

## Activities of the Center for the Liberal Arts: Report to the Faculty of Arts & Sciences

August 2016



This past academic year marked the introduction of our new College Curriculum. The faculty created seventy new COLL 100 courses, revamped or invented many new COLL 150s, and we developed new COLL 200s across the three knowledge domains. It was an extraordinary outpouring of talent and creativity.

Among the many COLL activities undertaken last year, of particular note was the visit of First Nations Artist Robert Davidson. A soft-spoken and gentle man, he is also a groundbreaker and visionary

artist. In 1969, at the age of twenty-two, Mr. Davidson carved the first totem pole on Haida Gwaii, an island off the coast of British Columbia that is the Haida ancestral homeland. This “innocent gesture”, as he called it, was a seminal event for his people, a gift to his elders, and it led to a renewal of the arts and culture of the Northwest, part of the ongoing worldwide recovery of indigenous peoples’ heritages, voices, and visions.

Mr. Davidson's visit was the CLA's first full step toward realizing the faculty's vision for the on-campus COLL 300. In the coming year we will implement the new model fully, with two COLL 300 semesters enriched by external visitors.

We also expect this year to bring a lively discussion among the faculty about our aspirations and plans for the COLL 400 capstone element of the new curriculum.

Individually and together as a faculty we are building something new, and making our own innocent gestures – a rededication to our shared commitment to creating something special here, a renewal of our creative energies, a gift to our current and future students.

The report that follows describes the CLA's activities for the 2015-16 year.

Gene Tracy, Director  
Center for the Liberal Arts

Art by [Robert Davidson](#)

We begin by reminding readers that the idea for the Center for the Liberal Arts (CLA) grew out of faculty discussions held during the curriculum review. The CLA was eventually chartered to “...support a robust liberal arts education through the continual organizing and infusing of content, integration, creativity, and innovation throughout the undergraduate College Curriculum.”

The Fellows are charged to anticipate aspects of COLL implementation before they occur and to bring proposals to the faculty in a timely manner that allows for full discussion so that the new curriculum will remain true to the intent of the faculty. This is our third annual report.

In addition, the Fellows’ Charter requires them to develop at least one COLL course; take on one issue of strategic significance; prepare and review guidelines for the new curriculum in collaboration with the EPC and Dean; assist faculty in designing COLL courses; help faculty incorporate their research into general education courses; develop technological and pedagogical means to advance general education; survey course offerings in general education; and work with student resource centers to facilitate student success in the COLL Curriculum. It is important to stress that the CLA is an advisory rather than executive or policy-making body; its role is to provide counsel, advice, and encouragement to the faculty, EPC, and the Deans.

Our reports for AY 2013-14 and 2014-15 as well as more information about the Center can be found at the [CLA website](#). We also refer you to the [COLL Resources for Faculty](#) website. (This latter website is password-protected, and requires you to have a WordPress account. If you don’t already have one, it only takes a minute to create an account).

While the new COLL curriculum is a collective effort involving many of our faculty, the CLA Fellows are on point and we feel honored and humbled by the role. We are grateful to those colleagues who welcomed us to departmental conversations, attended lunch-time work group sessions, January / May seminars, and brainstormed with us. This has been an exciting year, and the new curriculum is only just beginning. There is a lot of work ahead of the faculty as we bring the new curriculum online over the next two years, and the Fellows hope to make it as fun and intellectually rewarding as possible.

### **The Center and the Fellows**

This past spring, the Fellows selected six new Fellows and bade farewell five Fellows—three from our very first cohort (Deborah Morse, Nicholas Popper, and John “Rio” Riofrio) and two from the second cohort (Georgia Irby and Paul Mapp). All five were instrumental in establishing the COLL curriculum as well as an identity for the CLA. We are forever indebted to them all, especially the first cohort (along with continuing Director Gene Tracy) who essentially served as Fellows for three years. They worked tirelessly to craft the makings of a beautiful sculpture out of a lump of clay.

The six new Fellows brought us to twelve in all, with each Fellow serving for two years in one of two overlapping cohorts of six each. We anticipate that twelve will be the steady-state number of Fellows for the foreseeable future with new Fellows announced in May and the call for nominations going out sometime around Spring Break. Here are all of the Fellows listed by cohort:

First cohort (January 2014):

- Deborah Morse, English
- Nick Popper, History
- John Riofrio (Rio), Modern Languages and Literatures / Hispanic Studies
- Gene Tracy, Physics; approved as Director 2015-18

Second cohort (September 2014-16):

- Georgia Irby, Classical Studies
- Paul Mapp, History

Second cohort (September 2014-17):

- Carey Bagdassarian, Chemistry / Interdisciplinary Studies
- Bruce Campbell, Modern Languages and Literature / German Studies / European Studies

Third cohort: (May 2015-17):

- Paula Blank, English
- Matt Allar, Theatre, Speech and Dance
- Catherine Forestell, Psychology / Neuroscience
- Christine Nemacheck, Government

Fourth cohort: (May 2016-18):

- Arthur Knight, English / American Studies / Film and Media Studies
- John Lombardini, Government
- Iyabo Osiapem, Africana Studies / Linguistics
- Fabricio Prado, History
- Barbette Spaeth, Classical Studies / Women's Studies / Pilgrimage Studies
- Silvia Tandeciarz, Modern Languages and Literature / Hispanic Studies / Latin American Studies

In November, we hired a full-time Associate Director, Jerry Hart, to round out our Administrative Support Staff along with administrative assistant, Sharon Morris. Steve Otto, Communications Director for A&S, has provided critical staff support each step of the way, and we have had a very collaborative working relationship with the Dean's Office, where Dean Lu Ann Homza acts as our liaison and de facto Thirteenth Fellow. In addition, we have worked closely with the EPC, Academic Advising, Swem Library, APeL, and a variety of other campus offices and organizations. These collaborative relationships across campus have allowed us to develop and deliver a rich variety of offerings to the faculty, ultimately for the benefit of all our students.

### **Breaking new ground, setting precedents, making it real**

The CLA is still new, and therefore many things we do as CLA Fellows we are doing for the first time. We have been very conscious of the fact that we were setting precedents and laying the foundation for what must be an important locus of faculty creativity in the years ahead. The goal is to promote an inclusive, collaborative, innovative culture where faculty share ideas and learn from one another as we create the new curriculum and then strive to keep it fresh in year to come.

In addition to the stipends for the Fellows, we worked from a program budget of roughly \$100K this past year. Funding was provided by the Dean's Office, Charles Center, Reves Center, private gifts, income yields on several W&M endowments, and the Mellon Foundation's COLL curriculum implementation grant.

## CLA Activities and Accomplishments for 2015-2016

- **Brownbag / Workshop Lunch Seminars.** Fourteen of these events were organized. A complete list is appended below.
- **May/January Seminars.** Eight January Seminars and ten May seminars were supported with 100 faculty and staff participating. A complete summary is appended below.
- **Department/Program Engagement:** The CLA Fellows met with the following programs, departments, or directors this year: American Studies; Art and Art History; Chemistry; Classical Studies; Music; and Theatre, Speech, and Dance. The purpose of these meetings was to discuss the COLL curriculum, the department / programs' opportunities to get involved, answer questions, and outline the variety of programs the CLA has to assist.
- **COLL Coffee with a Fellow.** This proved a popular way for faculty to engage Fellows one-on-one about new course ideas and ask questions about the new curriculum. It also provided the Fellows a chance to hear feedback from colleagues and led to several ideas for seminars, or brown bags.
- **Faculty Innovation Grants.** These supported "outside of the box" ideas for faculty who want to bring new ideas to COLL course creation. Our three awardees were: 1) Suzanne Hagedorn (English) to travel to England to develop a future on-campus COLL300 course, 2) Elizabeth Harbron (Chemistry) to further develop a COLL200 course, and 3) Calvin Hui (Modern Languages & Literature) to perform research that supports transforming an existing course into a COLL 200 or even a COLL 400. This builds upon three faculty innovation grants in the previous year. We hope that more faculty will take advantage of this opportunity to try new things in support of COLL course creation.
- **Inaugural On-Campus COLL 300 Visitor:**
  - Robert Davidson, a Haida artist and activist, visited campus from March 22-24 thanks to a generous donation from the Reves Center. He interacted with five different classes in addition to performing his main presentation, "An Innocent Gesture" on Wednesday, March 23 in Sadler Center's Commonwealth Auditorium.
  - Attendance for "An Innocent Gesture" was extraordinary with every seat filled and many standing or sitting in the aisles. Attendance was estimated at nearly 500 people. The event was free and open to the public.
  - In addition to the scheduled student interactions, we hosted a few social events both on- and off-campus. After his main presentation we hosted a reception for select students, faculty, staff, and the community at the Muscarelle Museum.
- **Representing W&M in National Venues.** Fellow Chris Nemacheck and Dean Lu Ann Homza attended an American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) *Signature Work* symposium in Pittsburgh, PA this past April. This builds upon Chris and former Fellow Georgia Irby's participation with Dean Homza at last July's AAC&U Institute: Integrative Learning and the Departments. The goal remains to strategize priorities and elements of the coming COLL 400 experience.
- **Strategic Planning.** At our May retreat, the Fellows agreed to an updated Strategic Framework which includes continued support and budgeting for faculty development, course development, student resources, on-campus COLL300 visitors, and administration. Submission of a Priority Budget Request (PBR) is planned with the Dean's Office for Fall 2016. The goal is to institutionalize CLA funding that is currently provided by the Mellon Foundation curriculum implementation grant.
- **Home for the CLA.** The CLA, Dean Carrie Cooper, and Swem Library staff met several times to develop a plan for collaborative space for the future home of the CLA, its programs, the newly-created Swem Fellow, and a variety of faculty and faculty support programs. The new space will be the Studio for Teaching and Research. In June and July, the CLA's administrative staff, along with Steve Otto and Kathy Larrieu from the Dean's Office, moved into their temporary home in Morton

Hall #305. The CLA will also have a classroom and conference room on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor of Morton. Establishing a physical presence as well as nurturing programs for those spaces will pave the way for the eventual planned move to Swem Library's ground floor.

- **Gateway to the COLL Curriculum.** CLA Fellows provided content oversight and guidance for the Academic Advising portion (Part 1) of this summer course for incoming first-year students. The Fellows also collaborated with the Dean's Office and Swem Library to produce a new suite of online resources teaching students to become "information literate" (Part 2), with its design integrated with the faculty-approved criteria for COLL 100 and COLL 150 courses.
- **Proactive planning for COLL 300 and COLL 400.** The Fellows held conversations with the EPC, the Charles Center, and the Reves Center to discuss COLL 300 in preparation for the pilot semester in Fall 2016 and partial roll-out in Spring 2017. They also held a series of internal discussions focusing primarily on the on-campus piece of COLL 300, specifically how that very innovative aspect of the new curriculum can be brought online and coordinated in a manner consistent with faculty intentions. Additionally, Fellow Chris Nemacheck and the members of the COLL 400 workgroup are making headway into establishing a framework for COLL 400. We look forward to extended conversations with the EPC and the faculty in the coming year.
- **Work with Advancement on Fundraising to Support the New Curriculum.** Fellows Chris Nemacheck and Paul Mapp, and Director Gene Tracy, addressed a meeting of the Regional and International Advancement officers. Director, Gene Tracy, also met with the Northeast Director to discuss on-campus COLL 300 donor opportunities. We will continue to work in collaboration with Gerald Bullock, Director of A&S Development, and colleagues in Advancement, to help raise funds in support of the new curriculum.

Going forward, the CLA will continue to offer support for department or program retreats that are aimed at COLL course development. If funds can be identified, we eventually hope to encourage more ambitious and wide-ranging efforts by faculty that might include, for example, funding visitors, books or other media, or trips to national workshops or conferences.

### **Closing remarks**

The CLA lost a dear teammate, friend, and colleague in Paula Blank just a short time ago. She was a full and critical member of the CLA for the past year and we want take this opportunity to recognize her tireless contributions and to mourn her passing. Her gentle manner, generous spirit, and sharp mind will be greatly missed by us.

Respectfully submitted by the Faculty Fellows,

Matt Allar, Carey Bagdassarian, Bruce Campbell, Catherine Forestell, Arthur Knight, John Lombardini, Christine Nemacheck, Iyabo Osiapem, Fabricio Prado, Barbette Spaeth, Silvia Tandeciarz, & Gene Tracy

| <b>Brownbags and Workshops, 2015-16</b> |               |  |
|---|---------------|--|
| <b>Presenter(s)</b>                     | <b>Date</b>   | <b>Title</b>   |
| Tracy, Popper, Bagdassarian, Mapp       | Sept 16 & 17  | The On-Campus COLL 300 Colloquia:<br>How are they going to work?                 |
| Riofrio, Campbell, Nemacheck            | Sept 23 & 24  | COLL Recall  |
| Morse, Allar, Blank                     | Oct 16 & 20   | COLL 200 ALV   |
| Allar, Sher, Spaeth                     | Nov 13 & 17   | COLL Innovation Brownbag   |
| Blank, Irby, Campbell                   | Mar 30 & 31   | COLL 100- From Apprentice to Master:<br>Unleashing Your COLL 100 Creative Genius |
| Blank, Morse                            | April 13 & 14 | COLL 200- Reaching Out:<br>Creating and Transforming COLL 200s                   |
| Bagdassarian, Morse, Tracy, Mapp        | April 20 & 21 | COLL 300- Visitor Integration<br>Brainstorming Session"                          |

| <b>Funded January Seminars 2016</b> |   |                     |
|-------------------------------------|---|---------------------|
| <b>Presenter(s)</b>                 | <b>Name</b>   | <b>Participants</b> |
| Tracy / Longo                       | The Idea of the University  | 5                   |
| Zuber                               | Writing Program Best Practices and Innovations  | 4                   |
| Zuber / Otto                        | Transitional Communications Resource for International Undergraduate First-Year Students  | 4                   |
| Zuber / Otto                        | Curate and Create Faculty/Student Resources for COLL 100 and COLL 150 Communication Skill | 7                   |
| Swartz / Yu                         | Symmetry/Graph Theory and Complex Networks  | 3                   |
| MacGowan / Levesque                 | Sight/Insight in Early Modern Europe- COLL 200  | 4                   |
| Hui / Lu                            | Politics of Sentiment in Modern Chinese Literature and Film                               | 2                   |
| Forestell                           | The Science Group- COLL 300   | 5                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                        |   | <b>34</b>           |

| <b>Funded May Seminars 2016</b> |  |                     |
|---------------------------------|--|---------------------|
| <b>Presenter(s)</b>             | <b>Name</b>                                | <b>Participants</b> |
| Pacini                          | French & Francophone Studies               | 8                   |
| Compan                          | COLL300 off-campus                         | 7                   |
| Glasser                         | Gateway COLL200 Anthropology               | 7                   |
| Zuber / Forestell               | COLL100                                    | 8                   |
| Zuber / Forestell               | COLL150                                    | 5                   |
| Deconinck / Erlich              | Makerspace Technologies in COLL curriculum | 7                   |
| Deconinck                       | Entrepreneurship & innovation in COLL400   | 4                   |
| Longo / Tracy / Bagdassarian    | The Idea of the University                 | 6                   |
| Tracy / Bagdassarian            | F16 COLL300 visitors / symposium           | 7                   |
| Morse / Wilson                  | COLL200 ALV                                | 7                   |
| <b>TOTAL</b>                    |  | <b>66</b>           |