

PHILANTHROPY OF THE MIDDLE RANGE

ANNUAL REPORT 2013



The Teagle Foundation



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From the Chair

This has been a year of both change and continuity at The Teagle Foundation. On the change side of the ledger, leadership transitions are always important in the life of an organization, and the Foundation experienced such a transition. In the summer of 2013, Richard Morrill, who since 2010 provided such thoughtful and energetic stewardship for The Teagle Foundation, stepped down. We are delighted that his nearly 25-year association with the Foundation will continue with another year of service on the board. One might call this a “retirement,” but I have no doubt that we will continue to witness his contributions to higher education in the years to come.

We were fortunate to be able to tap Judith Shapiro, *President Emerita* of Barnard College, to take on the job. Having joined the Teagle board in 2009, she is no stranger to our work. She brings a great breadth of experience through her distinguished career in higher education. During the past four years, Judith had returned to her academic roots and was teaching at Barnard. We are delighted that The Teagle Foundation is able to continue its tradition of superb leadership with Judith at the helm.

On the continuity side of the ledger, the Foundation maintains a steadfast focus on improving teaching and learning. 2014 marks the 70th year of the Foundation’s existence, having been founded by my grandfather in 1944. We remain true to its goal of providing “educational advantage” to young people, both through our work in higher education and the Community-College Connections Program, an initiative to help financially disadvantaged but talented high school students prepare for and succeed in college.

This annual letter and the 70th anniversary provide an opportunity for me to reflect on the work and accomplishments of the Foundation both in the short and the longer term. I compare the work of The Teagle Foundation to philanthropic venture capital—we invest in opportunities to improve student learning. As a small foundation, we need to be mindful of opportunities to leverage our relatively modest investments through inter-institutional collaboration and dissemination.

I continue to be optimistic about the future of liberal arts education. Although some question its value and look to narrow measures such as graduates’ first jobs, we at The Teagle Foundation are convinced that it is the long view that matters. Liberal Arts education is a good investment for students and for society.

Walter C. Teagle III

January, 2014



Mission & Vision

The Teagle Foundation intends to be an influential national voice and a catalyst for change in higher education to improve undergraduate student learning in the arts and sciences. The Foundation provides leadership by mobilizing the intellectual and financial resources that are necessary if today's students are to have access to a challenging and transformative liberal education. The benefits of such learning last for a lifetime and are best achieved when colleges set clear goals for liberal learning and systematically evaluate progress toward them. The Foundation's commitment to such education includes its grantmaking to institutions of higher education across the country, its long-established scholarship program for the children of employees of ExxonMobil and its work with organizations and colleges and universities helping economically disadvantaged young people in New York City gain admission to college and succeed once there. In carrying out its work, the Foundation is committed to disseminating its findings widely, believing that the knowledge generated by our grantees—rather than the funding that enabled their work—is at the heart of our philanthropy.

History

The Teagle Foundation was established in 1944 by Walter C. Teagle (1878 – 1962), longtime president and later chairman of the board of Standard Oil Company (New Jersey), now Exxon Mobil Corporation. Mr. Teagle gave the Foundation a broad mandate, "to advance the well-being and general good of mankind throughout the world," mentioning many areas of concern and possible recipients of its support. Over the intervening decades the Foundation has pursued many of these avenues, always, however, including among its grants the aid Mr. Teagle envisioned for "institutions of higher learning and research," and assistance to family members of employees of his corporation who were "desirous of obtaining some form of educational advantage."

Walter Teagle graduated from Cornell University in 1899 and maintained close ties with that university throughout his lifetime. He served as a trustee from 1924 to 1954 and made generous contributions to it. Reflecting Mr. Teagle's wish, the Foundation includes among its directors a person nominated by the president of Cornell and another nominated by the chairman of ExxonMobil. The Teagle Foundation's assets derive from gifts and bequests from Walter C. Teagle, his wife, Rowena Lee Teagle, and their son Walter C. Teagle, Jr.



Philanthropy of the Middle Range

There is general agreement that higher education in America is going through a period of turmoil and transformation. This has prompted apocalyptic predictions in some quarters, a hold-the-fort rearguard action in others, and fortunately, some voices of reason and moderation in the middle.

The dimensions of the problem – involving access, equity, cost, quality, effectiveness – are daunting. The magnitude of these challenges has prompted a search for “scalability”—approaches that will affect the largest numbers of students. This is especially true for what have come to be called the “megafoundations.” (The Gates Foundation, for example, has been described as the one foundation visible from space.)

It is indeed fortunate that foundations with the greatest resources are dedicating them to higher education. At the same time, the demands of scalability can lead to focusing on what is easiest to measure (for example, completion rates) as opposed to what is more complicated to assess (the educational benefits received). This is a criticism that has apparently been heard and heeded: the partnerships that both the Gates and Lumina Foundations have established with the Association of American Colleges and Universities reflect attempts to marry scalability to a concern for the quality of the educational experience.

Scalability itself, however, is a goal we need to approach thoughtfully. Some important and desirable changes are especially labor-intensive, requiring a considerable amount of what is called “high-touch” intervention. This point was made compellingly by participants in a November 2013 Teagle Foundation [convening](#) of our [College-Community Connections](#) (CCC) initiative – an initiative that brings community-based organizations into partnership with colleges and universities to prepare high school students from underprivileged backgrounds to achieve the benefits of a liberal arts undergraduate education. If these students are to be admitted, to persist, and to succeed, they often require considerable ongoing personal support—a high-touch and labor-intensive undertaking.

The search for scalability is often accompanied by a premium placed on speed. But some changes, by their very nature, can occur only gradually. One of the background readings for the CCC convening was an article by Awul Gawande published in *The New Yorker*, in which he wrote about “slow ideas”, that is, ideas that spread through personal relationships of trust.¹ While the notion of doing something slowly is hardly foreign to academia, where doing anything at all can be difficult, the fact remains that deep and deeply worthwhile changes in higher education will only happen by gradual, persistent effort involving communities whose members have come to share both interests and values.

So, if, as another astute observer of human behavior, Mae West, put it, “anything worth doing is worth doing slowly,” how do we best proceed to be sure that there is steady movement toward a desired outcome? For The Teagle Foundation, as for many of our peer foundations, this means working intensely with relatively small groups of institutions and then supporting the diffusion of what has been achieved more broadly, through a network of ties involving individuals, institutions, and higher education organizations. This is what we may call: philanthropy of the middle range.

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I use this term as an echo of Robert Merton's concept of "theories of the middle range".ⁱⁱ Merton, arguably the most influential sociologist of the 20th century, wished to move the focus of his field from the abstract, all-encompassing grand theory of his senior colleague Talcott Parsons to specific topics that could be studied empirically. The goal was to build theoretical understanding from the ground up.

Merton thought that social science research should be empirically based, supported by data that could be collected, explored, and analyzed. This is an approach that has, in fact, been making considerable headway in the world of higher education as research-based assessment has become a more widespread practice. The problem is that, instead of Merton's intellectually sophisticated approach to empirical research, we too often see a push for quantifiable outcomes pursued uncritically, leading to what we may call nudnik positivism.

The major connection I want to draw between philanthropy and Merton's middle-range approach is *the search for right-sized questions with right-sized solutions*. Thus, for example, which *specific* on-line teaching and learning strategies will contribute to access for students most needing it and provide the quality of education they require and deserve? How, *specifically*, should we be educating our students for citizenship, long recognized as higher education's major contribution to a functioning democracy? What *specific* curricular models best serve the goals of a coherent liberal arts education?

Just as Merton replaced an approach that posited a small, *a priori* list of key features of society with one that looked out to the social world around us to discover the variety of matters there to be understood and addressed, so we approach our task not with our own preconceived ideas about problems and their solutions, but with eyes open to the experiences and understandings of those we seek to help. And, like Merton, we should benefit from a lively appreciation for history, since both social change and knowledge proceed in particular historical contexts.

Philanthropy of the middle range, as we may now call it, has had some notable successes. It has encouraged innovations in teaching and in efforts to responsibly assess the results. Some of these innovations have addressed the problem of cost; others have the potential to do so. Many of these positive developments are occurring among the less financially privileged institutions since they feel a greater pressure to change. The more privileged can, however, learn from them, since they increasingly realize that their own *modus operandi* is unsustainable in the long run.

A current Teagle Foundation initiative that especially reflects the need for a "high-touch" philanthropy of the middle range approach is one we have entitled "[Faculty Planning and Curricular Coherence](#)". It addresses the following set of issues:

- How can faculty, working together, construct a more intentional and thoughtful curriculum, one that truly serves the needs of students and provides them with a strong, well-designed liberal arts experience?

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- How, more generally, can faculty who are used to thinking of themselves as a community of scholars comparably come to view themselves as a community of teachers?
- How can curricular coherence serve the interest of cost control?

As is generally the case with Teagle grant initiatives, this one will involve small groups of collaborating institutions; will include an assessment component; and will involve dissemination of results beyond the participants. We will also be in communication with colleague foundations working in similar and complementary areas so that we can coordinate our efforts as best we can.

The ambitions of The Teagle Foundation to encourage innovation and enhance quality in liberal education exceed its small size and limited resources. But we firmly believe that an approach that engages members of an academic community directly and intensively, combined with a varied and sophisticated approach to assessment, is the surest route to lasting change in higher education. Our experience with philanthropy of the middle range is that it can produce the kind of sustained and sustainable change that comes only through the communal efforts of dedicated professionals who care deeply about the quality of the education they provide.

Judith R. Shapiro, President

¹Gawande, Atul. (2013, July 29). Slow Ideas. *The New Yorker Magazine*. Retrieved from http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2013/07/29/130729fa_fact_gawande

ⁱⁱ Merton, J. *Social Theory and Social Structure*. (1968 [1949]). New York: The Free Press.



Grants

Outcomes and Assessment

Council for Higher Education Accreditation

Continuing the Commitment: Academic Quality in Higher Education

\$50,000 over 6 months

Social Science Research Council

Measuring College Quality: Phase I, Humanities Component

\$150,000 over 24 months

Teaching and Learning (formerly Fresh Thinking for Liberal Education)

Dominican University of California

Embed Instruction through MOOCs into a High Impact Environment (Planning Grant)

\$25,000 over 10 months

Great Lakes Colleges Association

From Learning to Life: Gauging the Extended Impact of Liberal Education on the Development of Personal and Civic Virtues

\$100,000 over 24 months

National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Liberal Arts Degrees and Their Value in the Employment Market

\$60,000 over 5 months

Teachers College, Columbia University

MetroCiti: A Multi-Campus Institute for Improving Teaching for Students' Liberal Learning in Urban Colleges and Universities

\$155,000 over 25 months

Washington University in St. Louis

Discovering an Impediment to Undergraduate Learning, Validating Effective Teaching Interventions & Disseminating the New Knowledge

\$75,000 over 36 months

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A Larger Vision for Student Learning: Education for Civic and Moral Responsibility

Community College National Center for Community Engagement

Student Learning for Civic Capacity: Stimulating Moral, Ethical, and Civic Engagement for Learning that Lasts (Planning Grant)

\$20,000 over 7 months

Community College National Center for Community Engagement (led by Kapi'olani Community College)

Student Learning for Civic Capacity: Stimulating Moral, Ethical, and Civic Engagement for Learning that Lasts (Implementation Grant)

\$270,000 over 49 months

Columbia University

Core Curricula in the Research University: Challenges and Prospects (Planning Grant)

\$25,000 over 5 months

Duke University, Dartmouth College, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and University of Notre Dame

Education for Civic and Moral Responsibility

\$230,000 over 36 months

Harvard University

The Project on Purpose and Values in Education (PAVE Project)

\$235,000 over 36 months

Interfaith Youth Core

Renewing American Democracy through Liberal Education in an Age of Unparalleled Religious Diversity

\$250,000 over 36 months

Project Pericles

Creating Cohesive Paths to Civic Engagement

\$275,000 over 35 months

Fairfield University, Georgetown University, and Universidad Centroamericana (Nicaragua)

Collaborative Project in Student Learning: The Examination of Enduring Questions through Humanitarian Education

\$260,000 over 36 months

Ursinus College, Rhodes College, Lawrence University, and College of the Holy Cross

Gateways to Liberal Education

\$243,00 over 30 months



Faculty Work and Student Learning in the 21st Century

New York Six

The New York Six Blending Learning Project

\$150,000 over 28 months

Graduate Student Teaching in the Arts and Sciences

Northwestern University

Preparing Graduate Students in History for Teaching

\$85,000 over 24 months

College-Community Connections

Individual Community Based Organizations

Fresh Air Fund

College Connections Program

\$50,000 over 19 months

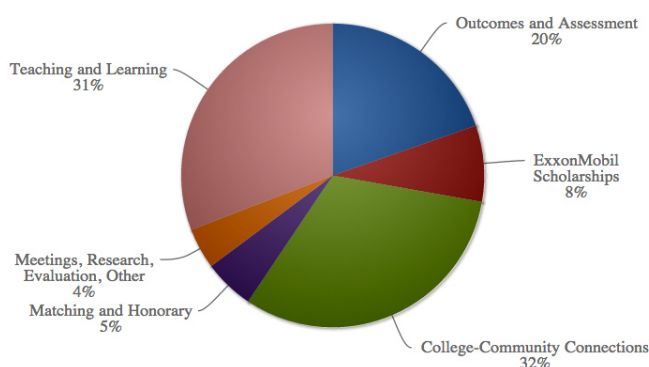


Financials

Grant Information

The Foundation continues to make grants in three major areas. Our Teaching and Learning program (formerly known as “Fresh Thinking”) funds projects that develop new ideas and pedagogical practices for liberal education. Our Outcomes and Assessment program supports projects ranging from ground-up, faculty-driven assessment work at liberal arts colleges and research universities to national efforts that advance student learning at the undergraduate level. Our College-Community Connections program helps disadvantaged young people in New York City prepare for college and thrive once they are there. Other funding initiatives include small grants to seed or extend projects related to the Foundation’s major grantmaking initiatives; our ExxonMobil scholarship program, which honors Walter Teagle’s commitment to help the families of employees at what was then Standard Oil of New Jersey; and a matching gift program for the Foundation’s directors and employees. We also fund meetings of our grantees and others in higher education to help ensure that our grantmaking is responsive to their needs.

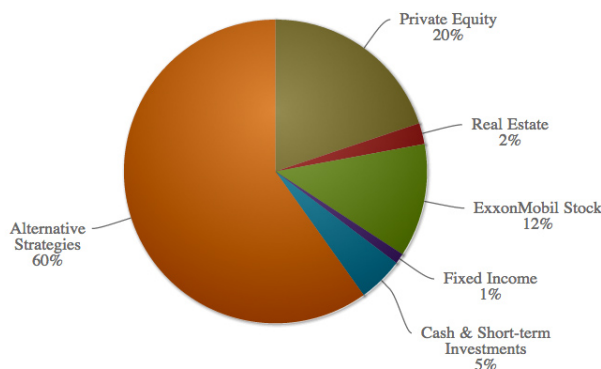
2013 Grants



Investment Information

The Foundation’s investment objective is to grow the portfolio and thereby maximize our ability to fulfill our mission. The market value of the portfolio was approximately \$154 million on December 31, 2013. The portfolio includes a diversified mixture of equity investments balanced between domestic and international investments. Alternative investment strategies, a significant part of the portfolio, include venture capital, merchant banking, and multi-strategy hedge funds. Click [here](#) to view the Foundation’s audited financial statements.

2013 Investment Portfolio



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