

**Associated Colleges of the South**  
**First-Year Report to**  
**The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**  
**New Dimensions Initiatives**  
**December 31, 2001**

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Associated Colleges of the South

Report to The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation

New Dimensions Initiative

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**I. Introduction**

The Associated Colleges of the South is pleased to present this report on the activities made possible by a grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation in December 2000. This report covers the twelve-month period from the receipt of the grant to the end of December 2001. A financial summary is included in the appendix.

In large measure, the past twelve months were a time of organization and establishing a foundation for activities that will take place in the future. It should be noted that all of the initiatives presented in this report address goals contained in the "Five-Year ACS Plan," which was approved by the Board in 2000. The following discussion highlights the initiatives begun through the auspices of the Foundation grant. Initial attention will be given to the academic projects. This will be followed by a presentation of the administrative projects.

**II. The Program Initiatives**

A. Academic Projects

1. Diversity

Since one of the top priorities for the consortium is diversity, ACS accepted an invitation issued by Southwestern University to join them on their campus for a "Conversation on Racial and Ethnic Diversity at National Liberal Arts Colleges in the South," October 1-3, 2001. Forty-one faculty, students, and staff from twelve ACS member institutions plus representatives from three Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) gathered for this meeting. Fortunately, funding was made available from another source, enabling the consortium to reserve its New Dimensions funds for later activities.

ACS President, Wayne Anderson, provided the opening remarks, in which he suggested ways ACS institutions might collaborate to address the diversity issues they are facing. Drs. Herman Blake and Emily Moore, both from Iowa State University, facilitated the discussion regarding student, faculty, and professional staff recruitment and retention. By first presenting statistics that revealed the rapidly changing face of the American population, Drs. Moore and Blake emphasized that the resulting changing cultural expectations call for unprecedented sensitivity and action at all levels of society. It is important to remember, according to these two educators, that diversity is fluid and ever changing; it has many dimensions and faces. Furthermore, in the realm of higher education, we cannot rest on past practices and discuss the topic only in terms of the literature. Institutions must respond and be responsible. We must be

concerned with and talk about the leadership roles and expectations of the faculty, who are the key to long range change, as well as those of the students, the staff, and the administrators. They also indicated that Liberal Arts Colleges, by their very nature and mission, could lead the way in manifesting creative change through creative leadership.

Dr. Ernesto Nieto, founder and executive director of the National Hispanic Institute (NIH) spoke at a lunch session. He shared stories from his own life journey and experiences from his days as an undergraduate minority student, at a time when many Latinos did not/could not enjoy the benefits of a higher education. In addition, Nieto shared poignant stories about the birth and growth of the NIH and its mission of helping Latino youth find ways to "channel their skills and capacities in order to participate and contribute to U.S. society without . . .surrendering their cultural identities, language, or relationships with their larger ethnic community."

As the Conversation drew to a close, participants were asked to share their ideas about future directions for ACS collaboration on diversity issues/concerns. It was clear that participants wanted to continue the conversation and engage in further dialogue, networking with colleagues who share a passion for "enhancing the educational quality of a diverse population." Participants also expressed a desire for concrete action, not just "more talk." Possibilities that emerged included:

- student and faculty exchanges
- cooperative recruitment of students and faculty
- collaborative career planning efforts
- identification of "best practices" in addressing diversity issues
- joint publications
- seminars and workshops
- expansion of the "circuit rider" program, to address diversity issues
- funding for special projects
- partnerships with community groups
- shared research on diversity issues/concerns
- information exchange and creation of linkages
- an annual conference
- an infusion of diversity questions and issues
- identify and/or design good curriculum modules
- establish a "diversity fund" for diversity fellows and/or mentors

Because this topic is such a priority for the chief academic officers, at their October 2001, meeting they appointed a small task force to proceed with plans for the future. And in keeping with one of the goals in the ACS five-year plan, members of this task force are in dialogue with the leadership of the Association of American Colleges & Universities (AAC&U) about convening the ACS constituents during AAC&U's biennial Conference on Diversity and Learning, October 2002. If the Diversity task force combines its efforts with AAC&U in 2002, then there will be an ACS sponsored "Conversation on Diversity" for its own constituents in 2003.

ACS also is exploring accessing and making available to its member-institutions the fee-based diversity database of doctoral scholars that will become available through the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB). Such a program will help our post-secondary institutions to identify, meet, nurture, interview, and hire promising minority graduate students for faculty positions.

Whatever diversity programs or projects are undertaken, the goal will be to include the voices of faculty, staff and students. Only by including all of these constituents will ACS institutions effectively and creatively address their concerns.

## 2. Women's Studies Conference

While the Women's Studies Conference is not a new ACS program, it is included in the ACS five-year plan, with an emphasis on increasing student participation. The conference has been held biannually since 1993 and provides an excellent opportunity for faculty/student collaboration on scholarship and presentations on undergraduate research. In the past, according to former planning committee members, the planning sessions have been just as meaningful and informative as the actual conferences. Indeed, one person described the planning committee meetings as "inspirational." Institutions without formal women's studies programs have been just as instrumental in planning the conference as those with established Women's Studies concentrations. As one member of the planning committee stated, "As members of a consortium of small colleges, not all of us work at institutions with Women's Studies programs. However, we find that our institutions have many similarities, and the network we build during our planning sessions for these conferences sustains us and strengthens what each of our individual colleges is able to offer."

During the past eight years, the planning committee and the conferences themselves have had to operate with minimal financial and staff support from ACS. The host college or university has contributed significant financial resources to each conference, and it is anticipated that they will continue to do so. With the New Dimension Grant, however, ACS is able to provide more resources to the planning group that is designing and hosting the next conference, which will be held in April 2002 at Hendrix College. The theme is "Women's Studies/Gender Studies: Separate but Equal." The keynote address will be delivered by Dr. Oyeronke Oyewumi, whose book *The Invention of Women* received the Distinguished Book Award in 1998 from the American Sociological Association. Her address is titled "Language and the Invention of Gender." The featured luncheon speaker is Brownie Ledbetter, who is a member of the National Congress for Neighborhood Women and Grassroots Organizations Operating Together in Sisterhood (GROOTS). Her talk is titled "We've Got the Words, Now We Need the Music."

Because it has long wanted to increase student participation in their conferences, the planning committee also has designated a portion of the grant money for student travel and has developed a distribution/reimbursement schedule for managing these funds. In addition, grant monies were and are being used to assist the planning committee with expenses incurred for their planning meetings, the conference keynote speaker, conference publicity, and a student worker to help with a myriad of conference-related details. The grant will provide seed money for the 2004 conference and activities between conferences. The place and the theme will be determined at the end of the 2002 conference.

## 3. Fine Arts

A Fine Arts collaborative effort was projected in the original proposal to the Foundation. This was in keeping with a goal stated in the ACS five-year plan, "to offer opportunities to explore collaboration in curriculum and program development." However, the enthusiastic response to an early spring conference call among ACS Fine Arts faculty, coupled with the truly diverse issues in Fine Arts departments, resulted in three, active fine arts groups: music, visual art, and theatre/drama.

a. Music Collaborative

The Music Collaborative, now called the Orpheus Alliance, was the first Fine Arts program to actively project a course of action. An enthusiastic, energetic, and creative group of musicians "hit the ground" running with this initiative. Within a period of about nine months, they have generated a host of activities and programs that will benefit faculty, students, and the ACS institutions. These include:

- *A Music Composition Forum:* This Composers Forum creates opportunities for collaboration between performers and composers of new music at participating institutions. A student composition contest is planned for spring 2002. This project will culminate in July 2002, when students and faculty come together at a music technology workshop, where selected works will be performed and recorded. Information on these and other Forum activities will be found at <http://www.colleges.org/~music/composition.html>
- *Modules for Music Teaching and Learning:* Designed to be self-contained, these teaching modules can be used by a variety of classes. The first projected module will be about Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde*. Progress in the creation and design of these modules will be found at <http://www.colleges.org/~music>
- *Travel and Study Opportunities:* Through the Orpheus Alliance students will have two travel/study opportunities in 2002. One excursion is a nine-day opera tour to Santa Fe. They will see five productions at the Santa Fe Opera, a world famous opera festival and have the opportunity to attend concerts of the Santa Fe Chamber Music Festival and other arts events in the area. As part of the academic requirements, students will build an online documentary of their experiences. Since the tour is designed for both general students and music majors, assignments will be tailored to the needs of the individual students. For some students this trip will be the culmination of an online "History of the Opera" course taught in spring 2002. Other students may use this as a "Directed Inquiry" opportunity. An "ONLINE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS BROCHURE" has been created to generate interest and explain the details.

The second travel/study opportunity in 2002 is offered through Birmingham-Southern College. The "History of Organ: Tour Of The East Coast Of The United States is a for-credit course that includes a two-week summer tour up the East Coast of the United States A

highlight of the trip for students is the opportunity to explore and perform on historic instruments. Students will have the opportunity to create a database of digital photographs of the various organs visited. The course may be expanded into an online version that will include collaboration with other organists, webcasting, and online assignments. Students may participate in this tour as part of the "History of Organ" course or use the trip alone as the focus of a Directed Inquiry. James Cook, professor at Birmingham-Southern, will be the course/trip coordinator

- *Chamber Music Exchange*: Still in the developmental stages, this has exciting possibilities for students and faculty. For small liberal arts colleges, it is often difficult to assemble players for various chamber music combinations, and students have limited opportunities to hear a wide variety of chamber music players and works. Such an exchange would make it possible to form ensembles from members of various departments. These musicians could prepare programs that would be performed in multiple ACS institutions. The concerts could be webcast and archived so students in all departments could see and study them. Pre-concert interviews with the performers could also be available online, enabling discussion to take place about performance practice and issues related to the individual music pieces. Additional possibilities include post-concert reviews and discussions. The largest benefit would be to the students who could meet and spend time with music faculty from outside their own institutions.

b. Visual Arts Initiative

Visual Art includes painting, drawing, sculpture, glass, graphics, photography, ceramics, printmaking, jewelry design, and silversmithing. A pilot program entered into by three ACS member institutions will create an ACS Virtual Art Gallery. The first virtual show will showcase student work, as selected by the three art professors spearheading this pilot. The target date for the initial viewing is spring 2002. As ACS faculty and museum directors hear about this project, they express their desire to be involved as soon as possible.

Projections and dreams for the future include the creation of multiple rooms within the Virtual Gallery, with rotating exhibits and juried shows for students and faculty; interviews with artists; critiques of displayed art; and live "opening receptions" for art shows. The chief academic officers, at their October meeting, expressed the desire to see ACS owned art displayed in the Virtual Gallery, so all ACS institutions will be able to enjoy the many fine works of art owned by the campuses. In addition, the core planning group is sensitive to the copyright issues that arise with such an endeavor and are seeking to address these concerns in a responsible manner.

Ideally, a program of this magnitude would benefit from having a designated "Gallery Curator." A curator would help schedule and rotate gallery "showings," archive images to build a collection which faculty and students could use for a variety of purposes; work with the ACS Technology Center to keep the gallery website current, assist in the solicitation of art work, and help identify potential jurors for juried shows. We are hopeful that we will find one or two faculty members who are interested in contributing to this program in this way.

### c. Dramatic Arts Initiative

Following a series of telephone conferences, a core group of theatre/drama faculty decided to pursue a pilot program for faculty exchanges among Drama faculty. This project has three projected stages. *Stage one* involves ACS hosting a lunch session at the Southeastern Theatre Conference in Mobile, Alabama, March 6-9, 2002. ACS Drama faculty will be invited to meet and create a preliminary agenda for initiating exchanges. This initial meeting will seek to determine and establish interest in, and specific procedural ideas for an extended meeting in the summer of 2002, which is Stage 2.

*Stage 2* is the extended meeting, or workshop, designed to help faculty develop and experience the tools, including the technological tools, needed to facilitate the faculty exchanges. The tentative agenda includes:

- learning new technology skills to facilitate both the classroom to classroom experience and the collaborative creative process
- curriculum and production calendar alignment
- the development of funding resources and support facilities
- tenure and promotion standards alignment
- the potential development of an ACS on-line Drama site

It also is proposed that an Exchange Steering Committee be created during this stage. Their tasks will be to facilitate two pilot exchanges [one director and one designer] and to gather data on the alignment of both curriculum and production calendars.

*Stage 3* is the actual pilot faculty exchange, which is projected for spring 2003. Based on the results of this pilot exchange, further exchanges may be developed for spring 2004 and beyond, as well as expanded to other fine arts departments.

### 4. Teacher Education

Teacher Education programs across the country face increased public and government scrutiny, and "Accountability" and "Teacher Education Reform" are the current catch phrases in most State legislatures. The debate, which occurs in both the public and the private sectors, and within as well as outside the walls of post-secondary institutions, will not abate any time soon. The ACS-member institutions that have teacher education programs or are implementing such programs cannot ignore this current controversy.

Spelman College, the newest ACS member, initiated the idea for a Teacher Education Planning Summit. This is scheduled for April 2002 and will be hosted jointly by ACS and Spelman. Individuals on each of the thirteen campuses who have responsibility for their respective teacher education programs have been identified and invited to this meeting. On the three campuses where teacher education programs do not exist or are in the formative stages of development, the appropriate person has been identified and invited. To expedite the April meeting and to provide a mechanism for ongoing communication and collaboration, an ACS listserv will be created before the meeting for the use of participants and other interested parties. In preparation for the meeting, participants will be asked to share via the listserv descriptions of their teacher education programs and any specific "regional" issues related to teacher education programs. Engaging in this kind of sharing ahead of time will jumpstart the meeting agenda so

that meeting time will be more productively spent identifying common teacher education issues facing ACS institutions and exploring creative, collaborative ways ACS may address them.

While the specific outcomes of this meeting cannot be predetermined, it is anticipated that possibilities may include:

- the exploration of "best practices" that already exist, particularly within the ACS geographical region of the Southeast.
- the identification of specific strategies for collaboration among the ACS member institutions, perhaps including P-12 educators where possible.
- the discussion of strategies for dealing more effectively with the most critical issues facing teacher education: the recruitment, preparation and retention of teachers for inner cities and in critical fields such as science and math.
- the consideration of ways to interact with and/or dialogue with legislators to positively impact educational policy.
- the dissemination of appropriate resources and materials that address pertinent issues.

#### 5. Undergraduate Research

To "promote cooperation among ACS institutions in undergraduate research" is another goal in the ACS five-year plan. As mentioned earlier, those involved in the field of Women's Studies are making a concerted effort to increase research and reporting opportunities in this discipline for undergraduate students across the consortium. Those working with the Latin American Studies Program are addressing this issue as well.

In recent years there has been an intensified emphasis in higher education on providing opportunities for undergraduate students to be engaged in original scientific research. ACS colleges and universities have taken this trend seriously, and many of our institutions have added new research programs to their existing programs, creating outstanding original research opportunities for their students. However, as a consortium, the opportunities have been limited for students to present the results of their undergraduate research.

One ACS institution, noting this void in the sciences, volunteered to take the lead in creating the ACS Annual Conference on Undergraduate Research in the Sciences. This same institution offered to host the first conference in the spring of 2003. Such a conference would encompass the disciplines of physics, chemistry, biology, mathematics and computer science. The small planning committee that is proposing and guiding this endeavor suggests that students would make presentations in either oral or poster sessions. Faculty, who might also be involved in presentations, would have the additional opportunity to present and discuss with their colleagues pedagogical issues related to fostering, funding, and performing undergraduate research. For both students and faculty it would be a time to foster and encourage sharing, interaction, and collaboration, as well as social ties within ACS. It is expected that the plans for this effort will be finalized at the meeting of the ACS Deans in February 2002.

#### 6. International Coordinating Group

As stated in our *Ten-Year Retrospective*, "ACS began as an effort to improve the international program offerings of small, private, select liberal arts colleges in the South." Even though ACS programs have grown and expanded into other areas of interest and need as

identified by the 16 member institutions, the short and long-range plans of the consortium always have included international study opportunities at the heart of its endeavors.

In its first year, the New Dimensions grant has done much to re-establish and/or reinforce ties among the international program directors on ACS campuses. For the first time in a number of years, this group of directors was able to have a face-to-face meeting in Atlanta. During this March 2001 meeting, these colleagues discussed a wide range of topics pertinent to the promotion and implementation of ACS off-campus study programs. Topics discussed included: financial aid, liability issues, student and institution insurance, information sharing, the Global Partners programs, and establishing links with partner institutions. The group also decided to meet annually. The 2002 meeting will take place at Rollins College in January 2002.

In addition, the directors agreed to develop a new International Programs website, which is to be incorporated within the existing ACS website. The design for this has been completed, and pertinent information is being gathered and sub-pages created. It is projected that the major portion of this process will be completed in early 2002. The directors also agreed to republish the ACS international programs brochure, and the design for this is completed. The new publication will be available in early 2002.

During January 2001, five international program directors and two faculty members attended a workshop on "Assessing Intercultural Learning in Study Abroad." Held at the School for International Training (SIT) in Vermont, this workshop afforded our participants the opportunity to interact with colleagues from across the nation as well as leading experts in intercultural competency. The workshop generated much discussion about the assessment of intercultural learning and its role in a liberal arts education. New Dimensions funds were used to help defray the expenses for the five ACS participants.

## B. Administrative Collaboration

In keeping with the ACS five-year plan, the original New Dimensions proposal identified four administrative interest groups that the ACS presidents hoped to bring together to explore issues and to engage in collaborative ventures:

1. deans of student affairs
2. physical plant representatives
3. career planning officers
4. institutional research directors

Reports on these groups will be presented in the order they are listed above.

### 1. Deans of Student Affairs

The stated objective in the five-year plan is to "initiate a dialogue between chief academic and student affairs officers to examine the link between intellectual and character development." In prior conversations between these two groups, the idea of student leadership and civic engagement emerged as critical components of both intellectual and character development. Using information from their prior discussion with the academic deans, the Deans of Students at their February 2001 meeting discussed issues of student leadership and civic engagement. They developed a discussion document that was presented at the October 2001 meeting of the academic deans, who authorized a small planning group to move the project

forward. The working title is "Leadership ACS." The project is designed to strengthen existing student leadership education programs and to develop programs where none exist. The designers project a four-year consortial project that will enhance leadership opportunities for students, faculty, and staff at ACS member institutions. Projected goals include:

- establishing a common model for leadership that includes group and individual qualities.
- designing and implementing assessment strategies to build campus-specific baselines for leadership programs.
- establishing a collaborative approach to leadership involving students, faculty, administration, and staff.
- supporting and enhancing existing programs.
- developing new programs.

The New Dimension grant will provide seed money for the planning group as they design and establish assessment strategies to conduct needed surveys, to identify and distribute resources, and to develop the technological tools and an ACS website for sharing and communication. They will seek additional outside funding in order to develop fully the program.

## 2. Physical Plant Representatives

In February 2002, physical plant representatives who participate in an ACS environmental initiative will meet with the ACS Joint Purchasing group to explore ways they can work together. It is anticipated that this meeting will generate ideas for future collaborative activities. Also at this meeting, both groups will have the opportunity to converse with Kevin Lyons, who is the head of purchasing at Rutgers University, Camden Campus. Mr. Lyons, who is internationally known for his work on "Buying Green," will talk about his "Lessons Learned Along the Way." He will share information on specific resources that will be helpful to the work of these two groups.

## 3. Career Planning Officers

As part of its five-year Plan, ACS is exploring avenues to enhance, individually and collectively, the career planning services of its member institutions. Strategies include:

- Promoting of the use of an on-line job referral service. In addition, the ACS environmental initiative has a link to this service on its website and encourages students, employers, and administrators to use the service to match students with environmentally related jobs. We expect to expand the use of this resource to other areas.
- Establishing an internship program, initially with an environmental emphasis. The projection is to have this available in 2002.
- Identifying a small group of employers who will partner with ACS to offer internships and career opportunities for our students.
- Creating a "Career Services" listserv to share concerns, information, and resources.

- Identifying "best practices" for consortial-wide distribution and implementation/adaptation.
- Engaging in benchmarking activities

ACS students and institutions stand to realize significant benefits from such collaborative, consortial activities.

#### 4. Institutional Research Directors

The expertise and work of institutional research directors can provide ACS with invaluable information. Possible activities and strategies include:

- collecting and sharing data on specific topics from /with our 16 member institutions as well as from the larger higher education community.
- benchmarking activities.
- identifying institutional issues and concerns that ACS may want to address in the future.
- researching consortial issues for ACS.
- utilizing joint purchasing options to purchase software and other resources.
- identifying "best practices" for Institutional Researchers and their offices.

The institutional research directors have a significant contribution to make to ACS, and more attention will be paid to this group in 2002.

### **IV. Organization and Structure of the Grant Program**

Since the consortium's presidents and chief academic officers initially identified the initiatives to be included in this grant, they have provided significant supervision and oversight for the resulting programs and projects. The presidents received progress reports and discussed the various aspects of the initiatives at their June 2001 meeting and reaffirmed their commitment to the "New Dimensions" initiative. Once again, they expressed their gratitude for the support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. They noted how useful this initiative will be in providing ACS-member colleges and universities with opportunities to test and experiment with new ideas, to bring together groups whose members have not been in regular contact, and to form new interest groups. They also noted the various benefits that accrue from bringing the various academic and administrative groups together, pointing out that working together on one project frequently opens up the possibilities for additional collaborative efforts.

The grant also was a focal point at the February, May and October 2001 meetings of the Council of Deans. In their important management oversight role, these chief academic officers made sure they were aware of the details of the various programs and projects, including the process for evaluating the various activities that take place. Email reports and updates are and will continue to be made to the deans between their meetings.

Furthermore, a core planning committee or an organizing program committee that is designed to provide guidance and to help establish policies supports every individual program.

These smaller groups work closely with the appropriate ACS staff member to ensure that each program is managed effectively and in keeping with the objectives outlined in the proposal.

We also want to acknowledge the grant's support for an ACS staff member who has provided substantial leadership to the New Dimensions effort. Drawing upon her more than 30 years of experience in education and administration, she has helped to move our groups in the right direction as they organize, plan and conduct their activities.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

In conclusion, the grant from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation has enabled the consortium to move forward toward 10 of the 20 goals contained in its current five-year Plan. Without the Foundation's generosity, this kind of progress would not have been possible. As we continue to move forward with these academic and administrative initiatives, networks will continue to operate collaboratively, new issues and goals will emerge for our consideration, and ACS and its program committees and task forces will continue to plan for the future.

Even though limited funds have been spent so far, the work that has been done has built a foundation for a very active and useful set of activities in 2002 and beyond. Thanks to the Foundation's support and encouragement, the ACS programs will keep moving forward.

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