Leadership institute features Five College leaders

As colleges and universities around the country are considering collaborations to reduce costs and maintain offerings, the Association of Consortium Leadership sponsored a 2011 summer leadership institute whose faculty included current Five College Executive Director Neal Abraham and retired executive director Lorna Peterson.

Held over four days at the Claremont University Consortium in Southern California, the institute was the first effort to train consortium leaders in the art of running a higher-education collaboration. It was a response, in part, to the fact that few leaders in this emerging field have actual consortia experience. With dozens of consortium already in existence and more forming each year, the need is apparent.

“It’s rare to see a consortium hire its leadership from within its own ranks,” says Abraham. “Most often executive directors and business officers are being brought in from posts at colleges and universities, or even from outside higher education. This means people are taking leadership roles in consortia with an increasing pressure to succeed, but lacking any direct experience in how a consortium actually operates.”

Abraham announced that the second ACL summer leadership institute will be hosted by Five Colleges in June 2012. “We welcome this opportunity to serve as host and co-sponsor for the second ACL Summer Institute in consortium leadership, and look forward to sharing with and learning from the attendees,” he said.

Consortium expands its presence in Holyoke

The city of Holyoke, an ethnically diverse community of 40,000, has long attracted the interest of Five College students and faculty members. Building on that interest, the consortium this year initiated regular bus runs linking four of the campuses to the city and hired a community partnership coordinator to assist with community service placements and other opportunities for engagement.

In recent years, the Five College Community-Based Learning Committee has worked with community leaders to create a daylong training workshop to prepare students for community engagement opportunities in the city. Some 250 students participated in Holyoke Bound training during the last academic year.

To further encourage student engagement with Holyoke, Five Colleges and the Pioneer Valley Transportation Authority (PVTA) launched a new, afternoon express bus line linking UMass, Amherst, Hampshire, Smith and Mount Holyoke with downtown Holyoke. Paid for by the consortium, the bus service operates Monday through Thursday, dropping off riders at the Holyoke Transportation Center and other spots in the city.

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Continued on page 2
Holyoke—continued

Although every campus maintains its own community-based learning program, each recognized the value of coordinating efforts through a central office. And so in September, Five Colleges opened a Community-Based Learning office at the Holyoke Transportation Center. The consortium hired Maria Cartagena to serve as the first community partnership coordinator.

Cartagena’s family moved to Holyoke from New York when she was 13, and she began community organizing as a volunteer while still in high school. In the years since, community development became her passion, and Cartagena has worked for several Holyoke-based social service organizations in her career, most recently as the assistant director of Nuestra Raíces/Solutions CDC, a nonprofit providing financial literacy and asset building services to the community.

Five Colleges receives $1.5 million grant from Mellon Foundation

As Five College community partnership coordinator, Cartagena works with two VISTA volunteers to support Holyoke Bound and the newly formed Springfield Bound, and helps the campuses explore additional opportunities for student placement in the two cities, maintaining contacts with some 50 community partners. “In some ways,” she says, “it’s a victory for the community partners that Five Colleges has heard them and created this position.”

Opening the Five College office is one of many hopeful signs Cartagena sees in Holyoke, which also includes a new energy in city government and the construction of the Massachusetts Green High Performance Computer Center in a former industrial site. “For the first time in a long time, I think good things are going to happen in Holyoke.”

—Kevin Kennedy

Newly formed collaboration responds to crisis

A new collaboration of western Massachusetts colleges and universities had an early opportunity to test its cooperative skills when on June 1 tornadoes struck member Springfield College and the surrounding area. The leaders of the 14 higher education institutions in the Pioneer Valley, composed of the Five College consortium, its member campuses and nine other campuses, had just begun meeting one month earlier, but they came together to offer their landscaping crews and financial help to contend with the hundreds of century-old trees that were destroyed on the Springfield campus. Ultimately, the schools together donated more than $14,000 to help Springfield College replace the trees.

Among the top items on the group’s agenda for future discussions are exploring cooperation in community-service opportunities, better coordinating support for pre K–12 education and improved college access programs for local residents.

A major new grant will jump-start efforts across the campuses to improve the student experience by exploring digital approaches to teaching the humanities and strengthening connections between the liberal arts and professional education.

The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation awarded Five Colleges and its member campuses a four-year, $1.5 million grant to pursue their Curricular Innovations project.

“The Curricular Innovations grant will enable the consortium to strengthen relationships and create pathways between our liberal arts colleges and the university’s graduate and professional programs to invigorate the teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels,” said Five Colleges Executive Director Neal Abraham.

“Similarly, strengthening use and access to digital humanities tools and techniques will support efforts of our humanities colleagues to remain current in their teaching methods and will prepare students for the more technologically enhanced environment that will be the future world of work in humanities.”

Called “Bridging Liberal Arts and Professional Education,” under the first prong of the Mellon-funded project Five Colleges will look for ways to combine the best qualities of a liberal arts education—the development of critical thinking, the ability to make connections across disciplines and to communicate effectively—with preparation for specific professions.

The Five College deans are inviting collaborating groups of faculty members from the consortium’s liberal arts colleges and the university’s professional programs to propose two-year projects bridging liberal arts and professional education. The first set of awards was approved in December 2011.

Under the second prong of the project, “Embedding the Digital in the Humanities,” Five Colleges will explore ways to use digital humanities resources and technologies as a tool for teaching humanities to liberal arts students, supporting student scholarship and preparing them for the increasingly technological environment of the working world.

Digital humanities techniques are already being used by faculty members in Five College classrooms: a classics professor at UMass, using the university’s digital humanities laboratory, is pioneering cutting edge archaeological research methods with hand-held GPS devices. A religion professor at Mount Holyoke worked with a computer scientist at Smith to develop handwriting-recognition software for author identification of early Syriac manuscripts. An associate professor of French studies at Smith is working with an Amherst GIS specialist to enable students to explore the historical and geographic layers of Paris.

Work has already begun on both aspects of the project, with calls for proposals being distributed and project teams being assembled. Grant funding will continue through the 2014–2015 academic year, at which time it is expected that many of the strategies developed by the project will be incorporated into the ongoing best practices of the campuses.
Five Colleges and PVTA agree to more buses and faster routes

More than a dozen new bus runs, more efficient schedules and the first new bus route in years emerged from negotiations among Five Colleges, UMass Transit and the Pioneer Valley Transit Authority (PVTA).

September saw the addition of 12 express runs between Mount Holyoke and Smith reducing to 30 minutes trips that could take more than an hour and require a bus change. Another early-morning run was added during the semester to accommodate commuters traveling from Northampton to Mount Holyoke. The times of bus runs between the two women’s colleges were also shifted, so that students would be arriving on campus just before (rather than just after) classes begin.

Among other changes to existing routes were adding a Minuteman Express run between Smith and UMass, and eliminating a 10-minute delay at Hampshire for the Five College buses on Route 116 connecting UMass, Amherst, Hampshire and Mount Holyoke. A shift in departure times will enable students to more easily catch a bus immediately after class to attend a course at another campus, missing only one class period.

“Getting students to campuses faster, and at times that work better with class schedules, gives students more options to take advantage of the intercampus curricular opportunities the Five College consortium offers,” said Five College Executive Director Neal Abraham, who negotiated the changes with PVTA and UMass Transit.

Recognizing the growing interest among Five College students in pursuing internships and research opportunities in the city of Holyoke, the consortium began subsidizing a new PVTA route linking UMass, Amherst, Hampshire and Mount Holyoke with downtown Holyoke. The service is available to the public for a small fee.

“Because PVTA has been level-funded by the state for several years, there are no resources to add new service,” said PVTA Administrator Mary MacInnes, “so we are very excited to launch a new route from UMass to the Holyoke Transportation Center, with funding provided by Five Colleges.”

All these changes appear to be appreciated; overall ridership on Five College bus runs increased more than 5 percent in fall 2011 over fall 2010, to more than 493,000 riders.

Expansion, diversification mark WFCR’s 50th anniversary

Before there was a Hampshire College, or even the consortium that welcomed it, there was Four College Radio. In May 1961, WFCR—based at UMass Amherst and named for the as-yet informal collaboration of UMass with Amherst, Mount Holyoke and Smith—emitted its first signal (the consortium was incorporated as Four Colleges in 1965, and redubbed Five Colleges after ground was broken for Hampshire a year later, four years before the new campus opened its doors).

In the 50 years since, the organization has grown beyond its namesake region, from broadcasting just 12 hours a day, six days a week, to 24/7 over two FM stations, an AM station and five translator links, extending into five states and reaching some 180,000 listeners each week. Included among the new stations is WNNZ, offering all-news programming on both AM and FM frequencies.

This diverse success has led to the corporation encompassing these stations to rename itself New England Public Radio and begin an effort to expand into 12,000 square feet of studio and office space in downtown Springfield.

“We decided that we had a unique opportunity at the age of fifty to reflect all of these changes, and to position ourselves for future growth and greater service to our communities,” said station manager Martin Miller.

The station also celebrated its golden anniversary by launching a $7 million capital campaign to fund new facilities and equipment, technology and other resources. “The success of this campaign is extremely important to serve the Five College community and the community as a whole,” said Miller. “We want to provide greater access to the knowledge-based information that’s coming out of the Five Colleges.”

—Julie Varney UM ’12
Winners picked in Riverscaping design/build competition

The votes are in and the winners have been chosen in the design/build competition sponsored by the Riverscaping Project, an 18-month effort of Five Colleges and the Five College Architectural Studies Program to help communities along the Massachusetts stretch of the Connecticut River find creative, sustainable approaches to working with the river.

With a grant from the European Union Delegation to the United States and support from Five Colleges, the project has brought together researchers, policy-makers, environmentalists, students and others in western Massachusetts and Hamburg, Germany. Coordinating the project were Thom Long, Five College assistant professor of architecture and design at Hampshire; Karen Koehler, professor of architectural and art history at Hampshire; and Frank Sleeegers, assistant professor of landscape architecture at UMass.

Last fall Riverscaping initiated the design/build competition for interpretive installations at four sites on the Connecticut. The purpose of the installations would be to create connections among communities, ecosystems and economies along the river and foster understanding between Connecticut River communities and those along the Elbe River in Hamburg. In January a jury made up of area architects, artists, builders and others picked winning designs for sites in Springfield, Holyoke, Hadley and Turners Falls.

“The Riverscaping design/build competition submissions ranged from landscape design to architecture to sculpture and came from as far away as India,” said Thom Long. “The projects gave our jury and committee members an amazing array of ideas to bring to the community. The projects selected for the design/build are sure to have a unique impact on each city. We have a lot of work to do to bring these projects to life, but the entire group was excited by the new additions to their community.”

In upcoming phases of the project, winners will construct their designs, and all entries will become a part of an exhibition, Riverscaping 2010–2020, that will travel to museums in the Pioneer Valley and Hamburg.

The exhibition’s opening will coincide with a Riverscaping symposium aimed at broadening community discourse over sustainable uses of the Connecticut. Scheduled for April 19–21, the symposium will feature a keynote address by the renowned environmental installation artist Christo, who will discuss his latest project, suspending fabric panels along 5.9 miles of the Arkansas River in Colorado.

The jury selected the following winners for each site: Springfield: Anthony Di Mari; Quincy, Massachusetts Holyoke: Samuel St. Jacques, Jillian Tara and Gabriella Jannotta; Amherst, Massachusetts Hadley: Laura Brooks; Amherst, Massachusetts Turners Fall: Terry R. Marashlian, Dan Trenholm, Paul Duga and Heidi Schmidt; Northfield, Massachusetts

For more information about Riverscaping, visit www.riverscaping.org

Hill’s Tap Dancing America awarded national prize

Tap Dancing America: A Cultural History, by Five College Dance Professor Constance Valis Hill, was awarded the 2010 de la Torre Bueno Prize as the year’s most distinguished book of dance scholarship, by the Society of Dance History Scholars. Hill’s book, published by Oxford University Press, explores tap dancing from 1900 to the present from a cultural perspective, featuring for the first time in any book the accomplishments of women dancers. Since its publication, in 2010, Tap Dancing America has received a number of accolades, such as the American Tap Foundation’s Tap Preservation Award, the Bill “Bojangles” Robinson Award, and selection as a finalist for the Theatre Library Association’s Richard Wall Memorial Award. An accomplished jazz tap dancer, choreographer and performance scholar, Hill is based at Hampshire College and teaches on multiple Five College campuses each year.
Consortium subscriptions to East Asian resources provide local tools for researchers

With the consortium purchase of subscriptions to two East Asian-language newspaper databases, faculty members and students at the five campuses will no longer have to travel to Boston or New Haven to conduct research using these materials.

For years, the Japanese studies researchers at the five campuses had to rely on newspaper databases at Harvard and Yale to access newspaper articles from such national newspapers as the Yomiuri Shimbun, the largest-circulation newspaper in the world. With a subscription to the Yomidasu Rekishikan online database, Five College researchers now have access from their home campus to millions of articles, photographs—even comics—dating to the 19th century.

Sharon Domier, East Asian studies librarian at UMass, said the database subscriptions will be a resource not only for faculty researchers, but also for language instructors and their students. “It’s been challenging in the past to provide research-level collections in East Asian languages, because funding is often tied to specific programs and departments, and one department may not want to devote part of its budget to a language that only one or two people in the department can read,” said Domier. “I’m very grateful to the Five College Libraries Collection Management Committee, who were able to see the bigger picture of faculty and student needs, not only across departments but also across colleges, so we can provide a level of support that will allow our researchers to do more of their research in the comfort of the Pioneer Valley.”

The consortium also purchased a subscription to China Maxx, a digital library of Chinese e-books, with almost 1 million volumes dating to 1938. Users at the five campuses can search the database and view up to the first 17 pages of any book with the option to purchase the book for a small fee. According to Domier, this gives member campuses access to materials that don’t exist in print outside China or that would otherwise be impossible to order through interlibrary loan.

—Julie Varney UM ’12

Five College risk manager wins national innovation award

Five College Director of Compliance and Risk Management Elizabeth Carmichael was honored with the fourth annual Innovative Risk Management Solutions Award from the University Risk Management and Insurance Association (URMIA). The award highlights innovative projects that others in the profession of risk management can use. Carmichael was named for her development of an online database to manage Five Colleges’ driver credentialing program at the consortium’s four college members.

“I was deeply honored to be recognized for this work among the many talented and creative risk managers that are URMIA members,” Carmichael said. “I hope that the award will showcase the program so that other schools may take advantage of it.”

At many universities, managing drivers is the biggest risk facing an institution’s auto insurance program. To help respond to and mitigate the risks associated with the drivers of campus fleets totaling more than 200 vehicles, the Five College Risk Management Program developed an online database to more effectively manage its driver credentialing. This database enables vehicle program managers to easily and efficiently collect license information, review drivers’ training and provide them with safety rules. This represented a significant innovation over the previous paper form of data collection.

Carmichael said the program will be licensed to other schools for a small fee. She plans to use these fees to pay for development costs on new risk management support programs.

—Julie Varney UM ’12

Campus librarians present at national conference

Lessons learned by Five College librarians in their effort to reduce the duplication of monographs in their collections were shared with colleagues from around the country at the annual Charleston Conference in November. The conference, which draws librarians, publishers, electronic resource managers and others from the publishing world to South Carolina, is, according to organizers, “a collegial gathering of individuals from different areas who discuss issues in a nonthreatening, friendly and highly informal environment.”

Included in this year’s presentations was “Reducing Unintentional Duplication: Adventures and Opportunities in Cooperative Collection Development,” by Leslie Button, associate director for library services at UMass; Rachel Lewellen, assessment librarian at UMass; Kathleen Norton, director of collection development at Mount Holyoke; and Pam Skinner, reference/electronic resources librarian at Smith.

In 2010, the libraries of Five Colleges member campuses instituted a program to reduce unintentional duplication. An analysis of the combined monograph collections identified the number of duplicated titles, their circulation, and the cost of the volumes. With some 80 percent of the books within a single collection being duplicated and roughly half of those items apparently unused, collection strategies were adjusted to eliminate unintentional duplication and increase unique material within the consortium. The session reviewed the results of the collection policy as well as how the libraries developed a shared approach across multiple institutions with varying environments.

—Julie Varney UM ’12
Learning in Retirement’s Civil War symposium draws hundreds

Hundreds of people from around western Massachusetts converged on UMass over two days in October to participate in the Five College Learning in Retirement symposium “Civil War Causes and Consequences.” With major financial support from Mass Humanities and the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts, the conference explored issues of race, states’ rights and cultural changes of the Civil War era that still resonate today.

It opened with a keynote address from Columbia University professor Eric Foner, winner of the 2011 Pulitzer Prize in history for his book *The Fiery Trial: Abraham Lincoln and American Slavery*. Attendees then chose from nearly two dozen small group sessions and panel discussions exploring subjects ranging from John Brown’s role in the abolition movement to neofeudalism in the Industrial Revolution to teaching the Civil War in the K–12 classroom. Sessions were led by faculty members from institutions throughout the Northeast including several from Five College campuses. The symposium closed with a keynote by Yale professor and former Amherst College faculty member David Blight.

“The Civil War Sesquicentennial gives us a chance to both acknowledge this traumatic national event and to explore issues of that era that still affect our lives,” said Chuck Gillies, the symposium’s project director. “Race and states’ rights still trouble us, and many current cultural issues, such as gender equality and the federal role in protecting and providing for its citizens, saw significant changes in the war.”

While in the area, Foner also met with a book club of Springfield public school teachers at an event organized by the Five College School Partnership as part of its US Department of Education-sponsored Teaching American History project.

Five College Depository expands membership beyond the consortium

A Five College collection of print copies of journals and other library resources has expanded its availability from the five members of the consortium to 179 campuses in the Northeast and Midwest.

As libraries began digitizing their journals and other print collections over the past two decades, they recognized the importance of having at least one paper version of everything, as a resource for researchers and as an ultimate backup copy. They also recognized that each paper version could be a resource shared among a number of campuses, and so began the Five College Library Depository, in 2002.

Located in a former Cold War–era strategic command center inside the Holyoke Range’s Bare Mountain, the depository contains nearly 500,000 volumes of printed resources in climate-controlled, high-density storage. In March, the three members of the Tripod Consortium of colleges in Pennsylvania became affiliate members of the depository, followed in June by the 152 campuses of CARLI—the Consortium of Academic and Research Libraries in Illinois.

“Limited space and the maintenance of aging library collections are urgent concerns of all CARLI libraries,” said Susan Singleton, executive director of CARLI. “Our membership in the Five Colleges Library Depository provides valuable access to these legacy print collections, while ensuring that our members can focus on providing local collections that best serve their patrons’ needs.”

In return for their annual fee, affiliate members can free up space on their own library shelves by eliminating little-used paper resources, knowing that they will always have access to a print copy. They may also deposit paper copies of issues and volumes that complement the depository’s current holdings.