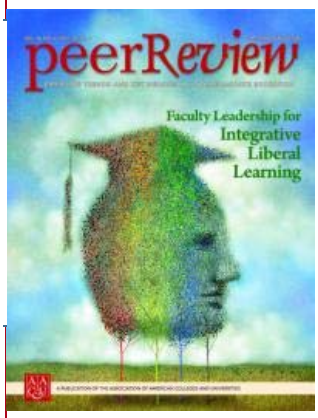
Association of American Colleges & Universities
Celebrating 100 Years of Leadership for Liberal Education

AAC&U's CENTENNIAL
Learn More



Fall/Winter 2015, Vol. 16/17, No. 4/1

Peer Review, Fall 2014/Winter 2015

Current Issue

Search Periodicals Search

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview
From the Editor
Interrogating Integrative Learning
Our Beloved Journey: Using Storytelling to Foster Faculty Community
Opening the Doors for Faculty Collaboration: The Case of the Allegheny Gateway
Integrative Learning in the First-Year Program
Creating a Culture Conducive to Integrative Learning
Creating "Connections 3.0"
Facilitating Campus Leadership for Integrative Liberal Learning
Integrative Learning Pathways at Bard College: Connecting Core Experiences
Making the Lynk at Mount Holyoke: Institutionalizing Integrative Learning
Collaborative, Faculty-Led Efforts for Sustainable Change

Peer Review

Opening the Doors for Faculty Collaboration: The Case of the Allegheny Gateway

By: Eric Boynton, Lee Coates and Laura Reeck

At the beginning of Allegheny College's strategic planning process in 2010, President Jim Mullen asked the campus: "What do our students need to know and be able to do to thrive in the twenty-first-century world they will encounter upon graduation from Allegheny?" Motivated by this question for the past four years, members of the Allegheny College community have been engaged in a strategic planning process anticipating the college's bicentennial in 2015 and the strategic plan's culmination in 2020. We have committed to a strategic learning goal that seeks to provide Allegheny students with the knowledge, competencies, and practical skills to think and act as citizens of a diverse, complex, and interconnected world. In order to support them as they meet that goal, the college has launched the Allegheny Gateway—a new campus space that will become "a portal to communities, cultures, and careers."

Opportunities for Integrative Learning

Located in the remodeled and well-trafficked first floor of Allegheny's Pelletier Library and opening in January 2015, the Gateway will house the offices of civic learning, diversity learning, global learning, and career education in a single location. At its core, the Gateway will be a site of integrative thinking and cross-disciplinary communication, which will allow opportunities to emphasize and extend points of contact between faculty and staff, the curriculum and cocurriculum, and classroom theory and practice.

Civic Learning

The Gateway will enhance the visibility of our civic engagement initiatives and programs, improving communication and creating efficiencies. By weaving together curricular and cocurricular initiatives and offices—such as service-learning, community-based teaching and research, Project Pericles, the Center for Political Participation, and the Bonner Program—the Gateway will help students to increase their sense of responsibility to their community/ies as agents of change. Within the Gateway, students will identify the challenges, goals, and opportunities for participatory democracy, engage in active citizenship, and develop collaborative skills to effectively navigate complex community issues involving civic life and responsibility.

Diversity Learning

Providing an intentional and strategic integration of academic areas dealing with diversity (such as black studies, women's studies, gender and sexuality studies, and community justice studies) and student affairs offices focused on multiculturalism

Negotiating Different Perspectives

and religious diversity, the Gateway will create opportunities for shared learning and teaching for faculty, staff, and students. Through course work, professional development, community building activities and civic engagement, we seek to critically interrogate the construction of difference and the implications for power and privilege. Our goal is to advance learning in general and create a community that is more aware and inclusive.

Global Learning

By internationalizing our campus through both curricular and cocurricular initiatives, programs such as internationally focused short courses, international internships, and short-term and long-term study away, the Gateway will provide opportunities that challenge students' assumptions and expectations about the world. We want students to develop the ability to examine critically and with sensitivity issues from multiple perspectives and to make connections between local and global contexts.

The Gateway builds upon the success of the Allegheny College Center for Experiential Learning (ACCEL), founded in 1999, which brought our experiential programs (pre-professional advising, career education, community service and service learning, and international education) together into one space. One of the obstacles that ACCEL historically has encountered is how best to involve faculty. ACCEL has come to represent the cocurricular domain, while faculty have remained focused on the curriculum. Indeed, in this context, some faculty members have expressed skepticism regarding the faculty's contribution to the emerging Gateway, whose mission may well extend beyond their disciplinary training as well as a certain traditional understanding of academic rigor.

Bold Educational Goals

Allegheny today faces a challenge in cultivating a climate in which the curricular and cocurricular can be understood as mutually beneficial when properly integrated. For this reason, in a meaningful and unforced way, faculty must be brought into the Gateway's initiatives and activities if it is to succeed and if Allegheny is to meet its bold educational goals. Two components, in particular, have been designed to encourage faculty to participate in the work of the Gateway: the Collaboratory and the Gateway Fellows programs. These two components will provide faculty the opportunity to participate in interdisciplinary, integrative, and collaborative multi-year projects and, in particular, to develop innovative ways to weave civic learning, diversity learning, and global learning into their teaching and research.

The Collaboratory is designed to involve faculty in the life of the Gateway and its integrative mission by serving as the facilitating institutional structure for innovative faculty teaching and research. The Collaboratory is both a program and a multiuse collaborative library space that is in close proximity to the Gateway offices. Here faculty and staff, in dialogue with students, will be encouraged to develop high-impact integrative programs such as short and team-taught courses, group studies, and teaching circles. Student research and creative activities—including the Office of Undergraduate Research and undergraduate conferences—and faculty development projects and collaborative workshops will factor prominently in the academic life of the college through the Collaboratory. Promoting the integrative spirit of the Gateway, the Collaboratory will become the symbolic and physical space

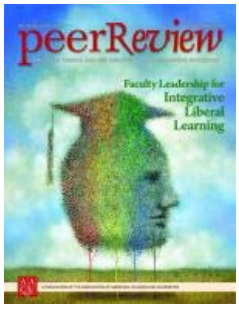
where problems are defined and where Gateway Fellows, students, faculty, community partners, and staff come together to begin to address complex issues. These projects will be linked to the curriculum and specifically with first-year seminars, junior seminars, senior projects, and faculty research programs to build problem-based pedagogy that is civic-minded, globally responsive, and sensitive to difference.

The Gateway Fellows program, the second initiative, supports ongoing and substantial teaching and research projects related to the integrative mission of the Gateway. Fellows receive a reduced teaching load (or the equivalent for a nonfaculty fellow) for a two-year term to work on research or teaching in one or more of the three Gateway foci (civic learning, diversity learning, and global learning). Selected projects will be integrative and interdisciplinary in nature so that fellows' work will necessarily involve faculty, staff, students, and community partners. Fellows will model for the academic community the Gateway's mission of engagement with complex social and global issues and support faculty development initiatives fostering their exploration and examination.

Ultimately, faculty leadership and collaboration in the Gateway will be essential in bridging what often has been seen as a divide between curricular and cocurricular learning on campus and in the community more generally. Undoubtedly, an important shift in perspective is afoot: through the work of the Gateway, faculty will begin to consider the student experience and collegial collaboration (with staff *and* faculty) before their own disciplinary training. Just as the Gateway will serve as a portal for students, faculty will be encouraged to travel beyond the boundaries of their disciplines and engage in new partnerships and pedagogies that promote integrative learning for both faculty and students.

Eric Boynton is an associate professor of philosophy and religious studies; **Lee Coates** is an associate professor of biology and neuroscience; **Laura Reeck** is an associate professor of French—all of Allegheny College

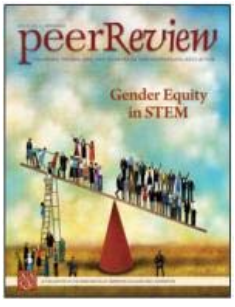
PREVIOUS ISSUES See All



Faculty Leadership for Integrative Liberal Learning
Fall/Winter 2015
This issue, sponsored by the Teagle and Mellon foundations, offers insights about the central role... Read more



Quantitative Reasoning
Summer 2014
Quantitative reasoning skills—the habit of mind, competency, and comfort in working with numerical... Read more



Gender Equity in STEM
Spring 2014
Close examination of the status of women science and engineering faculty at four-year colleges and... Read more

Contact
AAC&U
1818 R Street NW
Washington, DC 20009
(202) 387-3760