1</sup>

Hosted by Dr. Todd Edwards from Miami University, this session included five speakers who were invited to offer stories of professional practice from the classroom. These stories could convey excitement about a new tool sparking student creativity, an effective strategy of student engagement across disciplines, a purposeful college-high school partnership, a new holistic or alternative admission practice, an innovative approach for teaching writing and communicating, etc. The aim of the presentations was to ignite attendees by generating awareness of promising practices in liberal arts education and stimulating thought and action.

The following speakers provided lively presentations:

- Bryan Crady from DuPont Manual High School described the liberal arts mission and approach of his school.
- Leslie Rach described cross-disciplinary fine arts and social science projects assigned in a general education course at Gallaudet University
- Sean Cahill and Liz Heile featured the interdisciplinary “freshman houses” at St. Xavier High School.
- Abel Ochoa summarized the Collegiate Scholars Program at the University of Chicago.
- Lynne Mooney-Teta shared the global and intercultural learning approaches at Boston Latin School.

Following a brief question and answer session, delegates adjourned for dinner. Copies of the Powerpoint presentations are posted on the ISLAE website.

## POSTER SESSION

Following dinner, participants were invited to learn about each other through a lively and interactive poster session which included one poster for each school, college, or university represented at the 2014 Institute. To launch the session, Jeff Brokamp, principal of Walnut Hills High School, asked four delegates to offer brief verbal summaries of their posters:

1. Lu Ann Homza, College of William & Mary
2. Jill Burdick-Zuponic and Monte Bourjaily, Thomas Jefferson High School
3. Charles Westerberg, Beloit College
4. David Mengel, Xavier University

Each poster included basic information about the delegate’s school, college, or university as well as a concise description of a promising practice and a challenge each institution is currently experiencing or anticipates facing in the future. The posters and oral presentations of them were meant to foster dialogue among Institute delegates.

Delegates were encouraged to offer verbal and written feedback on the posters. The posters and the written feedback on them can be viewed at: <http://islae.wordpress.com>.

Delegates spent two hours discussing the posters and exchanging ideas before adjourning to their hotel rooms.

The following morning, Bill Kern shared several insights he gained from the poster conversations and invited delegates to engage in a brief discussion of the common themes that pervaded the posters, including the increasing calls for accountability and assessment, concerns over the declining public perception of liberal arts education, and the importance of cross-cutting, interdisciplinary learning to advance liberal arts education.

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<sup>1</sup> International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE) (2013). ISTE Conference. Last accessed August 13, 2013 at <http://iste2012.org/page/iste-ignite-sessions>

## CASE STUDIES

After the reflections on the poster session, delegates were given two case studies—one of an imaginary university and another of an imaginary high school-- to establish greater understanding of the context of many of the schools, colleges and universities represented at the 2014 Institute (see Appendix A for the case studies).

### THE CURRENT CONTEXT FOR LIBERAL ARTS EDUCATION

The case studies as well as the delegates' reflections upon their own educational contexts underscored the following key factors and challenges facing liberal arts educational institutions:

High school and college students are more heterogeneous than ever before. Not only are the geographic homes of students changing, but students come from a wider range of socio-economic statuses, races, ethnicities, nationalities, religions, and family configurations than ever before. Although the increasing diversity of students today opens new opportunities for learning, it also poses challenges for educators, due to students' wide ranging levels of academic preparation.

In the past two decades, e-technologies have burgeoned, opening up new possibilities for learning and engagement inside and outside the classroom. While students have grown up with the Internet and thus have a certain level of comfort with e-technologies, some experienced faculty members are less sold on its benefits for advancing learning and thus skeptical of its inclusion in liberal arts education.

Since the onset of the economic downturn in 2008, secondary and post-secondary educational institutions have faced shrinking external funds and tighter budgets, prompting higher student-faculty ratios, employee reductions, and other serious cost-cutting measures. Schools and colleges alike were forced to alter their ways of delivering education and conducting operations.

As the economy has continued to struggle, regional and national accrediting bodies, state departments of education, taxpayers, and parents have placed more stringent demands upon educators to provide evidence of the value added of liberal arts education, in the form of standardized testing, assessment of student learning, and other quantitative measures of student achievement. With this increased scrutiny, parents have begun playing an active role in shaping the policies and practices of schools and colleges.

## THINK TANKS

With this context in mind, delegates were invited to participate in three think tanks focusing on the following topics and facilitated by high school and college leaders with expertise on the topics. The think tanks and facilitators were:

- 1) **ADVANCING ALTERNATIVE COLLEGE ADMISSION PROCESSES AND COLLEGE-HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS TO ENSURE HIGH QUALITY AND DIVERSE LIBERAL ARTS STUDENTS**

Facilitators: Ann Boggs Bader, Miami University, and Carl Grueninger, Walnut Hills High School

- 2) **USING DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES TO PROMOTE RIGOROUS LIBERAL ARTS LEARNING**

Facilitators: Jennifer Burg, Wake Forest University, and Samantha Gerwe-Perkins, Walnut Hills High School

- 3) **HELPING LIBERAL ARTS STUDENTS COMMUNICATE EFFECTIVELY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY**

Facilitators: Peg Peoples, Bard College, and Dawn Wolfe, Walnut Hills High School

Each session included a silent note-taker who recorded key points on a laptop computer.

Although each of the think tanks focused on a unique theme, all three think tanks generated shared principles for advancing liberal arts education in the secondary and post-secondary contexts:

- 1) Faculty and students at each institution and ideally across schools and colleges should generate a **common vocabulary and set of expectations** for liberal arts learning. Even terms, such as "digital technology" or "writing," that on the surface seem clear actually have differing connotations within different disciplinary or other educational contexts. For example, does

good writing mean understanding and deploying appropriate grammar and syntax? Or is it a means of generating knowledge? Does one have a good grasp of digital technology when he or she can demonstrate a knowledge of the parts of a computer or when he or she displays the capacity to use technology to create new ideas? A common understanding of key terms and shared expectations for liberal arts education can lead to more purposeful integration of learning across grade levels and the secondary and post-secondary divide.

- 2) Because learning is a shared enterprise among parents, educators, administrators and educational institutions, **transparent and honest communication** is critical. Educators must seek out and address their shortcomings and failures in order to improve; students must be willing to test out ideas and make mistakes in order to learn, and parents must be willing to express their own uncertainties about their students and themselves in order to partner well with educators and ensure their student's success. Additionally, for students achieve their fullest, they must enroll in the school or college that best meets their needs which means that schools and colleges need to convey their strengths and limitations honestly to the public.
- 3) With shared understanding and honest communication come strong and trusting relationships whether those **learning-oriented relationships** are between student and teacher, teacher and school, or school and college. Learning-oriented partnerships are formed and nurtured when each entity is treated respectfully and approaches the other with an open mind and curiosity. During these think tanks, Institute delegates became aware of how infrequent honest dialogue across schools, colleges and universities actually occurs.
- 4) Each of the think tanks stressed the importance of **experimentation** in advancing learning for students, faculty and administrators. Admission leaders should diligently seek out new ways of evaluating students, teachers must be willing to test out new curricula and pedagogies, and students must feel safe enough to voice perspectives that are different from those of their peers. To achieve these goals, we must foster safe learning environments where purposeful mistakes are acceptable and new ideas are welcomed.
- 5) Such a learning environment is only made possible if faculty and administrators (like students) are encouraged to engage in **continuous learning and professional development**. If administrators and faculty are perpetual learners, it will be much easier to persuade students to become perpetual learners.
- 6) Finally, each think tank underscored the importance of engaging students in **authentic projects that span multiple disciplines and modes of learning**, leveraging students' unique talents, interests and aptitudes, and demand the incorporation of critical skills, such as communication, technology and information literacy. Teaching skills in the service of authentic learning helps students and educators understand the purpose of those skills and thus retain the skills more fully.

Think tank facilitators led participants in discussions about and sharing of promising practices related to the topic. A list of the promising practices related to each theme is provided below.

## PROMISING PRACTICES IN COLLEGE ADMISSION & COLLEGE-HIGH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS

- Use both quantitative measures (standardized test scores, high school GPA) and qualitative measures (e.g., interviews, letters of recommendation, essays) to reveal the full gamut of students' intelligences, talents, traits, aptitudes and interests. To gauge a student's motivation for learning or "grit" in the face of challenge, qualitative measures, such as interviews, portfolios, or essays, may be most appropriate.
- Build trust and strong pipelines between colleges & high schools through honest communication about the student applicants' abilities, the degree to which the college is an appropriate match for particular students, and the evaluation criteria used for college admission. Inviting high school counselors to assist in generating the college admission criteria, engaging in mock application reviews, or analyzing case studies of typical students can be effective ways of promoting transparency in communication.

- Write honest, candid letters of recommendation for college admission so that colleges can accurately assess those students who are the best fit for their missions and so that promising students who may have followed nontraditional paths can be identified. Use the letters to help differentiate students and to highlight students; unique contexts, limitations, and strengths.
- Consider performance-based assessments such as peer-to-peer interviews, participation in mini-college seminars, or completion of bridge programs, in the college admission process.
- Set up authentic college-like experiences for high school students rather than offering PR-driven tours and visits. Encourage faculty, administrators and other students to meet with prospective students and offer honest perspectives of the college experience.
- Provide an array of options (e.g., different essay choices, questions, or criteria) for students to complete or to be evaluated for their college application so that students can select those options which are suited to their skill set, talents, and interests.
- Hold meaningful workshops and communications with parents to explain the value of liberal arts and the mission of the college or university.
- Create advisory boards for colleges, universities, and high schools that include both secondary and post-secondary specialists to help create better partnerships and a seamless high school-college transition for students.
- Work together to create high-quality dual enrollment courses or teacher development workshops.

## PROMISING PRACTICES WITH DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES

- To help advance the use of digital technologies, it is important to define digital technology literacy and articulate what students will be able to do once they achieve it (e.g., information gathering, creative expression, computation, data gathering, analysis, and collection). Create criteria toward which faculty and students can strive. One way of understanding literacy is to consider that students need to be both critical consumers of technology and digital producers who use technology to advance their ideas or creative expressions. The chart below helps to define the two key roles we should cultivate in our students:

<i>Consumers</i>	<i>Creators</i>
Advancing understanding of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mechanics of computers</li> <li>• Reliability and credibility of information</li> <li>• Privacy and security issues</li> <li>• Ethics of publishing</li> <li>• Intellectual property</li> <li>• Search parameters and processes</li> </ul>	Using technology to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affect change within your business</li> <li>• Provide a creative outlet for publishing or exhibiting work</li> <li>• Advance research, scholarship &amp; inquiry (digital archives, Google's Ngram viewer,</li> <li>• Generate creative work</li> <li>• Teach others</li> </ul>

- Rather than simply emphasizing the grasp of particular e-tools, focus on the “timeless” aspects of learning that can be done via the use of technology. For example, assign significant authentic or real-world projects which demand the use of digital technology. Digital technology should be taught in the service of compelling questions, rather than as an end in itself. Keep

a supply of relevant books and articles. Encourage students to ask you questions, and send them links to helpful resources, such as the [DH Syllabi Wiki](#), [DiRT Wiki](#), [DH Commons](#), and [DH Questions and Answers](#).

- Create an atmosphere of fun and experimentation in the liberal arts classroom. Understanding how to take advantage of the iPad apps, how to use audio recording devices, how to export and upload files online, or how to leverage programming software like [Processing](#) -- these skills are utterly valuable. Beyond improving a student's job marketability, they create opportunity for creativity. They expand students' options for expressing their work and push them to rethink and challenge the 'natural' standards for collecting, communicating, and sharing knowledge.
- Build a support network of tech-oriented students and teachers. Leverage the expertise of tech-savvy students and experienced faculty to teach those who are less experienced and to champion digital liberal arts education.
- Find innovative ways of incorporating technology to advance learning and classroom projects. For example, use a Wordpress site to organize course material and communicate students' experiences and insights for a broader audience. Create or use an online archive to study a particular author. Develop geotagged maps or visual software to teach concepts. Use iPad apps to assist with all sorts of projects or tasks.
- Show teachers and faculty how digital techniques support scholarship and effective teaching. Introduce colleagues to digital tools that will allow them to pose new questions and produce interesting results. Invite speakers to your school or campus who have built strong yet attainable careers as teachers or professionals using digital methods. Demonstrate how digitally enhanced collaboration can improve the quality of teaching and new forms of scholarly production.
- Invest in faculty and staff development through technology-related workshops, training sessions, conference participation, webinars, etc. Hold brown bags or happy hours on technology topics, such as web annotation, iMovie, Audacity, Camtasia, or Arduino. If resources allow, support sending faculty and staff members to regional THATCamps. Such liberal arts-and-technology camps are among the most economical options. And because of their open-ended, collaborative nature, they are the least intimidating and most beneficial to novices. International events like the Digital Humanities Summer and Winter Institutes can provide an extraordinary, intensive experience in more-focused methods, such as geographic information systems.
- Reward and recognize accomplishments of students and faculty, including showcasing their digitally-oriented work or achievements online.

## PROMISING PRACTICES IN WRITING & COMMUNICATION

- Define terms (e.g., writing, rhetoric, communication) and approaches (writing across the curriculum, writing workshops, process vs. product, writing in the disciplines vs. writing to learn) as well as criteria for good writing to ensure that faculty and staff are working in tandem to achieve similar goals.
- Incorporate frequent opportunities to practice writing in a supportive environment. According to proponents of this approach, the atmosphere in the classroom must be non-threatening, and some of the writing should be ungraded. Frequent chances to write in-class, out-of-class, "low stakes" (informal and ungraded) and "high stakes" (formal and graded) papers provide venues for students to think for themselves. In addition to freewriting, in-class writing can include class notes; reading notes; observations; responses to specific text-based questions; microthemes; soapbox statements; requests for information or clarification; letters to the professor, other students, fictional characters, or authors; rebuttals; imaginary and actual dialogues; and evaluations of readings or class activities.
- Focus on writing as thinking, writing as a process in all subject areas. To do this, provide frequent opportunities to combine reading and writing as reciprocal activities. Writing improves when it is content-driven rather than viewed as a mechanical skill or when students write solely from first-hand experience.

- Offer regular opportunities to confer individually with the professor or in small groups with peers to discuss work in progress. Such interaction should be done in one-on-one conferences, in informal discussions, peer review or workshop sessions, and in written comments on drafts. In any of these situations, the interchange should carry a supportive tone but also be specific and thoughtful in its focus and direction. Students retain feedback when it is personalized and when the professor responds "as a real, interested reader" and creates an ongoing dialogue with each student.
- Write and receive feedback on multiple drafts and revisions of an assignment. When comments are only given in conjunction with a grade, students tend to look at the grade and ignore the comments, thus nullifying any beneficial and subsequent use of feedback. Consequently, faculty may want to give challenging assignments which require students to compose several drafts. The most detailed comments should be offered on drafts submitted or shared before the final version which is then evaluated for a grade and given minimal feedback. Set clear expectations; invite students to assist in developing evaluation criteria.
- Sequence writing assignments so that each successive assignment steadily and deliberately ask students to relate new knowledge and experience with old ones. Rather than regard assignments as individual, isolated topics to be generated as necessity demands, assignments should work together to advance course objectives and to enlarge the students' power of thinking, organizing and expressing ideas so that he or she can cope with a more challenging problem in future assignments.
- Create writing assignments which, when possible, relate to students' interests, career or beyond-school goals. This objective can be achieved by offering a choice of writing assignments or by specifying an approach to a topic but allowing a choice of subject matter. Alternatively, professors can encourage students to write in real-world forms rather than producing generic "papers." Writing a press release, a case study or a letter-to-the-editor can often spark a student's interest more than a book summary.
- Recognize that writing is a social process by offering opportunities for collaborative learning, including peer review and small writing groups. Collaboration is particularly valuable in a heterogeneous classroom of knowers because a student comprehends and seeks to emulate a level of cognitive maturity one level above her own. Moreover, collaboration reinforces the idea that writing is a social process and that processes vary from person to person and context to context.
- Begin each course by considering what you want your students to learn. Then select assignments that both teach and test the learning you value most. Writing assignments generally assist students in exploration, analysis, argument, and research. If you are interested in making sure that students understand key terms or facts, objective tests or quizzes might be a better form of assessment.
- Encourage students to engage in meta-cognitive reflection about their writing and thinking. Reflection will help them to transfer writing skills to new contexts, to view themselves as writers and scholars, and to consciously make improvements from one writing assignment to the next.
- Put all of your directions and guidelines clearly and comprehensively in writing. Give students a special handout for each assignment. Include in your instructions:
  - ✓ The genre or mode of the writing (lab report, research paper, personal essay);
  - ✓ The audience (you, their peers, experts in a certain field, a general audience);
  - ✓ The purpose (to communicate their knowledge of a topic, to persuade, to simulate activities of a professional in a certain field, to combine disciplinary perspectives);
  - ✓ A clear articulation of the problem or questions to be addressed;
  - ✓ The organizational plan and other needed forms of presentation (What typically comes first, in the middle, and toward the end? Are there subheadings, certain documentation styles used?)

- ✓ The evidence that counts (logic, quotations from experts, statistics, first-hand experience);
  - ✓ An explanation of how the writer might go about investigating the topic and creating the paper;
  - ✓ Your expectations regarding paper scope, depth, format, and length;
  - ✓ What resources you expect to be used;
  - ✓ The evaluation procedures and standards you will apply to the paper.
  - ✓ Make sure your assignment sheet is an appropriate length. Overly detailed and lengthy prompts can produce "cognitive overload"; assignments that consist of a single directive or only a couple of sentences are too short. One page is generally a good length. It is helpful to go over these directions in class and to seek student input in creating the evaluative criteria for papers.
- Leverage technology in teaching writing (podcasts, website design, twitter for class discussions, digital stories).

## ACTION PROJECTS

Using concepts, strategies and principles generated in the discussions and presentations at the 2014 Institute, participants developed plans for action-based projects for advancing liberal arts education at their school, college, or university. Below is a list of the action project topics:

### PROJECTS RELATED TO PARTNERSHIPS AND ADMISSION

- **CLAYTON HIGH SCHOOL:** Developing a partnership with Washington University
- **OBERLIN COLLEGE:** Developing new admission and recruitment approaches for area high schools with some components offered online
- **PROCTER & GAMBLE:** Creating reverse mentorship teams to improve products and creating multidisciplinary teams to engage in real-world projects
- **WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY:** Training and deploying undergraduate honors students as teaching assistants in high school classrooms

### PROJECTS RELATED TO CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

- **ACADEMIC MAGNET HIGH SCHOOL:** Create a symposium for all students to present their research
- **BARD COLLEGE:** Developing new assessment models and instruments for writing
- **BELOIT COLLEGE:** Developing a First-Year Seminar for students who enter the college with different levels of preparation
- **BOSTON LATIN SCHOOL:** Creating an interdisciplinary capstone experience
- **COLLEGE OF WILLIAM & MARY:** Creating and implementing a first-year sequence of courses
- **INDIAN HILL HIGH SCHOOL:** Developing an 11<sup>th</sup>-grade community-building experience
- **MOTHER MCAULEY HIGH SCHOOL:** Developing a vertical writing across the curriculum plan
- **OTTERBEIN UNIVERSITY:** Generating a plan for faculty development for interdisciplinary and integrative teaching and learning
- **ST. XAVIER HIGH SCHOOL:** Creating a new plan for faculty development for teaching writing with an online component

- **THOMAS JEFFERSON HIGH SCHOOL:** Planning, implementing and assessing a new “Vertical Articulation Program”
- **URSULINE ACADEMY:** Developing a new critical thinking project
- **WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY:** Designing and offering a required computational problem-solving course
- **WALNUT HILLS HIGH SCHOOL:** Creating a new initiative to promote creative writing

#### Miscellaneous Projects and Projects

- **ADVANCED:** Developing a plan for greater outreach to Ohio schools
- **GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY:** Developing new messaging for parents and admission counselors to explain the liberal arts mission of the University
- **SIGNATURE SCHOOL:** Creating a fundraising plan
- **UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO:** Developing partnerships and a plan for sustainability of the Collegiate Scholars Program within the University
- **UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA, ASHEVILLE:** Developing a plan for sustaining interdisciplinary teaching and learning opportunities

## CONCLUDING SESSION

The final session included recognition of key contributors to the 2013 Institute, including the members of the Institute Advisory Board. Key insights from the Institute were summarized, and participants were informed of the initial plans for the third annual Institute which will focus on understanding and communicating the value of liberal arts education.

Jeff Brokamp provided a brief preview of one of the featured sessions of the 2014 Institute: a roundtable of education, government, business and industry leaders to offer advice on and assist with defining and marketing the value of liberal arts education. The possible framing questions for the roundtable are: Is there a unique value in liberal arts education? If so, what is it? How does its value differ from other forms of education? How do we communicate that value to the public and overcome the anxieties related to the economy? How do we equip students for success in the future? In particular, how do we create a seamless pipeline from high school to college to employment so that students attain personal and professional success?

Participants were encouraged to offer ideas for the next Institute in the evaluation survey which will be sent to participants electronically following the meeting.

## CREDITS

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### INSTITUTE PLANNING TEAM

**INSTITUTE COORDINATORS:** Carolyn Haynes and Bill Kern

**MIAMI UNIVERSITY MEMBERS:** Todd Edwards, Mya Nguyen

**WALNUT HILLS HIGH SCHOOL MEMBERS:** Jeff Brokamp, Debbie Heldman, Bill Kern

### INSTITUTE ADVISORY BOARD

1. Jeff Brokamp, Principal, Walnut Hills High School
2. Ray Gorman, Interim Dean of the Farmer School of Business, Miami University
3. Michael Halleran, Provost, College of William & Mary (via conference call)
4. Mary Ronan, Superintendent, Cincinnati Public Schools (via conference call)
5. Jessica Walton, Purchasing Director, Procter & Gamble
6. Antonio Shelton, Principal, Indian Hill High School,
7. Phyllis Callahan, Dean of the College of Arts & Science, Miami University,

## ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTORS

The Committee would also like to recognize the following individuals for their contributions to the Institute: John Tassoni, Carl Grueninger, Ann Boggs Bader, Dawn Wolfe

## ***SAVE THE DATE***

The next meeting of the Institute will occur October 10-11, 2014. We hope to see many 2013 participants at the next meeting.

## APPENDIX A

### CASE STUDY: UNIVERSITY OF MIDLANDS

Maria Cabrillo recently accepted the position of Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs at the University of Midlands, a public institution of 8,461 undergraduate students and 450 faculty members. Founded in 1879, UM's picturesque campus is nestled in Midlands, a midsize city of 25,000 residents including two public high schools. Maria is particularly excited about UM's long tradition of a classical liberal arts education, its focus on undergraduate students, and its reputation for recruiting motivated students and faculty.

When she arrived on campus, she engaged in an intensive study of UM through interviews with the UM leadership, open forums with faculty and students, analysis of strategic plans and annual reports, and network meetings with key employers, alumni, and business and community leaders. Through this study, she came to understand better UM's many strengths as well as challenges.

Although UM enjoys a reputation for attracting strong students who excel in rigorous academic study, she is surprised that it was not as selective as she assumed. 81% of its applicants are admitted, with an average ACT composite score of 24 (SAT score of 1110). Despite these surprises, she is heartened to see that the admission process is not based entirely on empirical data. The application includes one short essay, two letters of recommendation, and a "resume" of extra-curricular activities. In addition, the difficulty of the student's high school curriculum is considered in the review process. The percentage of students of color is currently at 9% of the student population and has remained at that level for the past eight years. The percentage of male students has been steadily declining for the past decade and is now at 38% (down from 47% ten years ago).

The tuition cost for 2013-2014 is \$10,043 (in-state) and \$25,321 (out of state), and room board costs are \$10,461. The percentage of new students receiving aid resides at 73%, with 40% of that group receiving the aid in the form of loans.

The six year graduation rate is 63%.

Although the numbers of high school students in the state has declined by 5% in the last decade, the enrollment has declined only 3% in the same period. To maintain this enrollment, UM has had to decrease its selectivity.

Although UM has a long-standing history of classical liberal arts education, the most popular majors in the past five years, in order of demand, are: (1) biology or premedical education, (2) business administration, (3) communication studies, (4) international business, (5) political science, and (6) psychology. This ranking represents a change from the traditional listing of liberal arts majors UM enjoyed ten years ago.

UM's faculty are expected to be highly effective teachers and publish regularly. Most faculty members teach three courses per semester, with faculty members who are productive researchers assuming a two-course-per-semester load. To keep the student-faculty ratio low and remain cost-effective, 25% of the UM faculty are non-tenure-track, compared to a total of 5% ten years ago.

Over the past two decades, state funding has dropped significantly. In 1992, funding from the state constituted 60% of UM's budget; now the state funds less than 20%. Although UM has amassed a small endowment, it is not sufficient to account for the loss of state funding and increasing operational costs. As a result of diminishing state support, relatively low endowment, as well as rising health care and other costs, the UM tuition has steadily increased. As tuition costs have soared, parents and students have sought more evidence for the value added of the UM degree.

However, in UM's most recent accreditation review, the evaluators noted that the curriculum and teaching approaches should be reviewed and updated to meet the changing needs of students today and that UM lacked a clear plan for assessing the learning outcomes and value of the UM undergraduate education. Reviewers were particularly concerned with the low amount of assigned writing as demonstrated in UM students' responses to the National Survey of Student Engagement. Senior students reported writing an average of less than ten pages in their upper-level courses. They also commented on a need to leverage technology more purposefully to advance liberal arts learning.

In Maria's conversations with faculty, she learned that some of the most senior faculty were resistant to some of the new teaching approaches, such as service learning, interdisciplinary teaching, or inquiry-based education and saw little value in incorporating technology to advance learning. They preferred traditional liberal arts teaching approaches and rigorous and disciplined study of the classic questions and texts in their fields. Because the size of their classrooms had been increasing, many faculty asserted that they were not able to assign lengthy writing assignments to their students. Perhaps even more troublingly, tensions among the faculty in traditional liberal arts departments and the faculty in business or applied departments had emerged. Both sides complained that the other was garnering more resources and support from the administration.

### **CASE STUDY: MIDLANDS HIGH SCHOOL**

Elsie Granger was recently appointed by the City of Midlands Board of Education to serve as the assistant principal at Midlands High School. She has been charged with overseeing the curriculum and the master schedule, as well as handling discipline for ninth and tenth grade students. She will report directly to the building principal.

Midlands High School (MHS) is the larger of the two local public high schools in the town. It serves approximately 1900 students in grades 9-12, has 95 full time faculty members (95% of the faculty belong to the teacher's union, 60% have a Masters degree) and 20 administrative support staff members (100% union membership). A full time faculty member is assigned five classes and two prep bells per day.

Midlands is the older of the two high schools – it was established in 1940, prides itself on its liberal arts based curriculum, and markets itself as such. The graduation rate is 98% and 95% of the graduating class are accepted to college. The percentage of the students of color is 48%. Additionally, 43% of the students receive free or reduced lunch. The student population is comprised of 49% males and 51% females.

MHS has earned accreditation through the AdvancEd organization. The most recent audit challenged the faculty with two questions:

1. How can the school clarify what a "liberal arts based curriculum" is to all of their stakeholders?
2. How will MHS more fully integrate technology into their curriculum?

Through her administrative orientation, Elsie discovers a number of things about the district and state approved curriculum. The school requires 21 credits to graduate, which is greater than the minimum 17 credits required by the state. At MHS, students are required to earn four credits of English, four in Math, four in Science and four in History, two credits in the Fine Arts, one physical education credit, and two credits in a foreign language of their choice. Students also have the option of earning an "honors diploma" from the state if they meet certain curricular requirements and earn a 26 or above on the ACT.

MHS offers a wide variety of AP courses, the scores are competitive with the national averages, but when she looks more closely at the data, Elsie notices that there is a lack of diversity in the student population electing to take the AP courses. These courses are a hallmark of the MHS liberal arts model and the AP program is a long standing tradition at the school – it was one of the first in the country to do so in the 1960's. Eight-five percent of the students pass the AP exams with a 3 or higher. She also takes note that the average ACT composite score is 23 and the average SAT score is a 1070.

As the building curriculum manager, Elsie is now charged with leading the faculty through the state mandated transition to the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and preparation for the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) evaluations. The 2013-2014 school year is the transition year with the expectation that the transition will be finalized and in place for the 2014-2015 school year. Through her discussions with the faculty, she discovers that there is some skepticism regarding the implementation of the CCSS and some resistance to the changes in instruction and curriculum.

MHS had experienced constant and steady growth for many years, however, the recent economic downturn forced families to reconsider the educational options for their children and MHS faced the reality of a large influx of students. Classes are currently at the contractual limits for numbers of students, some classes are even above the set limits. With the increased class size, the teaching faculty is feeling more pressure in terms of workload and the mandated CCSS implementation is adding additional pressure. Another result of the economy is that the funding for public schools in the state has decreased and there are fewer resources to

support additional faculty members to decrease class size and fewer resources to support instruction in the classroom. These funding cuts have impacted both access to technology in the building and support for the existing technology.

The district is currently requiring teachers to attend professional development meetings to help prepare for the impending transition to CCSS. The topics of the meetings include use of technology to support instruction for the CCSS, inquiry-based instruction and Capstone projects, however, Elsie observes that there is a lack of interest by some members of the faculty in these meetings. She notes that the lack of interest is not simply evident by the more established teachers – the younger teachers seem completely overwhelmed – and there seems to be a consensus that there has been too much time consumed by meetings and not enough time spent in other necessary areas.