

Wagner College
Summary of selected College-wide research grants/projects, Fall 2011

Teagle Foundation grant - “*Learning by doing: Assessing the relationship between liberal learning and experiential learning*”. Wagner College with Belmont University.

Contact persons: Patricia Tooker, Dean for Integrated Learning, and Dr. Donald Stearns, Professor of Biology

A three year grant-funded research project ending with the 2011-2012 academic year. Participating faculty members specify what the liberal learning outcomes are for a course and design an experiential learning portion of the course to meet those outcomes. Faculty from the two colleges have met each year to discuss pedagogical practices and share results. The third and last year continues the research/pedagogy aspect of the project and disseminations activities.

Teagle Foundation planning grant – “*Preparing and Evaluating 21st Century Faculty: Aligning Expectations, Competencies, and Rewards*”. Grant request from NAC&U, Wagner is one of 10 participating institutions.

Contact person: Dr. Lily McNair, Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and Patricia Tooker, Dean for Integrated Learning

A one-year planning grant in which each institution will convene a working group of faculty and administrators to focus on two objectives: 1) develop a plan for faculty development that would recognize and reward faculty for effectiveness in teaching and learning, and implementing new approaches to teaching and learning; and 2) designing “ways to measure, evaluate, and recognize faculty work in light of expanded 21st century expectations, particularly in non-standard learning environments”. Results of each institutions deliberations and exploration will culminate in a working paper that will serve as the foundation of the 2012 NAC&U Summer Institute. It is expected that a grant proposal to further this work will be written and submitted in summer 2012.

Bringing Theory to Practice (BTtoP) grant – “*Examining the relationships between experiential learning, civic engagement, and psychosocial well-being*”.

Research team: Dr. Cass Freedland, Director of the Center for Leadership and Service; Patricia Tooker, Dean for Integrated Learning; Dr. Anne Goodsell Love, Associate Provost for Assessment; Dr. Amy Eshelman, Associate Professor of Psychology; Ruta Shah-Gordon, Assistant Vice-President for Campus Life and Internationalization; Dr. Katia Gonzalez, Assistant Professor of Education; Dr. Lily McNair, Provost and Vice-President for Academic Affairs

A two year grant-funded research project ending with the 2011-2012 academic year. Students have been surveyed through their courses in the FYP, Senior LCs, and Civic Innovations courses. Survey questions ask about student connection to the courses, the community, their peers and faculty, the type of experiential learning being done, and their sense of well-being using the Flourishing Quality of Life Assessment (Keyes, 2006). In addition, students responses to other

existing campus assessments (BCSSE, NSSE, CORE survey of Alcohol and Other Drugs, and other co-curricular evaluations) will be incorporated in the analyses.

In addition to the findings of this research, an important aspect of this project is a focus on sustainability. How will changes indicated by the research results be incorporated into our practice across campus? How do we sustain and improve The Wagner Plan after more than a decade of its existence?

CT2 – “*Critical Thinking for Civic Thinking*”

Contact persons: Dr. Donald Stearns, Professor of Biology, and Chair of the Committee for Learning Assessment

CT2 began with a SENCER grant from the NSF; Don Stearns was the P.I. for the grant and he developed the CT2. Through the SENCER grant Don used CT2 to assess critical thinking and civic thinking in natural science courses (with science colleagues at five other institutions), and since then Wagner College has adopted it for more wide-spread use. During the 2010-2011 academic year students in selected FYP and Senior LC courses were asked to do the CT2 (in class, students write a response to a prompt asking them to discuss alternate sides of an argument or situation, and then state what actions they could take to work for change with this issue.) Use of this assessment will continue for the 2011-2012 academic year, in tandem with the Teagle project.