**The Implementation of The College of William & Mary’s**

**New Liberal Arts General Education Curriculum**

**March 27, 2014**

The College of William & Mary requests a grant of $900,000 for use over four academic years (July 1, 2014–June 30, 2018) to provide funding for positions and faculty development to implement William & Mary’s new liberal arts general education curriculum.

**Overview**

In December 2013, after three years of research, analysis, hallway discussions, public fora, and formal debate, the Faculty of Arts & Sciences passed its first new general education curriculum in eighteen years. William & Mary’s new curriculum is the outcome of a searching consideration of the meaning of liberal education in the contemporary world and a reaffirmation of our commitment to this tradition. It rests, in particular, on the foundational commitments to the importance of research- and inquiry-based educational experiences and to the critical value of global perspectives—both of which have matured on our campus over the past eight years thanks in no small part to our partnership in these areas with the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.

Some universities change their general curricula in ways that require very few changes in the courses that faculty must teach, even if they readjust the specific mix of courses that students must take. Our new curriculum, in contrast, requires us to develop dozens of new College Courses (COLL) as well as to make many voluntary adjustments to our majors made necessary by their abutment with a radically new general curriculum. Moreover, we are eager to implement our new curriculum by the fall of 2015, a tight timetable made necessary, in our judgment, by the need to maintain the energy, clarity of vision, and sense of mission with which our faculty has emerged from our curriculum discussions.

William & Mary has much work to do in a compact timeframe. We write now to ask the Mellon Foundation to assist us in the challenging job of developing and implementing our new curriculum on an accelerated schedule that would simply not be possible without the Foundation’s assistance.

**William & Mary’s New Curriculum**

In early 2013, the faculty passed a series of nine principles that should underlie the new curriculum, and, in December 2013, it passed the curriculum itself. At the core of this curriculum will be a new sequence of College Courses. In our current curriculum (a subject matter-based distribution system), students meet over 30 percent of all requirements with Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses. In contrast, the core College Courses in the new curriculum must be met with courses taken at William & Mary. This requirement applies to all students, including (in most respects) to transfer students. In addition to the new College Courses, students have to meet proficiency requirements, for example, in mathematics and a foreign language. These proficiency requirements may be fulfilled with work that students have done in high school. While there will be some flexibility in when students may meet these requirements, the core College requirements will be distributed over the four undergraduate years, as outlined here:

**An Outline of William & Mary’s New General Education Curriculum**

**First Year**

**COLL 100**

Limited to 25 students, these four-credit courses will address significant questions and concepts, beliefs and creative visions, theories and discoveries that have shaped our understanding of the world. Students will learn about the discoveries, texts, and knowledge that are fundamental to further study in one or more academic disciplines, and a key objective will be for faculty to model the mode of inquiry in their discipline and to convey the excitement that attends work in this field.

These courses will include a systematic introduction to the library and other academic resources, and to the ways that information is accessed, evaluated, and communicated in the discipline. COLL 100s will also help students develop communication skills beyond the written and spoken words, including visual, quantitative, and digital and/or multi-media expression.

**COLL 150**

These four-credit first-year seminars will encourage students to think deeply and independently on a particular topic. While both COLL 100 and 150 present students with opportunities to engage actively with primary materials, on balance COLL 100 is organized around faculty modeling rigorous inquiry, while COLL 150 is structured around students working independently and engaging in inquiry under faculty supervision.

These courses will provide students with explicit writing instruction and multiple opportunities to write and re-write essays. The courses will also emphasize discussion and oral presentation, and they will initiate the development and practice of research skills.

**Second Year**

**COLL 200**

Students must take 12 credits in specially designed College Courses that will be distributed over three knowledge domains. They take at least two additional credits in each of the domains that are drawn from the broader curriculum.

The domains are: Arts, Letters, and Values; Cultures, Societies, and the Individual; and The Natural World and Quantitative Reasoning. Each COLL 200 course will provide students with an introduction to the ideas and methods central to its domain, while also looking outward to one or both of the other domains, and, by doing so, placing the course in the broader framework of the liberal arts.

**Third Year**

**COLL 300**

Students must take a course that joins them with people, places, and ideas that lift them out of their familiar surroundings and asks them to use their knowledge, their emerging expertise in framing questions, and their communication skills to engage the world in a self-reflective, cross-cultural way. Students will meet this requirement with approved study abroad courses and other off-campus and on-campus courses that include significant global or cross-cultural content and experiences. Courses that meet this requirement must highlight at least one of the three knowledge domains.

**Fourth Year**

**COLL 400**

This will be a capstone experience, usually, but not always, fulfilled within the major, that requires students to take initiative in synthesis and critical analysis, to solve problems in applied and/or academic settings, to create original scholarship, and to communicate effectively. This requirement will be met with advanced research seminars as well as with honors theses and other independent research experiences.

**A Four-Year Liberal Arts Curriculum**

At most universities, students are expected to complete their general education requirements in one or two years, with the implicit assumption that “gen-ed” is a juvenile prelude to the more mature work that students will do in their majors. Our new curriculum, in contrast, extends across all four years of the undergraduate experience. This decision reflects our commitment to the liberal arts and to the importance that we attach to helping students prepare to live lives as engaged democratic citizens and flourishing human beings. It also reflects our conviction that education in the liberal arts has an important role to play in equipping students with the critical capacities and communication skills that will make them productive and ethical leaders in their professions. For this reason, we believe that it is a mistake to leave liberal arts work out of the experience of upper-level students just as they are turning more and more to advanced and, in some cases, professional preparation in their majors.

**Balancing Inquiry and Substantive Knowledge**

One reason that the concept of liberal education has survived since the Middle Ages is that it is composed of a family of dynamic tensions that cannot easily be factored, without remainder, into constituent parts. The most prominent of these is the tension between a commitment to conveying settled knowledge on specific subjects and an emphasis on preparing students to conduct open inquiry, solve problems, and reconcile diverse interpretations. On the one hand, we often associate the medieval liberal arts curriculum with the *Trivium* and the *Quadrivium*, specific menus of subjects that properly educated gentlemen were to learn, often by rote. On the other, it is evident from medieval sources that the reason for teaching logic, rhetoric, mathematics, etc. was to equip students to evaluate the soundness of arguments and to further our knowledge of justice and the unity of God’s Creation.

The curriculum that William & Mary has had since the mid-1990s, requiring students to take courses in eleven different subject fields, is squarely in the tradition of the *Quadrivium*. In 1993, as we were developing this curriculum, the College was a different place than it is today. Only a handful of upper-level students, primarily in the experimental sciences, had opportunities to conduct undergraduate research. Moreover, a study that we undertook at that time revealed that one-third of our first-year students had no classes smaller than 50 students, and that fully one-quarter of them did not write a single paper in their initial year at the College. This study provided us with the motivation to expand the faculty and dedicate these new resources primarily to a first-year seminar requirement. Over the years, due in good measure to the support of the Mellon Foundation, we have also been able to expand dramatically the number of research experiences available to our students as well as to extend them across all of our disciplines and across all four years of the curriculum.

A gulf has emerged, then, between the subject-based general curriculum that we have had since 1995 and the commitment to research- and inquiry-based education that has been growing on campus over the years. Our new curriculum strikes a balance that better reflects our current sensibilities, while honoring the dynamic tension between substantive distribution and inquiry that characterized the classical tradition. This balance is tipped toward inquiry in the first- and fourth-year components of the curriculum, while it favors subject-matter distribution in the second year. The third-year focus on global and cross-cultural courses strikes a careful balance between the two. It embraces the importance of giving students a solid knowledge base about the rest of the world, especially when it is added to the language proficiency that we will require of students. But, it will also enrich students’ ability to think critically and increase understanding in a context where there are radically different points of view.

While our students will take courses across three domains of knowledge, the day has passed when our faculty is satisfied with a curriculum that requires students to be passive consumers of static knowledge in a series of subject-based introductory lecture courses. The new curriculum will provide distribution in the context of an emphasis on inquiry and research, rather than at their expense.

**The Implementation of the New Curriculum**

To implement our new curriculum on an accelerated timetable, we need resources to enable faculty and staff to develop and support new courses at all four levels of the curriculum. These start-up resources will support faculty positions, staff positions, and funding for faculty development as well as for the creation of two new Centers. We are requesting that the Mellon Foundation make an investment in this effort to add to the major institutional commitment that William & Mary has made to the implementation of the new curriculum.

Of course, teaching resources will be freed up when we end our old curriculum. However, most of the courses that have been fulfilling general education requirements have been courses that were designed primarily to meet major requirements and that have also, almost incidentally, been taken by non-majors to meet distribution requirements. We will need fewer sections of some of these courses, but our analysis confirms that the new curriculum will create shortfalls and bottle-necks, especially at the 100- and 400- levels, and, to address them, we will have to add instructional positions in several departments. The instructional positions in the attached budget are specifically targeted to addressing these shortfalls.

The creation of the two new Centers will enable us to implement the new curriculum over four years and will provide a critical infrastructure to support the objectives of the new curriculum in the initial start-up phase and beyond. We seek private support to launch these Centers on an accelerated timetable, side-by-side with the implementation of the curriculum itself.

**The Center for the Liberal Arts**

Unlike most of the courses that fulfill general requirements now at the College, our new system of College Courses is intended to deliver true *public goods*, owned by the Faculty of Arts & Sciences as a whole, not by its constituent departments. We know from experience that it will not be easy to build and sustain a curriculum that fully meets, and continues to meet over time, the criteria that our faculty have recently endorsed. Departments are strong and considerably independent at William & Mary, as they are at most excellent universities. Courses intended to serve general education goals can easily be subverted to the particular needs of majors. This is certainly the lesson that we have learned over the past two decades with our current curriculum.

As a means to build and sustain a curriculum that fully meets the criteria that our faculty have endorsed, we are establishing a new Center for the Liberal Arts (CLA). At its core, the CLA will be an independent committee of respected faculty fellows who will work with our elected Educational Policy Committee to clarify the characteristics of College Courses. The CLA faculty fellows will conceive and conduct faculty development initiatives designed to maintain a vigorous commitment to the vision that animated the curriculum that our faculty passed in December. Fellows in the Center for the Liberal Arts will be drawn from all areas of our curriculum and appointed to two-year terms. We are starting with four fellows but plan to increase this number to twelve over the next three years. We are funding this initiative with existing endowed professorships, so we are not asking for Mellon Foundation assistance with this cost. However, we are asking the Foundation to provide a share of the initial support for the Center’s administrator.

Departments are firmly institutionalized loci of decentralized power at William & Mary; the Center for the Liberal Arts will counter-balance their impact by serving as an equally institutionalized seat of public authority over our general curriculum.

**The Center for Student Academic Success**

In tandem with the Center for the Liberal Arts, the new Center for Student Academic Success (CSAS) will play an integral role in the new curriculum. The CSAS will serve all programs at William & Mary while playing a particularly important role in support of the new curriculum. For example, all of the skills objectives built into the College Courses— writing, oral presentation, and digital literacy and presentation, and research techniques—will require the support of workshops and drop-in services that will be offered by the CSAS.

The Center for Student Academic Success will bring together under one umbrella our academic advising office, writing center, and tutoring with the addition of a quantitative, computational and skills support office. We will appoint a single director to oversee the CSAS, and this position would be funded in its initial start-up period with Mellon Foundation funds.

The Center for Student Academic Success and the Center for the Liberal Arts will be housed at the heart of our campus, in Earl Gregg Swem Library. The faculty, staff, and students working in and served by these Centers will work closely with staff in the Media Center and the Mellon Foundation-funded Center for Geospatial Analysis, all of which are also in Swem, to serve as a single hub for student academic assistance. Because of its pivotal role in our new curriculum, all of our undergraduates will be served by the Center for Student Academic Success.

**Curricular Consolidation and Productivity**

Our new curriculum will be expensive—in faculty time, energy, and financial resources. So it is critical that we accomplish as many of our goals as possible within the sequence of College Courses. For example, our digital literacy competency requirement is currently met with a separate, stand-alone course; in the new curriculum, it will be folded into COLL 100. Similarly, our new emphasis on visual, quantitative, and digital and/or multi-media expression will be included in objectives for COLL 200 (which will be supported by the Center for Student Academic Success). Our freshman composition requirement also was once met by a separate required course but is now met with first-year seminars.

Technology, of course, already plays a critical role in our curriculum. For example, many humanities departments have courses that give students opportunities to build and curate online databases and to use these resources to conduct research projects, and GIS-based research now takes place across a wide range of humanities, social science, and science departments. We are also studying strategies for using e-learning to augment (not to replace) engaged learning, including course flipping, blended learning, and other techniques using asynchronous online materials to teach course content. We will use our College Courses, supported by course development initiatives organized by the Roy R. Charles Center and the Center for the Liberal Arts, as the primary venues for this experimentation.

Probably the biggest goal of the new curriculum is to make inquiry-based learning and research central to the undergraduate experience of ALL of our students. Many of our majors have research courses embedded in their degree requirements. An excellent example is the curricula in our Global Studies majors, which, thanks to Mellon Foundation support, now feature significant research opportunities at both the introductory and advanced levels. But this isn’t true for all of our majors, and, since our student body is growing in size (primarily in response to external pressure), it will not be easy for all of our departments to embrace a research-centered model in the near term. By building a significant commitment to research- and inquiry-based learning into our College Courses—and especially COLL 100, 150, and 400—we can say with confidence that this type of learning becomes a universal experience of our undergraduates. This is by far the most efficient way to achieve this goal.

**Implementation Timeline**

Kate Conley, Dean of the Faculty of Arts & Sciences, working together with four associate deans of Arts & Sciences, will be responsible for all oversight and for providing interim and final reports associated with this grant. The four associate deans of Arts & Sciences are: John Griffin, Dean of Undergraduate Studies; Lu Ann Homza, Dean for Educational Policy; Joel Schwartz, Dean for Honors and Interdisciplinary Studies; and [Virginia Torczon](mailto:vjtorc@wm.edu), Dean of Graduate Studies and Research.

There is considerable work for us to do to implement the new curriculum, and, for reasons that we have suggested, it is critical that we accomplish this within a compact period of time. We have concluded that we need a five-year implementation period, starting in 2014–2015 and ending in 2018–2019. This will permit us to pilot a small number of COLL 100s and 150s in 2014–2015, to launch the first-year component of the curriculum in 2015–2016 for the class that enters that year, and then to continue to develop the other elements of the curriculum as these first-year students progress and we add successive entering classes—with the whole process completed in 2018–2019, when members of our first cohort are seniors. One of the most urgent tasks will be to introduce our two new Centers—the Center for the Liberal Arts starting in Spring 2014 and the Center for Student Academic Success starting in Spring 2016.

This proposal focuses on the resources that are most basic and indispensable to the implementation of our new curriculum. Our plan, clarified in the budget narrative and table below, is to ask the Mellon Foundation to provide initial funding for each of the positions that are most critical to this project, with William & Mary assuming all of these costs in perpetuity by 2018–2019. We also ask the Mellon Foundation to provide funding for a significant four-year faculty development effort that will make it possible for us to create the courses we need to sustain the new curriculum. The new curriculum will be a high priority in William & Mary’s planned capital campaign. In fact, we have already received a significant private commitment, which will begin to become available in FY2016, that we will be able to use to help assume the funding that the Mellon Foundation will be providing for first-year instructional positions. In general, it is our plan to use the prestige and leverage of a gift from the Mellon Foundation to raise the additional funds that we will need, both to meet the specific obligations that we undertake in this proposal and to raise funds that will provide further important support for the new curriculum.

**Budget Summary**

We respectfully request that the Mellon Foundation fund new teaching and administrative positions and faculty development seminars during the critical first four years of implementation of the curriculum.

Specifically, we are requesting funding for the first year of six non-tenure-eligible positions (supporting the first- and second-year component of the new curriculum) and of one tenure-eligible position (supporting the first-year component). We also request funding for the first two years of leadership and administration positions for two new Centers (the Center for the Liberal Arts and the Center for Student Academic Success).

In each case, after initial support provided by the Mellon Foundation William & Mary will assume all costs of the positions. A table showing William & Mary’s assumption of these costs is attached on page 9.

The breakdown of Mellon Foundation funding is as follows:

6 Non-Tenure-Eligible Faculty

1 year each at: $63,000/ year ($45,000 salary + 40 percent benefits)

1 Tenure-Eligible Faculty

1 year at: $91,000/ year ($65,000 salary + 40 percent benefits)

Center for Student Academic Success Director,

2 years at: $84,000/ year ($60,000 salary + 40 percent benefits)

Office Administrator for the Center for the Liberal Arts/Center for Student Academic Success, 2 years at: $42,000/ year ($30,000 salary + 40 percent benefits)

In concert with start-up funding for faculty and staff positions, we ask the Mellon Foundation to provide partial financial support for faculty development related to the new curriculum in the form of May Seminars and Teaching Project Seminars to develop the curriculum for College Courses.

May Seminars (post commencement) will take place in the summer before the academic year when participants will be teaching College Courses for the first time. The May Seminars are designed to give faculty an intense period of time to develop new College Courses working side-by-side with other faculty in the same, or closely affiliated, academic areas who are also designing new College Courses. Teaching Project Seminars meet throughout the academic year and provide a framework for participants to visit each other’s classes and help each other evaluate whether their in-progress courses are meeting the objectives of the new curriculum.

May Seminars are best suited for the initial development of courses, and, for that reason we plan to conduct more of these seminars early in the proposed grant period; Teaching Project Seminars are ideal for sustaining a focus on general education goals after courses have already been developed. Many faculty members, but not all, will participate in both, sequentially.

May Seminars will average eight faculty members, and participants will each receive $500 as compensation for a one-week seminar. Teaching Project Seminars will also be made up of about eight participants, and participants will each receive $1,000 as compensation for meeting as a group at least four times per semester during the academic year and fulfilling other responsibilities, such as visiting each other’s classes.

William & Mary will provide a portion of the financial support for the May Seminars and Teaching Project Seminars in the first four years of the grant period and will assume full responsibility for the seminars, at a reduced level, in the fifth year of the proposed grant period and beyond.

Mellon Foundation funding will support:

15 May Seminars (8 faculty members per seminar group) at $4,000 per seminar

15 Teaching Project Seminars (8 faculty members per seminar group) at $8,000 per seminar

The distribution of funds between the Mellon Foundation and William & Mary on an annual basis is shown in the table on page 9, including the gradual assumption of costs by the College. As required by the Mellon Foundation, we will post accrued interest-to-date back to this grant.

**Investment Strategy**

The College of William & Mary invests expendable funds in accordance with the Board-adopted Cash Management and Investment Policy. The objective of this policy is to ensure safety of operating funds held as short-term investments and to maximize investment returns within the constraints of safety of principal and of maintaining sufficient liquidity to meet all operating needs and obligations that may be reasonably anticipated. The policy contains a list of approved and prohibited fixed income investments, as well as provisions for diversification, required ratings of the holdings, limits on duration of holdings, and limits on investments in specifically held securities of any single issuer. Income (including interest/dividends and realized gain/loss and net of fees) is calculated quarterly as a percentage of average value of funds held in the cash management pools, and that percentage is multiplied by the average of the month-end balances of grant funds on hand for the quarter to determine the amount of income allocable to the grant.

**William & Mary’s Assumption of Program Costs**

| Academic Year | Mellon-Funded Positions | William & Mary-Funded Positions | Mellon-Funded  Faculty Development | William & Mary-Funded Faculty Development |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 2014–15 | NTE-1 $63,000 | $0 | $60,000 | $16,000 |
| 2015–16 | NTE-2 $63,000  NTE-3 $63,000  TE-1 $91,000  Center Director $84,000  Office Administrator $42,000 | NTE-1 $63,000 | $60,000 | $16,000 |
| 2016–17 | NTE-4 $63,000  NTE-5 $63,000  Center Director $84,000  Office Administrator $42,000 | NTE-1 $63,000  NTE-2 $63,000  NTE-3 $63,000  TE-1 $91,000 | $59,000 | $17,000 |
| 2017–18 | NTE-6 $63,000 | NTE-1 $63,000  NTE-2 $63,000  NTE-3 $63,000  NTE-4 $63,000  NTE-5 $63,000  TE-1 $91,000  Center Director $84,000  Office Administrator $42,000 | $0 | $16,000 |
| 2018–19 | $0 | NTE-1 $63,000  NTE-2 $63,000  NTE-3 $63,000  NTE-4 $63,000  NTE-5 $63,000  NTE-6 $63,000  TE-1 $91,000  Center Director $84,000  Office Administrator $42,000 | $0 | $16,000 |
| TOTALS | $721,000 | $1,470,000 | $179,000 | $81,000 |
| GRAND  TOTALS | Mellon Foundation $900,000  William & Mary $1,551,000 |  |  |  |