



Using the “Cornerstone” Approach to Reinvigorating the Liberal Arts
Webinar Transcript
February 2020

Loni Bordoloi Pazich:

Good afternoon, everyone. My name is Loni Bordoloi Pazich at The Teagle Foundation. Welcome to this webinar on the Cornerstone approach to reinvigorating the liberal arts. Before we get started, I just have a couple of quick housekeeping notes. If you haven't already done so, please mute your telephone line or your computer audio. This webinar is being recorded and so the link to the recording along with the PowerPoint slides will be emailed to all of you later this afternoon. There will also be time for Q & A towards the end of our webinar session, so please use the chat function to post questions to the group and let us know if you have any questions or any concerns.

We are actually hosting this webinar again, because there's been such interest in the program model that we're going to be talking about. We had a webinar on this very topic last week featuring our panelists, Melinda Zook and Roosevelt Montas. And we're very fortunate to have them with us again this week. We're super grateful to both of them for making the time for this. I am joined by Andrew Delbanco, the President of The Teagle Foundation, and of course, Melinda Zook and Roosevelt Montas. Melinda is a professor of history at Purdue University. She is a scholar of early English history with a particular emphasis on the political thought, the religion, and the experience of women of that era. And she has been instrumental in implementing a program that at Purdue is known as Cornerstone, which is going to be the main focus of our discussion today.

Roosevelt Montás is a Senior Lecturer in American Studies and English at Columbia University. For 10 years, he served as director of Columbia College's Core Curriculum, so he has a deep experience with teaching, with core texts, engaging undergraduates of all backgrounds, all majors with these types of works. He really helps the student engage with the works as a means of discovering themselves, what they want to get out of their lives, and their work. So, I think we're fortunate to have him with us. He has a lot of experience working with institutions from all over the country, around the world, community colleges, four year institutions with using these types of works in the undergraduate classroom.

And Roosevelt, of course, his own area of scholarship is very much steeped in the humanities. He is a specialist in antebellum American literature. So with that, I'd like to turn over the webinar to our president, Andrew Delbanco. He is going to just offer a few words of welcome and talk a little bit about the purpose of our webinar, and how the program model that we're featuring is a major area of focus and priority for the Foundation's grant making.

Andrew Delbanco:

Thank you, Loni. A good afternoon or good morning to all of you, depending on where you are. I'm very grateful that you've made time for this webinar. I wish I could see you all, because I like to see people when I speak to them, with them. But this is the technology we've got so we're going to try to make it work toward our shared goals. I'll be very brief because I really think the main point is for you

to hear from Professor Zook and Professor Montás. Let me just say the Teagle Foundation is extremely excited about this initiative and very hopeful that other institutions will join in the kind of work that's been pioneered by Professor Zook at Purdue.

I jotted down sort of four points that I suspect we all agree on. And I think the Cornerstone model gives us an opportunity to act on our commitment. First of all, the colleges have a responsibility not just to impart technical skills, but to open the minds and hearts of their students to help them become imaginative and empathetic members of society. So many of our colleges and universities are not doing as good a job at that as they should be and could be.

Second, that the humanities have a central role to play in advancing this goal, particularly because certain books—and there's plenty of room for debate over which exactly those books are—the list is always in flux and always changing. Certain books or “transformative texts” as Professor Zook calls them, can help students grapple with the big questions of life that young people have on their minds, even if they need some help in articulating those questions.

Third, that introductory courses are really important and should not be sort of led by the left hand, as it were. They should not be places that discourage students, that winnow successful students out and identify less successful students.

But introductory courses should be the place where students discover the joy of learning and test themselves in an atmosphere of confidence under the direction of a teacher who wants to support them, and that's really the final point: that all students, incoming students, and this may be particularly true of first gen and low income students, students who come from a background where they may not have assumed that college was an automatic stop on the itinerary of life.

But all students deserve the opportunity for self-discovery under the guidance of a sympathetic and experienced faculty member. In other words, that introductory courses should not be consigned to fledgling teachers as good as many of them can be, but the responsibility for introductory courses should be taken by the faculty itself.

So, those are my four points and I don't think any of them is controversial. I'll stop talking now and look forward to Professor Zook's remarks, and we hope this webinar will be useful to all of you.

Melinda Zook:

So thank you, Andy. And hello everybody. As you know, I'm Melinda Zook and I'm the director of Cornerstone Integrated Liberal Arts at Purdue University. And my goal today is—or my hope today, let me put it that way—is that you can learn something from what we built in our liberal arts college with the help of our friends are Teagle. We've had some real success with Cornerstone. We've seen our enrollments begin to climb. We've stopped having to cancel low enrollment courses. We've re-energized our faculty, but most importantly, we began to see a real difference in how students think about the liberal arts. Last week, I was talking to a Cornerstone student and what he said was so poignant that I have to quote it. He said that, "This program makes him feel whole, a whole human being, not just an engineer" and on the way here today in the parking lot, of all places, I bumped into another student. He was one of our star basketball players and he'd been in Transformative Texts. And he said to me, who knew Plato could be so relevant today? So I really liked this. I think I'm going to use that quote on other marketing devices. But anyway, let me just give you a little history of the steps we took here.

Now, our situation in the college of liberal arts was fairly dire not too long ago. We were losing so many majors that most of our departments were down by half their numbers and particularly the traditional humanities. So English, history, the languages, and philosophy were really hit hard. And I can tell you from experience, the experience of walking into half empty classrooms and seeing my colleagues classes canceled, that this was an extremely demoralizing state of affairs. It's bad enough

to see your majors cut in half, but worse still was the fact that our college, the college of liberal arts as a whole, was teaching far fewer credit hours to students across the university.

What this means that that we were not providing a holistic education that our students deserved, and the statistics bore this out. In 2016, for example, among all Purdue students, only 10% graduated with a literature course, only 7% enrolled had enrolled in American history course. So it's hard to imagine that we were cultivating well-rounded graduates under such circumstances. So ironically, this fact was not lost on my colleagues in the STEM disciplines, because the first thing I did when I was charged with Cornerstone was go on a sort of listening tour, talking to the deans and the administrators in engineering, in science, in management and technology, and the first question I always asked was, how can we in the liberal arts better educate your students? And every time they would come back with, "You know what? Our students can't communicate, they can't read critically. They can't analyze and document data. Their interpersonal skills are lacking, nor do they have a broad understanding of the world."

And surprise, surprise, right? How are STEM students expected to gain such abilities when these same technical degree programs were constantly adding requirements in their own college and abolishing electives, which was often coursework in the liberal arts that allow students to discover the world and themselves and advance their communication skills. Nonetheless, when I began designing the program, I knew that just designing liberal arts courses that we thought might attract STEM students by itself would never work. These programs, particularly in engineering and in science, were so narrow that we had to fit within those programs.

So when we designed Cornerstone, we decided that we would one, offer new attractive gateway courses that fulfill Gen Ed requirements. And we'd also offer a certificate for students that would, if they followed through, they would take three more liberal arts courses. So what Cornerstone does is it gives liberal arts, gives students a pathway to fulfill their Gen Ed requirements rather than randomly picking unconnected courses. So we developed a new first year sequence, Transformative Texts One and Two. What I did is I put together a team of liberal arts faculty. They were offered stipends from our Dean's office, and we developed this sequence. And what we wanted from the very beginning was that we wanted courses that faculty would want to teach, courses that fulfilled written and oral communication requirements that were centered around foundational books, readings from around the world. And in that course of that first year, we put together a list of 200 authors from Gilgamesh to Plato, to Frederick Douglass, to Toni Morrison.

And where our knowledge was lacking, we solicited advice from colleagues in say Asian, African, and native American studies. Now that list exists, and it's a living document and we amend it from time to time as colleagues offer new names, but it's also extremely practical. So a colleague may say that Derrida, Jacques Derrida must be on the list, or the world will end. But what I always say is this something you're really going to teach to first year, say, aviation technology students. Our goal is to try and turn students on not off. And we try to teach texts that they'll appreciate and remember the rest of their lives. But at the same time, in these two courses, I give faculty a lot of latitude. At least half of their books must come from the list, but that gives them a lot of opportunity to blend in readings that they also want to teach.

For example, a colleague wanted to teach Richard Adams. He's not on the list. It doesn't matter. There's nothing to prevent you from teaching *Watership Down* if you would like to. I also asked faculty to require a wide variety of genres. So not simply fiction or say philosophical treatises, but plays poetry, speeches, nonfiction, scientific writing, short story, et cetera. And we also encourage in these courses a lot of outside activities. Now, all of these courses, by the way, are active learning. So they're usually discussion or teamwork skills, but we also take them out of the classroom. We go to concert halls, galleries, theaters, museums, we schedule film fests. We had one just last week and that's always in the evening with lots of pizza. And it's amazing how much pizza students can eat.

Last fall, for example, we had 900 of our students read *The Odyssey* and they all received free copies of the latest translation. And they all went to a theatrical performance of that epic. The year before we did the same thing with Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*. Now faculty are basically free to design the course they want to teach and they pick the books, so long as 50% is from that book list. So long also as they follow a few simple rules and they teach the learning outcomes, they must teach written and oral communication. The readings are a backdrop to teaching those skills.

So in the end, what we did is we created alternatives to the traditional English Comp course and the traditional Introductory Speech course that all Purdue students are required to take. And that for the last 50 years basically had been primarily taught by graduate students. Instead, in Cornerstone, full-time faculty, the philosopher, the musicologists, the sociologists, the historian, et cetera, develop our students' skills while enriching their lives and inspiring them with a level of learning and all of its related virtues, empathy, perspective, wisdom, joy.

Mentorship is also crucial to these courses. First year students have course schedules filled with graduate student instructors and adjuncts, but not so in Cornerstone. Their Transformative Texts instructor is a full-time faculty member ready to guide them, foster their interests, continue to be a resource throughout their college career. And these students need an adult in their lives. Someone who they can turn to. And most of you know that there's a mental health crisis going on right now in our universities and colleges.

And what I do every August during the orientation is I prepare Cornerstone faculty to handle students in crisis. And we do that again in the spring semester. Now you might be asking, how did I get the faculty to go along with this? Thanks to the Teagle foundation, we provide faculty who joined Cornerstone with a stipend. It's for one semester. It's a \$3,000 stipend, half of which comes from the college. And during that semester, they prepare to teach Transformative Texts. They attend workshops, those workshops run all year long for faculty that are in the program and are already teaching and faculty that are beginning to think about teaching Transformative Texts. They attend retreats. We have receptions. We have talks. Whenever we get together, I provide a meal. If you haven't gained five pounds after joining Cornerstone, you're not attending enough meetings. The Cornerstone workshops foster collegiality. Cornerstone faculty learn from each other.

It's the only place really on this campus that the anthropologist and the literature professor can sit around a table and talk about teaching, talk about students, talk about the problems they're having, talk about the readings that work and what doesn't work and the problems that they're seeing and how to resolve them. And I, myself, I've been teaching here a long time, but I have learned so much from these workshops just simply talking to the person, the art historian or the anthropologist about what works and what doesn't and faculty consistently praise Cornerstone for the collegiality, but also being part of a mission. Something that's bigger than just simply your department, which sort of silos you in the first place and is something bigger than self-promotion. They also say that it helped them teach in all their courses. It makes teaching transparent.

So we pivoted faculty from their departmental courses to these courses that reach undergraduates across the campus. And this allows our faculty access to students they probably wouldn't have otherwise taught. So they can attract these students into their other courses, they can inspire them to double major or minor in their field, and these courses recruit students. And we're already beginning to see that. Most of the students in Transformative Texts are engineering students, computer science students, technology students, business students. This sequence acts as a sort of student magnet. It's an onboard ramp to the liberal arts.

Now we encourage our students in Transformative Texts to complete the Cornerstone certificate by taking three more courses in our five themes, which you can see them listed on the PowerPoint slide, and you can tell that we designed these themes to attract STEM students. And what this does is allow

them to take more liberal arts courses, three more, and to see their discipline, whether it's science or finance or healthcare from a wider discipline, because these are all courses taught by liberal arts faculty, courses like Global Green Politics and Environmental Sustainability, that are offered by the political science department or courses like History of the Space Age, which is in science and technology.

That's offered again by the history department. This allows students to gain another competency, but also just understand the world in a better perspective. Now, the real concrete benefit here for these students is that with Transformative Texts at six hours, and then three more courses in the themes, that's a full 15 hours, they get the certificate, and what they have done is they have honed their analytical and creative thinking skills, along with their ability to read critically, write with clarity, speak with confidence, and of course, learn about the world and learn about themselves. And most of these students, they want to build things, they want to animate things. Well, they might learn from these courses how animating these things or building these things are going to affect humanity.

The next question you might be wondering about is how did I get the rest of the university on board? Here I did a lot of outreach and I still do. I spent a lot of time talking to my new best friends in STEM, presenting to their faculty, to their advisors, to their alumni, the Dean of our Purdue Polytechnic Institute, now that's our college of technology here at Purdue. He was equally concerned about his students realizing that they had all sorts of issues with communication and he made Cornerstone a requirement for most of his degree programs. And I go over to the Polytech all the time, and I talked to the chairs of their departments and I talked to their academic advisors. And by the way, of course, it hasn't all been wine and roses. I faced down blank stares and resistance and skepticism, but the very fact that their Dean wanted this to happen was very powerful. And the very fact that course now has high visibility on this program, that our university president has talked about it on numerous occasions has really helped the program.

And now let me say just a few more words about buy-in, and then I'll turn this over to my colleague at Columbia and he can say more words about the power of Transformative Texts. The Teagle Foundation grants allowed me to hold all sorts of events on campus that informed administrators around the campus what we were doing and why it mattered. So this was critical because every degree program on Purdue's campus had to change. There are 200 programs. They had to change in order to allow students to take our new gateway sequence, Transformative Texts. So for example, every August, right before classes start, we invite the provost, the deans across the college and other people instrumental in produce higher administration, that's around 50 to 75 people, to a very formal dinner in which my Dean makes remarks, in which I talk about developments in Cornerstone. But mostly what we do is we meet and we greet, and I place my liberal arts faculty at each table. The most articulate members of our faculty talk about what they're experiencing teaching Transformative Texts.

Secondly, for the last three years, Cornerstone has invited every academic advisor across the campus, there are 400 of those, to a brunch right before registration. And what we do is we do a sort of a little show where the faculty might be involved or our students in Transformative Texts and they talk about their experiences. And the academic advisors are really crucial. We wanted them to know what we were doing, wanted them to know our story so they could tell students, but they take a little persuading, and I'll be honest about that. They can be sort of conservative in so far as they like to do things the way things have always been done, and this is a very human reaction, but bringing them on board has been critical and I think we've done a fairly good job doing that.

And the other thing I do as I talk to our own faculty, the liberal arts faculty, and I talk to them about telling our story to the students, telling our students why this matters, why it's critical that they read these books, why it's critical that they know how to communicate with clarity and precision, and why they need to understand themselves and the world around them to be better engineers, better

pharmacists, better construction managers. To read and to understand and discuss whether it's Locke or the Federalist Papers or Belle Hooks that this isn't some academic exercise, that it's crucial to their formation as human beings, that it isn't some old fashioned bygone stuff that makes no sense in the age of artificial intelligence, because after all, what is Frankenstein about if not about creating monsters. And that's not some old fashioned bygone stuff that makes no sense in the age of political uncertainty, because what is de Tocqueville about if not the success of representative democracy.

So with all this in mind, I want you to know that I am well aware of everything that we are facing in the liberal arts, the digital revolution, the divisive political culture, the draw of career ready degree programs, the student debt crisis, we're competing with so much. But the simple fact is, and we have found this time, again, is the students want to be inspired and the students need us. They need us now more than ever. They need a classroom with a caring adult, someone who takes the time to listen and who asks them to read and ponder and discuss and open their eyes to all the riches that the liberal arts offer. So thank you.

Roosevelt Montás:

Thank you, Melinda. Every time I hear you speak, I just feel all kinds of inspired in part because what you're doing with Cornerstone, and the Teagle opportunities to further support this model at other places—what you're doing with Cornerstone addresses such a critical need and gives us a way to bring the vitality and the universality of the humanities back into center stage in undergraduate education, a place where it belongs and a place where it hasn't been for a long time.

As Loni said in her introduction, I spent 10 years as director of the Columbia core curriculum. The Columbia core program shares a lot in common with the Cornerstone approach. And so I have a lot of experience and have thought quite intensely about the challenges, the opportunities, the impact of this sort of education, and have worked with hundreds of instructors and thousands of students. So I can kind of give testimony to the power of what you're doing and the practicality of what you're doing. The way we do it at Columbia, we've been doing it for 100 years. And there are a set of courses that are based on the study of Western, roughly speaking, classics, important books in the Western tradition. Every student has to take them. Again, we've been doing it for 100 years.

It's a model that's not replicable, but there are aspects of it, I think that the fundamental aspects of it that are. And that includes what you're doing with the emphasis on small, discussion-driven courses. I think that we need to embrace the reality that a liberal education can only be delivered at the retail level. You cannot do the kind of transformative pedagogy by standing in front of a crowd of 100 people or 200 people and giving a brilliant lecture. That is important, that matters, but it does not have the impact, the effect that we're looking for in a transformative liberal education. So that emphasis on small, discussion-driven classes is key. And we share that, the Columbia model, the Columbia program shares that with Cornerstone.

The second is the commonality. The fact that there is an emphasis on a set of texts, a set of intellectual experiences that we deem to be fundamental, that we deem to be important, that we deem to be worthwhile for every undergraduate to engage with. You talked about 900 students, Melinda, you talked about 900 students reading the *Odyssey* at the same time or 900 students reading *Frankenstein* at the same time. Think about what that does to campus culture. Think about the kinds of conversations that students are able to have across other sorts of differences, across backgrounds, fields of interest aspirations, ethnicity, religion. It provides this point of commonality for all kinds of communication to happen. So that emphasis on commonality is really, really key, really critical. And it forces the faculty to come to terms with what really matters to them, and to rise to a point of view higher than their own narrow kind of curricular interest.

The third thing that we share is the emphasis on primary text. You call them transformative texts. At Columbia, they used to be called important texts. Some people speak about them as great books, although they don't need to be books. There are other forms of important expression, whether music or in art that fit the bill. But that emphasis on certain primary material whose importance has been demonstrated over and over again, texts that have proven their value for this kind of education.

And the fourth thing that we share is the non-disciplinary approach. We need to remember that what we are, the endeavor that we're engaged in in this kind of general education Liberal Arts courses is distinct, is different from the disciplinary endeavor that we are involved in when we teach our own classes in our major or in our field specialty. So I want to emphasize that general education being that portion of the undergraduate curriculum that lies outside the major that's required of all students, that is the curricular lane in which we're going to address something that continues to be central to what students should get out of college. That is, not only job skills, but a broader sense of themselves and of the world they live in.

Technical knowledge alone does not constitute an education. And we share an important aspect of our responsibility as faculty and an important opportunity if we don't take seriously the task of educating all students liberally. And I want to emphasize all students liberally. There's again, a difference between a Liberal Arts major and a Liberal Arts education. Liberal Arts majors are of great importance. I was one, I teach them, but the project of general education is of a different sort. The project of general education is liberal education for all. It is liberal education for the business student, for the pre-law student, for the premed students, for the engineering students. It is a liberal education generally.

In my experience, the most powerful approach to general education is one that introduces students to the literary and philosophical past that underlies our contemporary culture. There are certain texts, certain questions, certain lines of argument, certain debates that have fundamentally shaped the world in which we live, and that deserves special attention in a general education program. And one point I want to stress is that liberal education of this sort, that is liberal education based on the study of texts of major historical and cultural significance is critical to the project of inclusion and diversity that most of us feel committed to.

I often encounter the superficially appealing idea that in order to foster diversity and inclusion, our curriculum should move away from the study of canonical texts. And I think that is a fundamentally misguided way of thinking. Introducing students to important works from our literary and philosophical past serves a key democratizing function. It sharpens their understanding of how the world has come to be what it is, and it gives them the tools and the historical awareness necessary for effective intervention. We do our students—especially our disadvantaged students—an unconscionable disservice when we steer them away from the traditional Liberal Arts curriculum.

I know firsthand that assuming that students can only relate to texts in which they see their cultural specificity affirmed can be a subtle form of condescension. It's true that it matters that students see themselves in the curriculum, but it's not true that the only way they can see themselves is through their ethnic or cultural identity. I've experienced this in my own life, as I'm sure many of you have as well. Some of the most intense moments of recognition in my own education have not come from texts that reflect my cultural background. And I also see this in my students, and I see it most dramatically in high school students I teach every summer.

Every summer I teach a course called Freedom and Citizenship in a program by that name, which is essentially an introduction to political theory to rising high school seniors from low income households who are first gen, they are the first in their families who hope to go to college. We read Plato, we read Aristotle, we read Hobbes, we read Locke, we read Martin Luther King, we read James Baldwin. And the way in which the students are able to connect and be transformed by encounter

with these great minds, these fundamental questions that we continue to grapple with is evidence every summer, and it's quite extraordinary to see.

Take a student I had a couple of years ago named Mystery. Mystery was a high school junior whom child protective services had removed from the neglect of her crack addicted mother in Harlem. In my Freedom and Citizenship summer course, she encountered the apology of Socrates. Mystery saw herself in Socrates. She found some of the deepest aspects of her identity reflected and affirmed in that figure. This past summer in June, I attended a party after Mystery's graduation from her Ursinus College. She graduated with a major in philosophy, won three prizes at graduation. One of those prizes explicitly compared her to Socrates.

Socrates made an impression on her that stuck with her, not because he shares her life experiences, but because there's something beyond that, that transcends that, that they do have in common. I often think of Frederick Douglass, who is very much in my field of specialty, but Douglass has his famous incident in which he is being taught to read by his mistress, his owner. And the master finds out what's going on, and forbids his wife to continue to teach Frederick Douglass to read, because he says it is unlawful, and Douglass overhears this. It is unlawful as well as unsafe to teach a slave to read. There would be no keeping him says Mr. Auld. It would forever unfit him to be a slave. When Douglass hears this, Douglass says that from that day, he understood the pathway from slavery to freedom. There is an inherent liberalizing impact of this sort of education.

One other point that I want to address quickly is about who can teach this, because there's often a sense that in order to teach undergraduates any of these important books, you have to have scholarly expertise in them. And what I would like to say about that is that when we teach these courses in a general education program, we do so not from the point of expertise, but rather from the point of a kind of engage a mentorship. That is, one week I might be teaching Shakespeare's Macbeth, and the next week I will be teaching Frankenstein. And maybe the next week I will be teaching St Augustine or James Baldwin.

I'm doing something quite different when I'm teaching Shakespeare in that context. And if I were teaching the introduction to the English major or the Shakespeare class in an English major where I would need to have that kind of scholarly depth, but at this point we are introducing students to, what is there in these works that speaks to us simply as human beings? Not as scholars, not as academics, but simply by virtue of our humanity and by virtue of our living together in this given community.

So Cornerstone strikes me as just extraordinarily exciting and a practical way of invigorating this vision of education, putting it back at the center of undergraduate education and of reorienting the humanities faculty towards this central mission that has been, I think, much neglected, the mission of educating our undergraduates to be full human beings and citizens of a democracy. So I look forward to questions, and I also look forward to many of you feeling as I do, encouraged by this model to advance this mission. Thank you.

Loni Bordoloi Pazich:

Thank you so much Roosevelt. I am now going to speak briefly about Teagle's grant making opportunity for those of you at institutions that are interested in adapting and implementing the Cornerstone program model in your own contexts. We're very much looking to partner with institutions that are committed to ensuring that all college students, whatever their major or their professional goals are inspired by powerful works of literature and philosophy to lead more reflective lives.

David Reingold, who is the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts at Purdue has described Cornerstone as a core within a core strategy. By which he means that rather than attempting to build a wholly new general education program, which would be a very daunting undertaking in almost any setting, that the Cornerstone approach is to create a pathway through general education within the existing structure, within the existing requirements. That's one strategy for adopting this program model. It need not be the only strategy. We're open to a variety of approaches.

I think what's key is thinking about how to take what's foundational to the model and making it work in your own setting. So we place a strong priority on projects that emphasize engagement with transformative texts. And by that we mean texts that spark students' curiosity about human diversity, about ideas that really grapple with enduring questions that have intrinsic value in and of themselves. But as Melinda and Roosevelt have described can also serve as excellent vehicles to help students strengthen their communication skills, their writing skills.

We also prioritize projects that provide students with a clear pathway through general education that help them link the Liberal Arts to their professional aspirations. And so here one approach could be thematically organized courses, for instance, that help students explore connections between different disciplines and fields of learning, and that complement the more technical course load that students typically take in majors for STEM, for business, for nursing and other health fields.

The Liberal Arts clusters can provide a more purposeful path through general education. Distribution requirements have become the norm for most institutions of higher education, and that can lead to what's been described as a checklist mentality in students. Some form of thematically organized, intellectually coherent clustering or a pathway approach can help combat that, while helping students really see in a tangible way, how Liberal Arts perspectives have bearing on the professional problems and technical problems that they expect to encounter once they enter the workforce.

All of Teagle's grantmaking is focused on teaching and learning. And so we see the role of faculty as crucial. We really value faculty leadership. We see it as essential for the success of our funded projects. This particular project would involve faculty from not only the Liberal Arts, but also faculty from professional domains. The point of the enterprise is to come together and reimagine together how general education can look like for your students regardless of their major, but especially to be thinking about how to ensure that general education, where typically for more professionally oriented majors, this may be the only Liberal Arts exposure they get. And so how do you ensure collaboratively that this is a valuable experience, and again, helps them build their skills while helping them think about the cultural, the social, the economic, the ethical dimensions of technical problem solving.

In terms of the final point for the success of these projects, thinking at the outset about long-term sustainability will be really important. So thinking about how this would work within your current curricular structures, your academic governance procedures, faculty teaching load, the existing faculty expertise you have, all of those will have to be thought through. So part of thinking about how to adapt to this program to work for your institution is to think about how to implement this in a way that it can continue in the post grant period and be sustained in the longer term, given the institutional resources that you have.

At the Teagle foundation we make two types of grants. We make both planning grants and implementation grants. Planning grants are usually in the range of \$25,000, over 6 to 12 months. Sometimes the grant award size is higher. They can be as high, for instance, as \$40 to 50 thousand dollars over 6 to 12 months. Usually, in a situation where the planning grant is larger, it's because of the size of institution, the number of faculty who will be involved and/or a course or program of some type is going to be piloted during the planning grant period.

Implementation grants usually range from the typical amount is usually \$200,000 over 24 to 36 months. They can be as high as \$300,000, \$400,000. Again, this depends on the scope of work, the number of faculty who will be involved, the size of the institution, what will be carried out and accomplished, the number of curricular changes that are expected to be completed during the grant period. So there's flexibility in the grant award amount.

In terms of the types of expenses we cover in the planning and implementation of grants, they are fairly similar. We don't cover indirect, but the grants otherwise have a lot of flexibility in terms of being used to provide stipends for faculty, support a course release for faculty leaders, for project leaders, to connect with field experts, consultants, to support site visits to other campuses or visits to professional development conferences, to support assessment, to provide some support for graduate students' assistance and expenses of that nature.

Something that I would like to emphasize is, for many institutions a project that involves general education can, even if you're not changing the structure of general education, it involves a lot of moving parts and involves a lot of departments. There's complexity. And so the planning grants may be especially attractive for you. Teagle is very open to making planning grants. We make many, many planning grants over the course of our fiscal year. We're big fans of planning grants. We see them as a low risk way of building momentum for change. And so if you're thinking about, how do you make this a reality on your campus, and what are the resources that you have to pull together to make an appreciable change, I strongly encourage you to consider applying for a planning grant.

In terms of the actual grant application process, we work in two stages. We start off with what we call a concept paper, a short document that helps us understand your goals, how it aligns with our mission to advance Liberal Arts, our interest in ensuring undergraduates of all backgrounds and majors engage with transformative texts and have a coherent pathway through general education that links the Liberal Arts to their professional goals. So with that sort of introductory document, what other foundations may refer to as a pre-proposal or a letter of inquiry, we use that as the basis.

Pre-proposal or a letter of inquiry, we use that as the basis for inviting full proposals from institutions. You can see in front of you in the slide, the guiding questions that we will be keeping in mind as we review your concept papers. Of course, we wanted to understand what will change about your curriculum as a result of Teagle support and how these curricular changes will be sustained in the post grant period given the institutional resources and considerations that we have to keep in mind.

We have a rolling deadline for concept papers. We review concept papers on an ongoing basis, but I strongly encourage you to submit a concept paper by March 9th, and the reason why it would be advantageous to do so is because we would then be put in a position to potentially invite a full proposal ahead of our May Board review meeting.

If your full application is approved by our Board, that would provide you with funds as early as the summer. I think this would be especially helpful for those of you who are considering planning grants. It would provide you with support over the summer and over the upcoming academic year to develop a plan for action in consultation with your colleagues, and then be in a position by next year to submit an implementation grant request to the Teagle Foundation for the next phase of work.

Please consider submitting a concept paper to us by March 9th. I know that's very, very soon. If, for whatever reason, that's just not possible, I still encourage you to email me and let me know that you are planning to get a concept paper to us.

March 9th, I know it's extremely ambitious, don't be discouraged. If, for some reason, you're not able to get us something by then if you're in communication with me, and we're starting a dialogue about how this program might work for you, I think that's our primary goal.

Here are a couple resources that you will get as part of our mailing later this afternoon when you get the recording along with the slide deck. What I wanted to call your attention to is the fact that the Cornerstone Program model has received attention in a diverse array of media outlets from the *Washington Post* to the *Chronicle of Higher Education*. Taking a look at these articles may be helpful.

Now we have a few minutes for Q&A, and at this point, my colleague Tamara Tweel, who is Program Director for Civic Education at Teagle, will be joining us to moderate the questions that have been posed in using the chat function on Zoom.

Andy Delbanco:

Loni and Tamara, if I may rudely interrupt for about 120 seconds or so, just to underscore a couple of things that have been said. First, I also want to say some of you may have to leave at 1:30, but those of us hosting the webinar are happy to remain longer to facilitate question and answer if that proves to be useful.

I just want to say very quickly one general thing and a couple of specific things. To underscore something that Roosevelt said, we must revitalize general education in this country. If we fail to do that, given the trends of where the majors are going and for understandable reasons, they're not going into the humanities. If we fail to revitalize general education, we will lose liberal education as an ideal in our democracy. I think that would be a very lamentable state of affairs.

Another way to put it is we will also foreclose the future of graduate students who are studying in humanistic fields, who are hoping to become teachers and mentors in the future. Because unless there are opportunities in general education for those young people, I think there will be very few options for them.

Second thing I want to say very quickly, because this can be misunderstood when people hear about this initiative briefly. This is not about force-feeding students something that we faculty or administrators or "adults" feel is good for them. This is not about imposing a new structure in their lives. This is about creating an opportunity for students to take advantage of, if they wish.

It's built, and the way I think about it, on the field of dreams principal, build it and they will come. And the reality at Purdue is very remarkable. They are coming. There are, last I checked, roughly 2000 incoming students signing up for the Transformative Texts sequence. Not because they have to, but because they're hearing from their peers, from other students, that this is a good experience and it builds on itself. It's never going to attract all the students, but it's attracting a very significant number of students who realize that this gives them an opportunity to add a dimension to their education that they want.

The third thing I would say is this is not, it's not a high tech initiative and it's not a high cost initiative. The grant, as Loni has been emphasizing quite correctly, a planning grant is probably a good way to start. We don't foreclose an implementation grant. If you're already thinking along these lines, that's fine and we can be with you on that. But if you want to just get the conversation going on your campus, find out which faculty would be willing to make the commitment. A planning grant would be a good way to start.

At the end of the day, correct me if I'm wrong, Melinda, but I think the grant we made to Purdue was something on the order of \$200,000. There was institutional buy-in. As Melinda mentioned, faculty get a \$3,000 stipend for participating in the Cornerstone colloquium, if that's the right term, and the institution provided half the funding for those stipends.

This is not expensive. This is about faculty and administrators having the will to restore some meaningful humanistic dimension to general education for their students. I just wanted to say that,

and apologize for taking up time and now turn it over to Tamara to moderate some discussion. Thank you.

Tamara Tweel:

Wonderful. Well, this first question is for Melinda. How were faculty selected for participation in the Cornerstone initiative?

Melinda Zook:

When I began, the first seven faculty that I selected, I went to basically our best teachers. They were people that had won teaching awards that were in... I guess there was about five different departments in the beginning that I selected from, political science, English, history, philosophy. I knew they were excellent teachers, and I knew that they were somewhat like-minded, that they understood the crisis, that they were ready to do something to save our college.

Now that was the very beginning, and then I would bring in generation after generation each semester. I would select, I would recruit maybe ten more the next semester, eight more the next semester. People heard about the program, they wanted to join. That was one thing. Some people opted out. They didn't join, but we've had a lot of success actually, and most faculty were very excited when they got my email "Teach for Cornerstone" was the line in it, and wanted to.

Now I don't recruit as much as I used to because all our incoming tenure track faculty are 50% in Cornerstone. So at Purdue you have a 2:2 teaching load and two of their courses must be Transformative Texts. I'm not recruiting as much as I used to. Now people come to me, actually. I don't have to recruit all anymore.

Tamara Tweel:

Wonderful. An adjacent question is then who leads these training workshops?

Melinda Zook:

The faculty themselves. I usually do the first one every semester and faculty have volunteered usually to lead them. But I've also said we talked the other day and you had that fantastic idea about teaching Antigone. Would you like to lead a workshop? And they always say yes.

It's been a lot of fun, those workshops, because they'll lead the workshop about the text or about maybe an assignment, but mostly it's discussion talking about not only the text, but talking about students and talking about assignments and talking about what we're calling the learning outcomes, whether it's written communication or it's oral communication. They're always a lot of fun, I have to say.

Tamara Tweel:

Wonderful. This is a question for Loni. Does Teagle prefer to award grants to multiple institutions?

Loni Bordoloi Pazich:

Oh, that's a great question. We have a history of collaborative grant making. That is something that we still continue to do, but it depends on the situation, the problem that's being confronted. In a situation like this where we're making a heavy investment in terms of time and resources and rethinking general education, this may be a situation where a single institution grant may be more appropriate.

We would leave the decision up to the grantees. If they would like to collaborate and come together to tackle the problem of how to adapt this successful program model in their own settings, that's fine. But if they would like to pursue this as a single institution endeavor, that's also fine.

Tamara Tweel:

Wonderful. Melinda, are there shared writing assignments in Cornerstone?

Melinda Zook:

No. There are guidelines and there's a certain amount of writing that they must do. We do share assignments. Okay, let me put it that way. We have a SharePoint that all the faculty can use to see different assignments, but since they're all using different books, I mean, a lot of them are using the Odyssey of course, and a lot of them did use Frankenstein, and last fall, it was 1984. But they can create their own assignments.

Some of the assignments they create usually come out of a workshop. We talk about different ways of doing it. But I mean, I think that this is true for all faculty. Faculty like to create their own assignments, to be honest, and their own class. I think if I tried to force anything on them, that would not work. We would never have gotten as far as we've gotten. I allow them a lot of latitude.

Tamara Tweel:

There's one final question for Melinda, but I would also like to open it up for Roosevelt. Which is, at Purdue, do students make the choice between regular gen ed and Cornerstone? I think this is a broader question about how these core curriculum actually work in a school? Do students feel restricted by that? Are they trying, or are they balancing other choices? I'm wondering if you could both just talk a little bit more about the experience for students?

Melinda Zook:

Well, I'll say a little bit, and then I'll hand it off to you, Roosevelt. Transformative Texts is only one among, I think there's for English composition, for written communication, let's put it that way. There are two other choices, right? They get to choose between Transformative Texts and the traditional English composition. This is also true, there is still the introductory speech course. It's still there. They can choose between the second half of Transformative Texts or that traditional speech course.

We're allowing them the choices and what's been marvelous and what I always fear every time we register again, I think, oh my God, what if the sections don't fill? And they always fill. The first time we offered 30 sections in the fall of 2018, I was so worried and we not only filled, but we had 500 on the wait list. Then I realized that actually students were choosing Transformative Texts over the more traditional courses.

Roosevelt Montás:

The situation at Columbia is entirely different because at Columbia it's a required core compulsory for every student. And as I was saying, it's a very unusual model. No other major university has anything like it. The University of Chicago, its core curriculum approximates it, but it's not a common set of courses.

Perhaps the unintuitive, surprising thing is how fiercely devotedly students embrace it. For one thing, Columbia puts this feature of its curriculum front and center in the way that it talks about itself, Columbia College, and many students already come to Columbia having chosen it in part because of the core curriculum. It is what distinguishes the undergraduate experience curricularly at Columbia from its so-called peer institutions.

There's something that people, it's called the paradox of choice, where people want more choices, but in fact are not pleased or satisfied by more choices. Having more choices produces often the opposite of satisfaction. Many schools fill I think the curricular options of the distribution requirement where students have to take three of that and one of these and one of that, becomes for students a kind of obstacle course.

On the surface, it might feel like great, I have a lot of choice in how I fulfill the requirements. In the end, it comes to feel like just boxes to check, things to get through in order to get to what I really want to do at school. That doesn't happen at Columbia. Students have this shared experience. Everybody is doing it, everybody is doing it at the same time. The senior did it. The sophomore is doing it. The senior and the sophomore talk to each other about doing it, the alumnus did it.

It's hard to actually convey how strong a sense of community and of being a special participant in this project, in this thing that's much larger than you that commonality creates. It's quite a magical program to teach in for this reason.

If you look at the Columbia student-produced literature, like the student newspapers or the student blog, or the annual student theatrical production called the Varsity Show, you will see how central this experience of the Core is. Whenever there is an administrative threat to the Core students, not to mention alumni, but even students are quick to rise in defense of this, the Core. Because they can tell that the amount of energy, the investment of time, of thought, of organization to deliver this experience to them is unlike anything else that they experience in their courses.

It's not optional in any sense, but it doesn't produce the kind of student resistance you might initially think it would.

Tamara Tweel:

Wonderful. We just have final two very brief questions that just came. Melinda, how large are class sizes?

Melinda Zook:

They're capped at 30.

Tamara Tweel:

And are the themes picked up by the faculty, and how early do they do it?

Melinda Zook:

Okay. I'm not sure exactly what that means. The themes, okay. All those courses in the themes, which you can see on our website, by the way, with the exception of one or two, were already courses on the books at Purdue University in our Liberal Arts College. All I did was place them into the themes, right?

Those classes are running on a regular basis, taught by the professor who created them in the first place. We're beginning to see a slow uptick in the number of students in them because students in Transformative Texts are beginning to funnel into the advanced courses.

Roosevelt Montàs:

At Columbia, just as a point of data, they are capped at 22.

Tamara Tweel:

Thank you. Loni, back to you.

Loni Bordoloi Pazich:

Thank you, Tamara. Well, thank you, Melinda, Roosevelt, Andy, for your inspiring words and examples. Everyone, I hope this webinar was useful and informative. I am happy to be in touch. My contact information is before you. It's also posted on our website.

Please reach out if you have any questions or concerns about how to adapt this program model in your institutions. I certainly hope to hear from as many of you as possible in terms of questions about the concept papers, submitting a concept paper.

Please do keep in mind the March 9th deadline. We strongly encourage you to share concept papers for planning grants by then. And even if you aren't able to submit a concept paper by then, please be in email communication with me so we can start a dialogue about how we might work together. Thank you again.