Increasing connectivity through trusted partnerships

BY TALIESIN NYALA

To produce their best scholarship, students and faculty members need to be able to access a wide range of resources without compromising their digital security. In the past few years, Five Colleges has been streamlining how its members securely access resources among the five campuses and at other educational institutions worldwide.

Thanks to a grant from the Davis Educational Foundation, the first major project to simplify the infrastructure of information technology at Five Colleges is Shibboleth Federated Identity Authentication, which is a standards-based, open-source, single-sign-on platform to manage access to web-based resources across or within organizational boundaries.

In other words, Shibboleth enables a person from one college to use her or his home college username and password to access web resources available at one of the other four campuses. Each campus has its own set of rules about what can be shared and sets who may use those shared resources.

“Shibboleth gives you easier access to web resources you’ve been authorized to use,” says Maria Toyofuku, director of information technology for Five Colleges. It does all of this, she says, “while maintaining your security because you don’t have to give unnecessary personal information or your usernames and passwords to other institutions.”

Examples of services that are part of Shibboleth’s federated user-authentication system are the Five College library catalog, some of the five-campus Moodle sites and the Five College Virtual Computing Lab, which allows users to access specialized software or computing environments without having to be in a computer lab. On some campuses, students and faculty members don’t have to create new credentials when taking or teaching off-campus courses.

Shibboleth is used with InCommon, a national federation of education and research institutions. Individuals who are part of that group therefore share greater access to one another’s resources. Both Shibboleth and InCommon grew out of Internet2, a community of research, academic, industry and government organizations dedicated to advancing education and improving public services. Joining these partnerships strengthens Five College ties to other educational institutions.

Shibboleth has led to expanded usage of electronic web resources in the five campus libraries and computer labs. In addition, consortium members are better prepared to respond quickly, securely and effectively to future technological advances and opportunities as they arise.

“We helped explore the idea and seeded the proof of concept,” says Toyofuku. “The institutions really took the ball and ran with it.”

Another federation that’s improving academic connectivity among campuses is eduroam, a secure, worldwide roaming-access service that enables students and faculty and staff members to connect to the Internet while at another participating institution. Although eduroam is a well-known system within the world of research institutions and throughout Europe, it’s new to many liberal arts colleges.

“Eduroam allows users to have secure access to the Internet at other institutions because, as with Shibboleth, they’re trusted partners with the host institution,” says Toyofuku. “People can maintain security of their digital selves, with easier and greater access when they’re at a different institution.”

Thousands of organizations around the world are part of eduroam, among them UMass, Smith and Amherst. Mount Holyoke will be connected shortly. To participate, people register with eduroam at their home institutions prior to traveling to other locations to make sure their devices are set up properly. Once the devices are, they’re good to use eduroam elsewhere.

The concept behind eduroam and Shibboleth is to create groups that can help one another. Being in these partnerships lets those within Five Colleges connect in a way that makes sharing research and finding resources safer and more straightforward.

Brazilian dancer and scholar Amélia Conrado was the 2014 distinguished visitor to the Five College Latin American, Caribbean and Latino Studies Program. She delivered a public lecture and guest-taught in several courses on the five campuses, including this West African dance class at Mount Holyoke College. Photo: Paul Schnaittacher
Five College fund honors consortium pioneer

Five Colleges has established a fund to honor Jackie Pritzen, one of the consortium’s early leaders, who died in August at the age of 83. Pritzen was hired in 1969, four years after Five Colleges was incorporated, as assistant coordinator of academic programs. During the next 26 years she worked closely with four executive directors and played a leading role in creating and sustaining such collaborations as faculty seminars, the Five College astronomy and dance departments, the student cross-registration system and Five College buses.

The year after Pritzen began her Five College career, Hampshire College opened its doors and Jacqueline Slater was in the first incoming class. Upon graduation, Slater became a Five College postbaccalaureate fellow and worked for Pritzen and North Burn, the consortium’s chief executive, becoming good friends with them both.

After Pritzen’s death, Slater made a generous donation to Five Colleges to establish the Pritzen Fund, which is a portion of the endowment of Five Colleges. The fund has already received 61 contributions or pledges, totaling more than $166,000.

Earnings will be used to support Five College projects that were of long-term interest to Pritzen. These include certificate programs and interdisciplinary collaborations; faculty development and faculty seminars; and area studies and joint academic departments, majors and programs. The fund will also support the annual Five College Jackie Pritzen Lecture.

Those interested in receiving support from the fund for their Five College collaborative project should contact Executive Director Neal Abraham. Applications for funds will be considered and awards will be made on a rolling basis beginning in fall 2014.

For more information about the Pritzen Fund, visit fivecolleges.edu/pritzenfund.

New installation connects Five Colleges to nationwide geoscience community

On September 10, 2013, Five Colleges joined the EarthScope scientific community with the installation of a seismometer at Smith College’s Ada and Archibald MacLeish Field Station, which is in Whately.

The seismometer measures and records underground motions close to its location: everything from small movements, such as vibrations from students jumping up and down near the site, to the larger-scale motions created by earthquakes. It’s one of 400 such installations in an array across the United States established to measure seismic activity. The EarthScope initiative was brought to the attention of the Five College geology chairs by the UMass geology department.

"This is an exciting opportunity to be involved in a national research network, and it provides us a way to discuss the geological research taking place at MacLeish with visitors to the field station," says Reid Bertone-Johnson, who manages the field station in addition to being a landscape studies studio instructor at Smith. "Classes and students from across all five campuses visit MacLeish for interpretive tours and to participate in ongoing research initiatives."

Bertone-Johnson often has student groups visiting the site to jump near it and then shares the seismographic details of their movements with them, so they can learn firsthand how the installation works and see for themselves the measurements it takes.

"K–12 classes from the region have also begun to visit MacLeish," says Bertone-Johnson. "The EarthScope provides one more way for us to engage them in what scientists do during fieldwork and to show that interdisciplinary collaboration can take many forms."

Faculty members and students regularly use the MacLeish Field Station, with its 240 acres of forest and farmland, for environmental research and outdoor education, making it a good location for this project.

UMass’ Clingman delivers 2014 Pritzen Lecture

UMass English Professor Stephen Clingman delivered the 2014 Five College Jackie Pritzen Lecture, discussing how human rights enter into the core of literary investigation. In his talk, “Rights, Routes, and Refugees: The Fiction of Caryl Phillips,” he examined human-rights issues through the lens of the playwright, novelist and screenwriter’s award-winning work.

A professor at UMass since 1989 and director of the university’s Interdisciplinary Studies Institute, Clingman has published widely on Nadine Gordimer and other South African writers, as well as on transnational fiction. In 2012 he was selected as a Distinguished Faculty Lecturer at UMass and awarded the Chancellor’s Medal, the highest recognition bestowed on faculty members by the university.

Named in honor of longtime consortium staff member Jackie Pritzen, this annual lecture series celebrates the central role that our professors have in furthering cooperation among the five institutions.

The 2014 winner of the Peterson Prize for commitment to collaboration among students is UMass junior Liana Gineitis, pictured here with Five College Executive Director Emerita Lorna Peterson. One of the stars of the Five College Opera production of Street Scene, Gineitis was nominated by UMass professor and Street Scene director Gina Kaufmann and Amherst professor and Street Scene music director and conductor Mark Swanson for her accomplishments as a performer and her collaboration with students during the staging of the production. Gineitis will use the prize to help fund her participation in the Bienen School of Music Summer Voice Institute for Singers and Teachers, in Evanston, Illinois.
“Gentle Giant” leaves a musical, artistic legacy

Yusef Lateef, an award-winning and influential jazz musician and Five College Distinguished Professor of music and music education, died at his home in Shutesbury on December 23. He was 93.

Lateef was an accomplished composer and stylist who mastered a range of instruments, such as the tenor saxophone, the flute and the oboe, as well as the Indian shenai, the Arabic arghil and the West African Fulani flute. Nicknamed the “Gentle Giant” because of his generous nature, Lateef played with Charlie Mingus and Dizzy Gillespie, among others, during his decades as a musician. A Grammy Award winner and a 2010 National Endowment for the Arts award winner, he was also a writer and painter.

In 1975, Lateef earned a doctorate in education from UMass, and he taught for 14 years as a Five College professor before his retirement in 2002.

Students share work in symposia and performances

Five Colleges and Amherst-based game company HitPoint Studios organized a 24-hour Game Jam in September at Hampshire College. Over the course of 24 hours, dozens of college students, adults and kids brainstormed, designed and built electronic and board games.

During the academic year, students came together to share their work in the arts, sciences, humanities and social sciences. Below is a list of events that took place during the 2013–2014 year.

- Anthropology Symposium, Amherst College
- Asian/Pacific/American Studies Symposium, Mount Holyoke College
- Chinese Speech Contest, UMass Amherst
- Coastal and Marine Sciences Symposium, Amherst College
- DataFest, UMass Amherst
- Digital Humanities Symposium, Smith College
- Ethnomusicology Symposium, Amherst College
- Film and Video Festival, Amherst College
- Film Studies Conference, Mount Holyoke College
- Five College Game Jam, Hampshire College
- Geology Symposium, Amherst College
- Global Game Jam, Mount Holyoke College
- HackUMass, UMass Amherst
- Japanese Speech Contest, Mount Holyoke College
- Korean Speech Contest, UMass Amherst
- MakerJam, Mount Holyoke College
- Native American Studies Symposium, UMass Amherst
- PoetryFest, Amherst College
- Queer, Gender, and Sexuality Conference, Hampshire College
- WORD! A Staged Reading of Student Work, UMass Amherst

For this year’s annual Africa Day, which took place on April 4, the Five College community paid tribute to Nelson Mandela by celebrating his life and achievements. The event featured keynote speaker Garrey M. Dennie (pictured here), a former speechwriter for Mandela, as well as singing, dancing, drumming and discussions.
Curricular Innovations supports new approaches to teaching and learning

Since its launch, in 2011, Five College funding for Curricular Innovations projects has helped faculty members explore new approaches to research, teaching and learning. Curricular Innovations comprises two parallel initiatives. The first, Digital Humanities, provides seed money and training to encourage faculty members to incorporate digital technologies into humanities studies and student research. The second, Bridging Undergraduate Liberal Arts Programs and Graduate Professional Programs (known as Bridging), brings together liberal arts and graduate center faculty members to infuse liberal arts teaching techniques into graduate-level curricula and introduce into liberal arts courses methods traditionally considered the province of graduate and professional programs. The efforts are made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and funding from the campuses.

To date, dozens of projects in both initiatives have been supported and 20 are currently active, involving students and faculty members from all five campuses. The initial Bridging projects are centered in three fields: architectural studies, environment and sustainability, and public policy and social innovation. Architectural studies offered an undergraduate course with embedded practitioners and a graduate teaching assistant as well as graduate-level courses open to undergrads. In environment and sustainability, faculty members from the colleges and university team-taught liberal arts courses in environmental studies, assisted by graduate teaching assistants. Projects in public policy and social innovation included workshops for students and faculty members with graduate students mentoring undergrads in fieldwork.

Digital Humanities projects have explored a variety of fields; many projects have results that will outlive their initial undertaking. The Digital Literacies program, for example, sent students into Latino neighborhoods to help community members digitally record their stories, which were in turn saved into a public-access database at WGBY television. Digital Medievalia has students and faculty members building a database of medieval manuscripts, and historic clothing and other materials are being digitally stored and curated through the Online Archive of Dress and Textiles. For more information about Digital Humanities, visit 5colldh.org.

Five College Opera’s Street Scene plays to sellout crowds

This spring, the Five College Opera and UMass Department of Theater presented Street Scene, a Tony Award–winning opera about multiethnic relationships in a run-down New York City tenement. The show ran in late February and early March at UMass’ Rand Theater, and its five performances attracted some 1,800 theatergoers. A hybrid of musical theater, opera and spoken-word poetry, the opera was created in 1946 by composer Kurt Weill, poet Langston Hughes and playwright Elmer Rice, based on Rice’s Pulitzer Prize–winning play of the same name.

Leading up to the main production were three shows that offered insight into the three artists, as well as greater curricular connections for students. They were “Cabaret! Songs of Kurt Weill” at Smith College and two at UMass: “Hold Fast to Dreams: The Poetry of Langston Hughes,” featuring lively improvisational music and poetry readings; and a staged reading of “Stirring the Melting Pot: Elmer Rice’s We, the People.”

This was the fourth production from Five College Opera in its 12-year history. A diverse group, including opera director and UMass Theater Professor Gina Kaufmann, Amherst College musical director Mark Swanson and UMass choreographer Erica Wilson-Perkins, took the show from idea to curtain. The production featured a three-story set; a 40-person cast of students, community members and professionals; and a 30-piece orchestra. It was funded in part by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music, in New York City.