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# Initiative Gains Momentum

## Eighty-eight campuses, hundreds of individuals involved

### WHAT IS GREATER EXPECTATIONS, REDUX?

AAC&U's multi-level initiative, *Greater Expectations: the commitment to quality as a nation goes to college* (GEx), is designed to define the aims of a 21st century undergraduate education and to discover the best strategies for achieving those aims. Through GEx, AAC&U is engaging many constituencies in conversations; the desired result will be to create a broad commitment to raise expectations for achievement by all college students.

### HOW HAS THE INITIATIVE ADVANCED? SUMMARY

Since its launch 18 months ago, *Greater Expectations* has taken off with elan! First a brief summary of accomplishments detailed further in this—the second—GEx newsletter.

The National Panel's bold work in defining a new vision for liberal education promises to reconcile the disparate expectations for higher education held by many different stakeholders. The complex internal and external pressures on the academy result in an increasingly chaotic environment for college study; these pressures and this environment are reflected in the recommendations for improvement emerging from the Panel's work.

While contributing to the work of the Panel, the Consortium on Quality Education has begun its own activities, anchored in campus practices to advance a learning-centered education.

The accrediting associations represented in the GEx Project on Accreditation and Assessment (PAA) have come to similar conclusions as the Panel about goals for student learning and the curricular practices to achieve them.

Interactions among the Panel, Consortium, and PAA have brought individuals and groups with importantly diverse perspectives to surprisingly consistent conclusions about quality undergraduate education.

All told, 88 campuses, 19 state systems, 21 associations, and well over 300 other individuals have been involved to-date in the five GEx projects described in this newsletter. A Forum on Liberal Arts Education Practice, the sixth and last project, will extend the initiative's reach beginning in fall 2001.

*Greater Expectations* acknowledges generous support from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York, and Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE).

### WHAT HAS THE NATIONAL PANEL ACCOMPLISHED?

Charged to formulate a statement of aims and purposes for 21st century college-level learning, the GEx National Panel has now met four times. At AAC&U's January 2001 annual meeting in New Orleans, the Panel shared its 'work-in-progress statement' with over 200 conference attendees through a presentation and roundtable discussions. The comments received have influenced the Panel's subsequent work.

The Panel welcomed representatives from the Consortium on Quality Education (see next page) who brought concrete examples of innovations to create learning-centered campuses. The weekend also included a meeting with the GEx Project on Accreditation and Assessment to review recommended outcomes for college learning.

An April meeting in Washington, D.C., at which panelists grappled with an early draft of the final report, led to a second work-in-progress statement shaped by

**PROJECT ON ACCREDITATION AND ASSESSMENT (PAA) LIBERAL EDUCATION OUTCOMES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY**

(Note: incorporated into the Panel's learning goals)

**Goal:** To prepare for work, citizenship, and life; enable freedom and community; deepen understanding of science, history, culture, and human nature

**Method:** Through content determined by each institution, that develops:

- Core proficiencies learned through constant practice across the curriculum: communication, reasoning, information literacy, resourcefulness and adaptability, and ability to apply knowledge
- Critical thinking manifested in intellectual creativity, lifelong learning, systemic thinking, scientific reasoning, historical perspective, and aesthetic appreciation
- Inquiry capacities learned in the major, various disciplines, and integrative work
- Orientation and application exhibiting both proficiencies and capacities in dealing with the self, society, and the natural world

the writing sub-committee. The Panel also heard from communications experts on how best to engage external stakeholders so as to ensure the final report's impact both within and beyond the higher education community.

A small group of panelists convened with presidents and chief academic officers of Consortium campuses at two meetings in June to gather comments on the second work-in-progress statement. Representatives from foundations and federal funding agencies, as well as individuals leading other major related projects, also attended. The basic tenor of the conversations reinforced the Panel's direction, thus supporting the draft recommendations emerging from the work to-date. Revised to reflect the comments received, that statement is enclosed with this newsletter (or can be read on-line at [www.aacu-edu.org/Initiatives/gxworkin-progress.html](http://www.aacu-edu.org/Initiatives/gxworkin-progress.html)). Thoughts on the Panel's work are warmly encouraged.

**HOW HAS THE PANEL GATHERED INFORMATION?**

To ensure that its discussions were anchored in research and reflective of multiple perspectives, the National Panel has informed itself through:

- nearly two dozen briefing papers prepared by the AAC&U GEx staff
- oral briefings by experts

- interviews and focus groups to discover and understand stakeholders' concerns
- conversations with campus representatives
- an open discussion at AAC&U's annual meeting
- joint meetings with other GEx projects
- its own extensive and rich conversations that have reflected a substantial diversity of experience.

**WHAT ABOUT THE CONSORTIUM ON QUALITY EDUCATION?**

The Consortium was created at the conclusion of AAC&U's search for innovative, learning-centered colleges and universities. It consists of the 16 leadership institutions selected through a national competition, plus the six recipients of the Pew Leadership Award for the Renewal of Undergraduate Education. The creativity and energy of these campuses has been evident since the start. Meeting together as a group for the first time in January 2001, campus liaisons commented constructively on other GEx activities including the new Institute on Campus Leadership for Sustainable Innovation.

During its second meeting, in March at Richland College in Dallas, the Consortium members began sharing ideas and innovations. In addition to discussing various inter-

pretations of the term 'liberal education' and curricular structures that foster learning-centered education, Colgate University and Central Connecticut State University led an exchange of experiences in changing faculty reward structures. The University of Southern California, Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis, and Worcester Polytechnic Institute (WPI) did the same on the topic of goals for student learning. The next Consortium meeting is planned for November 2001 at WPI.

As mentioned, presidents from 18 of the 22 Consortium institutions convened in June with National Panelists and other higher education leaders. The meetings' purposes were

- for AAC&U to hear from these campus leaders on the work to-date of the National Panel
- to involve them in planning a visionary national agenda for higher education.

Briefings by Clifford Adelman, researcher at the U.S. Department of Education, and by business leaders (Michael Emmi, CEO of SCT Corp. and Roberts Jones, CEO of the National Alliance of Business) helped set the external context for the Panel's analysis and recommendations. Representatives from The Pew Charitable Trusts, Carnegie Corporation of New York, FIPSE, NSF, Ford Foundation, and The Atlantic Philanthropies summarized currently supported projects and future priorities

of relevance to GEx. Many of the funders emphasized systemic change in higher education, collaboration, accountability, an increasing interest in community colleges, and greater strategic emphases in their grantmaking.

**HOW HAS THE PROJECT ON ACCREDITATION AND ASSESSMENT (PAA) ADVANCED?**

PAA reports substantial progress in its work with six regional and five specialized accreditors as they develop a common definition of the desired outcomes of liberal education and investigate ways for assessing them. Meeting in New Orleans after the AAC&U annual meeting, the group completed 'Liberal Education Outcomes for the 21st Century' and a companion statement on campus practices to foster such outcomes, 'Blueprint: Principles for Curriculum Design.' Summarized in boxes above and available in their entirety on the AAC&U website ([www.aacu-edu.org/Initiatives/gxhome.html](http://www.aacu-edu.org/Initiatives/gxhome.html)) both documents were presented to the GEx National Panel during the joint meeting referred to on page 1. As is clear from the Panel's progress statement, PAA's work has influenced the panelists' thinking.

The subsequent PAA meeting in March focused on assessment. The group produced a first draft of criteria for good practice in the

**PAA BLUEPRINT: PRINCIPLES FOR CURRICULUM DESIGN**

- Clear learning outcomes, linked to curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment
- A coherent, purposeful, rigorous, and progressively advanced degree program
- A general education component that is of central importance, adds breadth, and relates to mission
- Attention to the core proficiencies in the majors, as well as in general education
- Collaboration between, and integration of, general education and the major (including professional programs)
- Corporate faculty responsibility for general education and achievement of the outcomes
- A major or professional program that aims both at mastery of a field and at preparation for the complexities of the 21st century
- Assessment of student learning in general education, the majors, and in their collaboration

assessment of senior-level, integrated outcomes for general education and the major. The draft has since been refined through e-mail interchanges and is available on the AAC&U website.

Most recently, PAA has begun identifying promising models of such assessment that evaluates capacities developed over time and through many educational experiences. At the final project meeting in September, the group will select 12 to 15 models for inclusion in its final report. The report will emphasize the need for powerful articulation of

mission, outcomes, curriculum, and assessment in planning and implementing 21st century liberal education. For more information contact John Nichols, Director of PAA, at [nichols@saintjoe.edu](mailto:nichols@saintjoe.edu).

**WHAT IS THE NEW INSTITUTE ON CAMPUS LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION?**

Called 'Sustainable Innovations' for short, the new institute is designed to allow participating institutions to discover and share knowledge about the processes of creating, main-

**INSTITUTE ON CAMPUS LEADERSHIP FOR SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION: CAMPUS TEAMS**

Alvernia College  
 Alverno College  
 Audrey Cohen College  
 Baldwin-Wallace College  
 Berry College  
 Central Connecticut State University  
 Chatham College  
 Colgate University  
 Connecticut College  
 Duke University  
 Eastern New Mexico University  
 The Evergreen State College  
 Georgia College and State University  
 Goucher College  
 Hampshire College

Indiana State University  
 Indiana University-Purdue University,  
     Indianapolis  
 Iowa Wesleyan College  
 James Madison University  
 King's College  
 Miami University  
 Millikin University  
 Monmouth College  
 Montgomery College  
 Moraine Valley Community College  
 Northern Arizona University  
 Portland State University  
 Prince George's Community College  
 Richland College

Shepherd College  
 State University of NY at Stony Brook  
 State University of NY at Geneseo  
 U.S. Air Force Academy  
 University of California-Santa Cruz  
 University of Hawai'i-Kapi'olani  
     Community College  
 University of Maryland  
     Baltimore County  
 University of Southern California  
 University of Nebraska-Lincoln  
 Wagner College  
 Winthrop University  
 Worcester Polytechnic Institute

taining, extending, and improving a learning-centered campus. Among the 41 colleges and universities that attended the highly successful first institute (July 10-15 in Washington D.C.), many are GEx Consortium members and Commended Institutions (see complete list on page 3). Each campus was represented by a team of four or five, often led by the chief academic officer.

Prior to arriving, teams developed goals for their 5-day participation; in preparation for the institute they reviewed information and research literature related to student achievement, faculty involvement, and campus culture. The institute curriculum included daily team time, small group discussions with other institutions, concurrent sessions highlighting attendee campus practices, plenary or panel sessions focusing on aspects of change, and consultation with invited experts. Lively discussions and sessions revolved around daily themes such as institutional change strategies, student engagement, designs for academic excellence, diversity as a catalyst for change, and linking cam-

pus innovations to the national movement. Each team prepared a final report detailing plans for employing back on campus the newly gained knowledge, insights, and strategies. Alma Clayton-Pedersen, directs the institute and anticipates its becoming an annual event.

### WHAT IS THE NEWEST GEX PROJECT? *GREATER EXPECTATIONS FOR STUDENT TRANSFER*

*Greater Expectations for Student Transfer: Toward a National Dialogue on State-level Curricular Coherence* is an important part of the GEx vision to define and provide leadership for undergraduate education. Through a grant from FIPSE, AAC&U has been working with the state university systems of Georgia, Maryland, and Utah to:

- identify the educational purposes of their pre-existing statewide requirements
- specify learning outcomes implicit in the requirements
- make the purposes clear to all

faculty members teaching courses that meet those requirements.

Moving beyond this stage, the three states have begun examining how to explain those intentions to students and what assessment strategies can best determine whether the stated purposes are, in fact, being achieved.

Sixteen additional states sent representatives to a conference in Atlanta (February 2001) for initial conversations on the creation of purposeful and coherent statewide education requirements. Nearly all of these states have indicated their intention to participate in a series of meetings held annually over three years to continue these discussions; the first will occur later this summer. Next year, AAC&U is planning to assemble state legislators and higher education representatives to launch conversations on general education and transfer policies (budget issues will be excluded). Other national groups, are cooperating in this meeting. Robert Shoenberg serves as director of the transfer project. For more information, contact Debbie Wolfe at wolfe@aacu.nw.dc.us.

### HOW CAN YOU GET INVOLVED?

AAC&U and all the participants in *GREATER EXPECTATIONS* encourage broad active involvement. Please

- join the Friends of *GREATER EXPECTATIONS* mailing/e-mail list (contact Deborah Yarrow at yarrow@aacu.nw.dc.us)
- read the National Panel's 'Work in Progress Statement #2' and send comments to gex@aacu.nw.dc.us
- find PAA's complete documents on the AAC&U website and send comments to nichols@saintjoe.edu
- read the National Panel briefing materials and articles about significant innovations in higher education ([www.aacu.edu/gex/gextoc.htm](http://www.aacu.edu/gex/gextoc.htm))
- plan to attend the 2002 AAC&U annual meeting in Washington DC (January 23-26) where the National Panel will share a draft of its final report and PAA will present its conclusions

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