The Gloria L. Duclos Convocation
Collaborative Institute

Held May 23 to 25, 2011

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Summary:

Using Glora S. Duclos Convocation funding and responding to a request from Provost John Wright to coordinate a concluding event for the 2010-2011 Convocation on faculty collaboration and interdisciplinarity, the above organizers developed and administered a three-day institute to encourage faculty development in these areas. To attract the largest number of participants, we allowed attendees to take part for one, two, or all three days. We offered small stipends for each day ($150) and a slightly larger sum for all three days ($500). With little advance publicity, attendees (not including the overlap between presenters and participants) totaled 40. The attached exit surveys from the event reveal overwhelmingly positive sentiments about the institute and a clear desire to continue faculty development in various forms, including similar events to this one.

Rather than inviting a national figure, the organizers chose instead to focus on three different, yet related areas of inquiry each day: collaborative teaching, collaborative scholarship, research, and creative activity; and a day on more general issues relating to a collaborative curriculum. (See attached schedule). Each day, we invited presenters from the faculty to discuss their collaborative work. These colleagues were also given small honorariums ($250). In most cases, these presentations were followed by a participatory activity accomplished by groups of attendees. Additionally, organizers chose readings on the daily topic that generated fruitful discussions.

The following action steps were generated by faculty during the course of the three-day institute. These are measures the faculty in attendance believe are necessary to further a meaningful culture of collaboration within and across departments and colleges at USM. A few of the steps could be implemented during the next academic year, others may take more time. All were referred to multiple times by different speakers throughout the proceedings as necessary if faculty collaboration is going to be consequential as USM continues to reform and improve itself academically to meet 21st century demands:

- **Team-teaching is necessary for faculty development, including but not exclusively related to the new core.** It is necessary for the administration to make it financially feasible for a unit to invest in team-teaching across departments for several iterations of a course, at least until such time as each member of the teaching team can competently teach the course her or himself.

- **Participants repeated calls for a new office or, at minimum, an existing administrator from the provost’s office to coordinate the various activities that are important to foster interdisciplinary collaboration.** These activities include those listed below, including coordination for inter-departmental course offerings, dedicated space for collaboration, as well as a dedicated web presence to benefit faculty desiring teaching or scholarship collaborations.

- **Participants overwhelmingly felt the need for ongoing faculty development.** Such encouragement could take several simultaneous forms, including:
A dedicated space for faculty to discuss collaborative projects. One scientist offered the example of a GIS lab that first became an informal meeting place for like-minded colleagues and grew to be a free-standing dedicated room in which collaborative projects are ongoing.

An online Blackboard site both for those who wish to share their teaching or scholarly endeavors with colleagues and for colleagues who have an idea for which they are seeking collaborators.

So-called “lightning rounds,” in which faculty participants meeting together would exchange ideas in summary form with a time-limited format before moving on the next colleague and repeating the exercise.

Some kind of dedicated faculty space on each campus where the informal exchange of ideas could take place. Participants repeatedly cited the absence of such dedicated places as being responsible for colleagues not knowing in what projects each other may already be engaged. An assigned place would make it more possible for colleagues to know about and join in collaborative initiatives.

More innovative technology and support staff who have more actual in-class experience was discussed as a vital component of moving into 21st century work in digital humanities, new media and art, GIS, environmental humanities and other areas. Interest in invited speakers practicing in these fields—whether from within USM or elsewhere—was high.

Many faculty members suggested that one function of a coordinator for collaborative and interdisciplinary activity might be to designate senior faculty to serve as mentors for appropriate junior faculty if such work were incentivized and rewarded.

Periodic events such as the institute that are funded and incentivized by the Provost’s office were cited as necessary to gain widespread approval for an improved collaborative culture at USM in the near and longer-term future.

In general, administrative leadership that rewards collaborations of various types in the tenure and promotion process was also seen as a vital ingredient in any meaningful progress in this direction.

Summary of participant exit survey:

All but one participant came away from the conference with new ideas for collaboration (question 1). Many people assumed that this was just the beginning of a university initiative to support collaboration, and nearly every responder appreciated what they considered to be the unique opportunity to meet and interact with faculty they had not known well. The most
important comment to come out of the survey may be that successful initiatives like this institute need follow-up, follow-through, and support from top university leadership. Otherwise, participants said they feel like these events only offer an inexpensive substitute for real faculty development and progress rather than meaningful, ongoing support. See, for example, the comment about the potential for faculty morale to erode further if this cynical view were to prevail.

(1) Both Sally Meredith and Susan McWilliams were instrumental in the planning and the success of this institute. Appropriate credit should be accorded to them.
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May 23rd: Collaborative Teaching
University Events Room, Glickman Library

8:45am to 9:30am     Arrival, coffee, and tea
9:30am to 10:45am    Presentation by Dennis Gilbert, Communication and Media Studies and Rebecca Goodale, English
10:45am to 11:00am   Break
11:00am to 12:15pm   Common reading discussion
12:15pm to 1:15pm    Lunch
1:30pm to 2:45pm     Presentation by Kent Ryden American and New England Studies and Terry Theodose, Biology
2:45pm to 3:00pm     Break
3:00pm to 4:00pm     Open discussion
4:00pm to 5:00pm     Refreshments

May 24th: Collaborative Scholarship, Research and Creative Activities
University Events Room, Glickman Library

8:45am to 9:30am     Arrival, coffee, and tea
9:30am to 10:45am    Presentation by David Harris, Nursing and Matthew Bampton, Geography & Anthropology
10:45am to 11:00am   Break
11:00am to 12:15pm   Common reading discussion
12:15pm to 1:15pm    Lunch
1:30pm to 2:45pm     Presentation by Rob Sanford, Environmental Science and Policy and Bob Kuech, Teacher Education
2:45pm to 3:00pm     Break
3:00pm to 4:00pm  Open discussion
4:00pm to 5:00pm  Refreshments

May 25th: Collaborative Curriculum
102 Wishcamper

8:45am to 9:30am  Arrival, coffee, and tea
9:30am to 10:45am  Presentation by Lynne Miller, Teacher Education
10:45am to 11:00am  Break
11:00am to 12:15pm  Common reading discussion
12:15pm to 1:15pm  Lunch
1:30pm to 2:45pm  Presentation by Susan McWilliams, Associate Provost for Undergraduate Programs
2:45pm to 3:00pm  Break
3:00pm to 4:00pm  Open discussion
4:00pm to 5:00pm  Refreshments
May 2011 Collaboration Institute
Organizers: Professors Dan Panici, Jeannine Uzzi and Eve Raimon
Presenters: Kent Ryden, Terry Theodose, David Harris, Matthew Bampton, Rob Sanford, Bob Keuch, Lynne Miller, Susan McWilliams
Participants:
Alexandrin, Julie
Baruch-Runyon, Adele
Benedict, Lucille
Bird, Donna
Carey, David
Champlin, David
Christiansen, Paul
Congdon, Clare
Dean, Ann,
Ebben, Maureen
Erickson, Nancy
Gulielmetti, Angela
Killmeier, Matthew
Knight, Thomas
Kohli, Hermeet
Langley-Turnbaugh, Samantha
Lockridge, Rebecca
Marsh, Jayne
McCormick, Kelly
Moyo, Otrude
Mundhenk, Leigh
Murphy, Julien
Muthyala, John
Panici, Daniel
Raimon, Eve
Richeson, Nancy
Rosenthal, Charlotte
Ross, Flynn
Sanford, Robert
Schnieders, Lori
Stairs, Andrea
Staples, Joseph
Theodore, Theresa
Timberlake, Sharon
Uzzi, Jeannine
Vassallo, Francesca
Zaner, John