

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

January to August 2014

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' Charter requires them to develop at least one COLL course; 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. It is important to stress that the CLA is an advisory rather than executive body; its role is to provide counsel, advice, and encouragement to the faculty, to EPC, and to the Deans.

A more complete statement and further information about the Center can be found at the [CLA website](#). This is our first annual report.

Creation of the Center

The decision to move forward with the CLA was made last fall by the Dean's Office, which also identified funding for the first cohort of CLA Faculty Fellows. The [CLA charter](#) was developed by the Dean's Office in consultation with the Faculty Affairs Committee.

Appointment of the first CLA Faculty Fellows

The new curriculum was approved by the FAS in December 2013. The call for nominations for the first cohort of CLA Fellows went out in December 2013, and the first [Fellows](#) were appointed in January 2014. These inaugural CLA Fellows are:

- Deborah Denenholz Morse, English
- Nicholas Popper, History
- John Riofrio, Modern Languages and Literatures
- Gene Tracy, Physics

The Fellows would also like to acknowledge the tremendous effort on our behalf by Lu Ann Homza, Dean of Educational Policy, and Steve Otto, Director of Communications for A&S. Their support, hard work, and wise counsel, have been critical to us, and to all of A&S.

Breaking new ground and setting precedents

Everything we did as CLA Fellows was done for the first time. We were very conscious of the fact that we were setting precedents and laying the foundation for what – we hope – will be an important locus of faculty creativity in the years ahead.

The major activities of this past year concerned efforts to turn the CLA from concept into reality, and to begin the work of the CLA to forward the new College (COLL) Curriculum.

Each of the CLA Fellows committed to create a new COLL course, worked with the Dean's Office and the Educational Policy Committee (EPC) to move planning for the new curriculum forward, and organized a variety of activities to help other faculty create their own COLL courses.

Work with EPC on the crafting of COLL course criteria

In Spring 2014 the EPC convened working groups tasked with developing criteria for the COLL courses mandated in the new curriculum. Each CLA Fellow was assigned to an EPC COLL working group and took part in discussions; CLA Fellows also attended several EPC meetings, and the two-day EPC retreat in July. We have engaged in a sustained conversation with the EPC about the new curriculum, and how we can contribute to its success. This was necessary groundwork for the coming call (in Fall 2014) by the EPC for formal COLL course proposals.

Work with Development on fundraising efforts to support the new curriculum

The Fellows took part in the annual Dean's Charter Day Dinner, an important venue for connecting with significant donors to A&S. We also met with Matthew Lambert, the VP for Development, to discuss the CLA and the new COLL curriculum. At his request, we wrote a white paper describing the CLA and its role in the new curriculum. We will continue to work in collaboration with Ginny Elwell, Director of A&S Development, and colleagues in Central Development to help raise funds in support of the new curriculum.

Work with Swem Library on collaboration and program development

The Fellows met with the Dean of Libraries, Carrie Cooper, and other members of the Swem staff multiple times to discuss the CLA, Swem's plans to develop a collaborative space, and the role of the Library in the new curriculum.

Mellon Grant to support the new curriculum

A writing team from the Dean's Office, led by Joel Schwartz, in collaboration with the Provost's Office and Development, successfully won a grant from the Mellon Foundation to support our transition to the new curriculum. This is the largest Mellon award to the College to date. Some of these funds have been used to support CLA May Seminars and other CLA faculty development activities to promote COLL course development.

Activities to promote COLL course development

Through the support of the Dean's Office, the Provost's Office, and the Charles Center, the CLA had a budget of roughly \$70K to work our first year. These funds were used to support the development of the new curriculum in a variety of way: stipends for faculty participating in over twenty May seminars, lunches, and reading materials. These activities were open to all faculty in A&S:

- **Brownbags.** Four lunch-time discussions centered on the COLL curriculum. The Fellows introduced their emerging COLL course designs, answered questions, and explored and allayed faculty concerns about the new COLL course designs.
- **May seminars.** Based upon the conversations at the brownbag sessions, the Fellows focused a substantial amount of the first-year budget to the support of May seminars geared toward creation of COLL 100, 150, and 200 courses. These were modeled on the Charles Center's May Seminar program. A call for proposals went out in early April, and a variety of proposals were funded, from half-day intensive workshops to full-week intensive seminars. A complete list for this round of CLA May Seminars can be found appended to this report.

The Dean's Office provided part-time staff support by Vicki Thompson Dopp, whose efforts helped to make the CLA May seminars a great success.

Going forward, the CLA will 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.

Call for nominations for the second cohort of CLA Fellows

The [call for nominations](#) for the second cohort of four CLA Fellows went out in early May. Applications are due by Friday, August 29. Appointments will be made in early September, and the new Fellows will be expected to start work immediately.

Closing remarks

We want to thank our colleagues in the Dean's Office and the Faculty at large for the opportunity to launch the CLA as the inaugural cohort of Fellows. This spring has been overwhelming at times, and very exciting.

The next academic year will be a critical one, as we head toward the implementation of our new curriculum in Fall 2015. We look forward to starting work with the next set of Fellows in the fall, and with all the faculty who will turn to work in earnest on the creation of new COLL courses. The May Seminars we attended this spring and summer were inspiring, and we sense a return to the original excitement about the possibilities of the new curriculum. Our job as CLA Fellows is to feed that excitement and to embrace that positive energy we need to make the new curriculum a reality.

Respectfully submitted by the Faculty Fellows,
 Deborah Denenholz Morse
 Nicolas Popper
 John Riofrio
 Gene Tracy

Center for the Liberal Arts:
Funded May Seminars, Summer 2014

Proposer	Topic	# participants
Blum and Yanez (IT)	Digital Tools for COLL 100	10
Palmer, Porter, Tanglo-Aguas	Theatre, Neuroscience and Medicine	3
Africana Studies Program	Multiple new ASP courses	10
English Department	Multiple new ENG courses	8
Zuber	Freshman Seminars: Making Them Work	8
Applied Science retreat	Multiple new APSCI courses	10
Leventhal/Campbell	Multiple new German Studies courses	4
Bagdassarian/Mead	Emergent Dialogs (Art and Science)	3
Putzi	GSWS Core Course on "Gender"	8
Dawson/Morse	Multiple new ENG courses	8
Spaeth/Panoussi	Classical studies COLL courses	2
Blazer/Galambush	Religious Studies	4
Burk	Neuroscience	6
Leventhal	German studies curriculum	3
Ickes	Public health minor	7
Levesque	A&AH COLL courses	7
Macdonald	Geology courses	8
Wiley	Theatre, Speech, and Dance courses	11
Swaddle	BIO 220 revision and impact on COLL	4
Tanglo-Aguas	Africana Studies	10
COLL Fellows	COLL 100: Intellectual Goals & Strategies	19
TOTAL*		153

* There is some double counting in this raw total because some faculty took part in more than one seminar. The number of individual faculty who took part in CLA May Seminars was 132.