

Associated Colleges of the South

Six Month Report to the

Robert W. Woodruff Foundation

New Models in Three Challenged & Critical areas

June 30, 2005

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I. Introduction

The Associated Colleges of the South is pleased to submit its first report on the activities begun under the auspices of the *New Models Grant in Three Challenged & Critical Areas* that was received from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation in December 2004. The programming report covers the five month period of January 1 - May 31, 2005. The financial summary, in Appendix A, shows activity from receipt of the grant in December 2004 through May 31, 2005.

The ACS expresses deep appreciation for the funding received from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation to address programmatic and curricular needs in the three challenged and critical areas of Interdisciplinary Opportunities, Undergraduate Research & Engagement, and Diversity.

II. Organization and Structure of the Grant Program

Upon receipt of the grant, the ACS Council of Deans began the task of nominating faculty from different disciplines within their institutions for membership on a new Interdisciplinary Opportunities Task Force and a new Undergraduate Research & Engagement Task Force. Rather than create a new Task Force for diversity issues, the decision was made to let the existing ACS Diversity Planning Committee build upon its previous work under this new grant.

Once the nominations were received for the two new task forces, a draft list of potential members was prepared and shared with the Council of Deans for their approval. Upon their approval, the process of issuing invitations for task force membership began. In an effort to gain the broadest possible representation on the two new task forces and the already constituted ACS Diversity Planning Committee, such factors as academic discipline and institution were taken into consideration. To facilitate work within these groups and potential cross-taskforce collaboration, the two new, small task forces are constituted with six faculty/staff members and a liaison with the Council of Deans, and the Diversity Planning Committee has ten members (two chief student affairs officers, four diversity officers, three deans, and one special assistant to a college president). A list of Task Force and Planning Committee membership is found in Appendix B.

General program review of grant funded activities continues to rest with the ACS Council of Deans, who receive full reports at their meetings. In addition, the ACS presidents receive full program reports at their annual meeting. Both the Council of Deans and the Presidents receive interim reports throughout the year via e-mail. The day-to-day program and fiscal oversight is provided by ACS staff working collaboratively with the task forces and the program committees via e-mails and conference calls.

III. The Program Initiative

A. Overview

There are two primary foci of this grant. One is to foster new collaborative models and opportunities in the three challenged and critical areas of interdisciplinary opportunities, undergraduate research and engagement, and diversity. The second is to support campus efforts to refine and to enhance existing programs and opportunities. While individual ACS member institutions are making efforts in these areas, the seed money received through this grant will help faculty members and their institutions explore and experiment with different ways of creating viable academic and co-curricular experiences in these three challenged and critical areas, strengthen the liberal arts education provided by ACS institutions, share resources, and utilize the experiences and lessons learned from others to re-fashion programs to fit their own campus context.

As outlined in the original proposal, the objectives for this grant are to:

- Enhance student learning.
- Support and promote the practices that distinguish the liberal arts education from other types of learning.
- Stimulate faculty, student, staff, and administrative dialogue about and cooperation in these three challenged and critical areas.
- Assist member institutions in developing campus climates that are conducive to and promote diversity, undergraduate research and engagement, and interdisciplinary opportunities.
- Seek creative and meaningful solutions to issues.
- Develop new models to address these three areas.
- Infuse sound pedagogy throughout the curricular offerings.
- Increase the intentional development and inclusion about diversity in strategic campus documents.
- Share the results of the consortial efforts with all member institutions as well as beyond ACS.
- Model cost efficiencies and effectiveness in academic areas.

To facilitate the work of the two Task Forces and the Planning Committee, and to help keep them on task, the same Key Questions were used by each group in the planning process:

- What are the issues/concerns that we want and need to address in this area as a consortium?
- Which of these issues can we realistically address through consortial collaboration?
- What are the priorities for addressing them?
- What are the best ways to address the issues/concerns? What are the goals?
- How will we evaluate/assess our efforts, from the beginning to the end of the grant period?
- What baseline benchmarks might be helpful? How will we gather this information?
- Regarding dissemination of our efforts:

- i. What will be disseminated?
- ii. Who will disseminate information?
- iii. Where will information be disseminated?
- iv. When will information be disseminated?

The report of progress made to-date by and future plans of the two task forces and the Planning Committee are found below, in items B, C, and D.

B. Interdisciplinary Opportunities

It is the responsibility of a liberal arts education to help students connect ideas in order to grasp the mutual relationship of various disciplines and to develop a breadth of understanding that builds an ability to find, to evaluate, to integrate, and to synthesize information that will inform decisions, policies, and practices in every phase of their personal, social, and business life. While dialogue among the disciplines is crucial in developing truly interdisciplinary opportunities, historically, the very structures and traditions of colleges and universities of all sizes hinder such dialogues. In light of what a liberal arts education is all about, one of the fundamental questions for any discussion about interdisciplinarity is “how can interdisciplinary opportunities be moved from isolated occurrences on campus to the norm?” Given higher education history, traditions, culture, and disciplinary entrenchments, finding acceptable answers to this question will be a long-term challenge.

As the Task Force members began working through the Key Questions, it became apparent that the terms “interdisciplinary” and “multidisciplinary” were being used interchangeably, even though they have different meanings. Since the focus of this area is “interdisciplinary,” the committee determined that an important first step was to develop a working definition of “interdisciplinary.” This definition will shape the task force’s work, keep the group faithful to the grant, and provide a common understanding from which they can articulate to others the differences among these two terms and the less problematic terms of “cross-disciplinary” and “trans-disciplinary.” After much sharing and multiple discussions, the task force adopted the following definitions:

Interdisciplinary: Interdisciplinary courses, programs, and/or activities are those that link together and integrate information and methodologies from two or more separate, traditional, and/or artificial disciplines. Such linkages and integration create a multi-faceted picture of a topic through the exploration and synthesization of various approaches/views. To ensure success, these intersections and connections among disciplines require a non-hierarchical sharing of intellectual authority and continuous dialogue among ALL participants. This is an especially critical point for those designing and implementing the course/ program/ activity. Often, a team teaching/leadership model is used to achieve the intended results. In this model:

- faculty and/or leaders plan every facet of the course/offering together. There are no unilateral decisions.
- there is dialogue between the faculty/leaders and the disciplines. All are equal. Faculty members teach each other’s texts.
- each class/session interweaves the disciplines and texts. There is no sole ownership of disciplines or texts.
- all faculty/leaders involved participate in every class/session.

- [ideally] grading and evaluation are done as a team.
- courses count for credit in each discipline.

Multidisciplinary: Multidisciplinary offerings present information and methodologies on a given topic from more than one separate, traditional, and/or artificial discipline without linking or integrating them. Typically, this approach presents different disciplinary approaches to the same topic through the juxtaposition of terminology, methodology, assumptions, and goals. It addresses a topic by presenting disciplines as “stand alone” or parallel views. A single person may be responsible for the presentations, or multiple persons may make presentations within the same or in subsequent sessions. If multiple presenters are involved, “tag-teaching,” sometimes mistakenly called “team teaching,” frequently is the model used. In the tag-teaching model:

- different presenters are responsible for developing and presenting their own material.
- there is little communication/coordination among the presenters.
- they may/may not be present during the other presentations.
- evaluations/grading are handled by the individual instructors for each course when two or more courses are linked.

In addition to developing the above two working definitions, the task force identified the following programs/activities as areas of interest:

- Share syllabi of [truly] interdisciplinary courses at ACS institutions.
- Create a web-site to expedite the sharing of syllabi, interdisciplinary experiences, resources, and other pertinent information.
- Plan a pilot Best Practices seminar/workshop to share what is being done well on ACS campuses and to help faculty, department chairs and deans explore how to structure true interdisciplinary offerings. Topics to be covered include the working definition of interdisciplinary, best practices, logistics, institutional concerns, and overcoming resistance, etc. A variety of presentation methods may be used, including panels, papers, focus groups, and break-out sessions. A tentative date for this session is in February 2006, at Hendrix College.

Over the next few months the task force has agreed to:

- Develop a base line of “what’s going on at ACS institutions in interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary offerings.” Task force members will be the first to submit short summaries about interdisciplinary/multidisciplinary offerings on their campuses.
- Submit copies of syllabi for current interdisciplinary offerings and/or web links to online syllabi.
- Share links to ACS institutional web sites that contain information about interdisciplinary programs/courses/offerings.
- Create an ACS website to share its work.
- Determine the specific interdisciplinary consortial programs/activities that will be available, including the pilot Best Practices Workshop, and the possibility of other pilot programs and mini-grants.

C. Undergraduate Research & Engagement

Meaningful undergraduate research, such as collaborative research where students and faculty work side-by-side as co-investigators on a project, engages students with ideas and concepts that open doors to creativity and inquiry; develops critical and logical thinking skills; and introduces students to a process that helps them learn how to think like a professional, learn how to gather and use evidence, and how to question what is heard, read, and seen. This type of research is quite different from the typical research papers and guided research projects in which students participate in their undergraduate courses.

Perhaps of all the disciplines in higher education, the sciences have a better history of engaging students in research as co-investigators. Even though the history and traditions of many disciplines, such as the humanities and business, think the collaborative research model is not applicable to their fields, there is good anecdotal evidence, over a twenty-five year period from such institutions as The Reinvention Center at SUNYSB, Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, the University of Oregon, South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Association, St. Cloud State University, Ohio State University, BYU, and The Council of Undergraduate Research, indicating that the collaborative research model is applicable to most disciplines.

The perception that the collaborative research model does not work well in undergraduate experiences is a common one and a very difficult one to overcome, because it requires a significant shift in thinking and may require some sacrifice in the research agendas of faculty members who engage in it. These changes do not come easily. However, faculty and students who engage in collaborative research usually are very positive about the experience and indicate that it changes lives in a much more meaningful way than research papers or guided research ever could.

Not surprisingly, the initial discussion of the ACS undergraduate research and engagement task force mirrored typical campus conversations about collaborative research. While some task force members are sold on it, others think it is inappropriate for their disciplines. Still others see the possibilities and are willing to explore them. All agreed, however, that a key element in this program is creating an academic climate that encourages research across the curriculum. And, all agreed to focus on collaborative research for the purposes of this grant.

Fundamental questions that emerged as the group conversed included:

- What collaborative research opportunities, as opposed to guided research opportunities, are available on ACS campuses?
- How can/do we overcome resistance to the idea of collaborative research and stimulate collaborative research in disciplines other than the sciences?

The initial issues and concerns that were identified as ones to address through this grant included:

- Research/scholarship across the curriculum
- Assessment of undergraduate research opportunities
- Forums for sharing collaborative research and venues for publishing student work, within and outside of ACS
- Development of research based courses
- Development of collaborative research modules in existing courses/programs, promoting structured critical thinking and other skills

- Professional and graduate school development/student preparation
- Collaboration with the Interdisciplinary Task Force and the Diversity Planning Committee
- Disseminate ideas about how to engage in research across the curriculum
- Help students improve the way they present their portfolios and themselves to graduate schools
- Interinstitutional student exchanges (during the summer or during the year) to pair students and faculty in research projects (collaboration among ACS institutions)

In order to determine the direction of this task force and this portion of the grant, the task force members unanimously decided to conduct a brief survey of ACS institutions to gather current information about collaborative undergraduate research opportunities that already exist, plus which member institutions have an office or an individual directing/coordination these efforts. The task force members felt that this information would be instrumental in determining the programs and activities offered through this portion of the grant. A copy of the survey, which is being coordinated on each campus through the chief academic officer, is attached in Appendix C.

D. Diversity

As indicated in the original proposal, creating safe campus climates that welcome, respect, and celebrate diversity is a high priority for the consortium. And learning to better manage diversity and to tap its potential to the fullest, while being fiscally responsible, is a major challenge before the consortium and the individual institutions. The focus must be on sustainability and quality, rather than quantity, in the pursuit of inclusiveness, equity, educational excellence, and cost containment.

Prior to receiving this grant from the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, the ACS Diversity Planning Committee has been responsible for planning and coordinating a web site and three major consortial activities:

- A 2003 conference at Rhodes College, focused on IMPROVING OUR CAMPUS CLIMATE: ACADEMIC AND CO-CURRICULAR PRACTICES THAT WORK. 50 participants represented 16 colleges and universities, two of which were not ACS members.
- A 2004 NCBI Pilot Preview at Furman University. After reviewing several diversity leadership education and prejudice reduction models, the ACS Diversity Planning Committee endorsed a model developed by the National Coalition Building Institute that focuses specifically on the college and university campus setting and culture. Five ACS institutions were represented by 19 faculty, staff, and administrators.
- A 2005 Diversity gathering at the Heifer Ranch, Perryville, AR, focused on RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATION: DIVERSITY IS NOT AN OPTION IN THE REAL WORLD. 10 ACS institutions were represented by 47 faculty, staff and students. William Winter, the former Governor of Mississippi (1980-84), was the keynote speaker.

The ACS Diversity Planning Committee authorized a sub-committee of the Diversity Planning Committee to prepare a program/activity proposal that outlined consortial programs and activities that would be offered with the support of this grant. Suggestions received from the 2003, 2004, and 2005 Diversity conferences and pilot programs provided a basis for the subcommittee's meeting, which was held in Atlanta on May 19-20, 2005. The subsequent proposal was reviewed by the larger Diversity Planning Committee and the ACS Council of Deans the week of May 27, 2005. The following foci were approved:

- Overall themes of campus climate and ethnic diversity.
- A pilot workshop, September 30-October 1, 2005, at Rhodes College, for department chairs [from 5 member institutions] who will be involved in upcoming faculty searches. The focus will be on hiring practices and retention. The tentative facilitator is Ms. Martie LaBare, Academic Dean, Bloomfield College, Bloomfield, NJ. A department/division chair, preferably from within ACS, will co-facilitate the session.
- Diversity Mini-Grants, for student led collaboration with faculty and/or staff. Students must find a faculty or staff member to sponsor/work with them on the proposed project. Campus climate is the focus for the mini-grants, and diversity issues in addition to ethnic diversity will be considered for funding. Two grant cycles are proposed: (1) a spring 2006 submission deadline for the 2006-07 academic year, and (2) a fall 2006 deadline for the 2007 calendar year.
- Campus Climate Assessment - After gathering data on which ACS campuses have conducted such a survey (or are planning to), the outcomes, and follow-up plans, share survey instruments, lessons learned, etc., and develop a climate assessment instrument for adaptation by ACS campuses. Bring together a few ACS people who have been involved in campus assessments to be the initial brain-trust to develop the survey instrument. Sponsor a research group of internal ACS people who could be consultants for ACS campuses who want to conduct a climate assessment. Train focus group leaders, to be shared across ACS.
- NCBI One-Day Workshops - To meet the need for train-the-trainer sessions, to create a pool/core of persons who are available to support/assist their own and other ACS campuses in prejudice reduction and education for leadership sessions, provide matching leadership grants to six ACS campuses to host a one-day NCBI workshop. Host campuses would pay the balance of the leadership fees and any other related expenses. Host campuses may invite other ACS campuses to participate in the one-day workshop and may charge a nominal fee [to the other campuses] to cover meals, breaks, materials, etc. Participants from non-host institutions would cover their own travel and lodging expenses.
- Prototype of consortial brochure/web page - focused on Diversity in the context of liberal arts education at ACS institutions with small, residential campuses. This would have a student recruitment theme. A brochure might result which could be tested in areas where member institutions usually do not recruit and where they may be misconceptions about the South. Look into the

possibility of collaborating with a national service or a neutral party to distribute a brochure.

- ACS students meet with ACS presidents - A recurring request on ACS Diversity related evaluations, especially from student participants, is to dialogue with the top campus decision makers about diversity concerns/issues. Explore the possibility of recruiting 9-10 students, from across ACS, to meet with the ACS Presidents at the dinner session the evening before the Presidents' annual meeting.
- Diversity Gathering Spring 2007. Use part of this meeting to share results/information from the above ventures. The tentative host is Sewanee University.
- Sharing the ACS Diversity story - Use such publications as *Black Issues in Higher Education* and *Hispanic outlook* to share with a wider audience, including potential [minority] faculty and staff recruits, stories about successful ACS faculty/staff Diversity efforts.

In addition, there is interest in bringing together the faculty of color on ACS campuses for networking and sharing experiences, specifically as it relates to recruitment, hiring, and retention efforts at ACS institutions.

IV. Conclusion

The three challenged and critical areas of Interdisciplinary Opportunities, Undergraduate Research and Engagement, and Diversity are integral to a liberal arts education. It is important the ACS consortial efforts focus on sustainability, quality (not quantity), and cost effectiveness.

The challenges in addressing these three areas are many and are not taken lightly. And, while each one has separate issues with which it must deal, there are underlying concerns that are common to all three of them:

- honestly assessing campus and disciplinary structures, traditions/cultures, policies and procedures
- being open to new ideas
- thinking "outside the box"
- engaging in dialogue that produces action and results.

Furthermore, collaboratively supporting and encouraging campuses in their efforts to offer the best possible liberal arts education has the potential for tremendous and far-reaching benefits. The funds so generously provided by the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation for this initiative opens the door for ACS to be more actively involved with its member institutions in providing programming and resources to address issues and needs.

APPENDIX B

**Membership of
Interdisciplinary Task Force
Undergraduate Research & Engagement Task Force
ACS Diversity Planning Committee**

Interdisciplinary Opportunities Task Force Members

John Donahue, Sociology, International Studies, Trinity University
Carmela Epright, Philosophy, Furman University
Mike Gleason, Comparative Lit & Director of Core Curriculum, Millsaps College
Cassie Mansfield, Art/Art History, Sewanee: The University of the South
Lyle Rupert, Economics/Business/Accounting & 1st Year Program, Hendrix College
Sandra Sprayberry, English & Classics, Birmingham-Southern

Richard Smith, VP Academic Affairs and Dean of the College at Millsaps, liaison with the ACS Council of Deans.

Undergraduate Research & Engagement Task Force Members

Brannon Anderson, Earth & Environmental Science, Furman, University
George Bent, Art History & Associate Dean of the College, Washington & Lee University
Frances Flannery-Dailey, Religion, Hendrix College
Teresa Beckham Gramm, Economics & Undergrad Research, Rhodes College
Mark Lewis, Computer Science, Trinity University
Thom Moore, Physics, Rollins College (Task Force Chair)

Andy Newcomb, Dean, School of Arts & Sciences, the University of Richmond,
liaison with the ACS Council of Deans

Diversity Planning Committee Members

Eric Benjamin, Director of Minority Affairs, Sewanee: The University of the South
Idella Glenn, Director of Multicultural Affairs, Furman University
Carmen Hardin, Director of Minority Student Affairs and Minority Recruitment, Hendrix College
Jim Hunt, Provost & Dean of the Faculty, Southwestern University (Committee Chair)
Brit Katz, Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs, Millsaps College
Bob Llewellyn, Vice President Academic Affairs, Rhodes College
Clark Ross, Vice President of Academic Affairs, Davidson College
Tom Shandley, Vice President of Student Affairs, Davidson College
Ron Swain, Senior Advisor to the President for Strategic Planning and Assessment, Southwestern University
Sheryl Wilburn, Director of Multi-Cultural Affairs, Millsaps College