

2011

Choices for Bates, May 2011

Bates College

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CHOICES

CHOICES FOR
Bates

A PLAN FOR BATES
College

New Pathways for the Learning Century at BATES

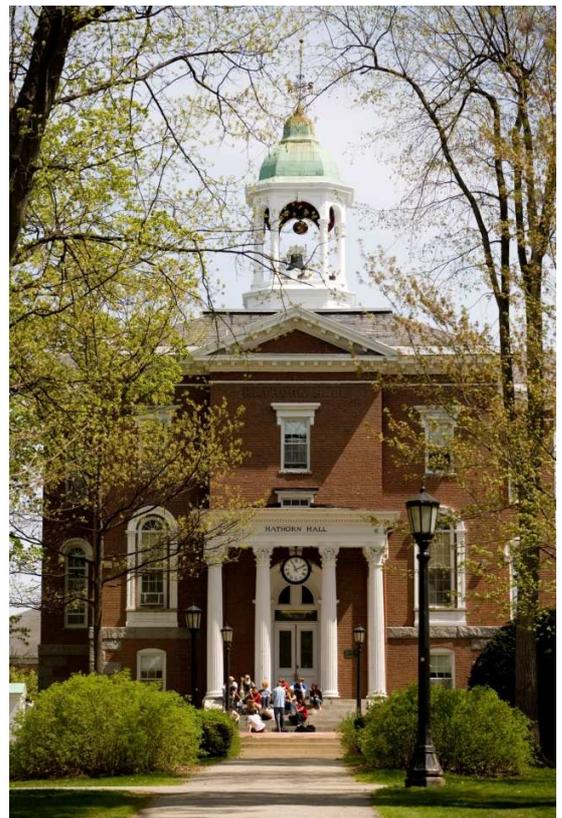
Dear Colleagues,

A lot can happen in less than four years! It's with real pride and excitement that I recall our launch of the planning processes that led to *Choices for Bates* and the impressive work that is taking place now. Since the fall of 2007, the faculty, students, staff, alumni/ae, trustees, and members of wider community have worked creatively and diligently to examine our strengths, consider our challenges, and explore ways to make our great college even greater.

It is gratifying to see how the individual and collective insights—and spirit of collaboration—continue to drive our work and our goals. As you can see from the updates provided in this newsletter, the faculty and staff are moving forward with passion and care to accomplish the *Choices* recommendations. Now our initiative groups—focusing on Arts, Science and Math, the Learning Commons, Residence Life, and Diversity—are finding intersections among the initiatives and across the disciplines at Bates.

For example, students and residence life staff worked with a faculty member who is also part of the Arts Collaborative to establish an “Arts Co-Op” Theme House for 2011-12. Students living in the Arts Co-Op will work with their faculty advisor and the Arts Collaborative on arts programming for the campus. The Science and Math Initiative is exploring curricular innovations that will prepare majors for leading roles in their fields. Several faculty members are teaching or developing new multidisciplinary and team-taught courses that draw on the common history and strengths of each of their disciplines.

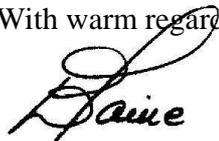
The Learning Commons sponsored the Sixth Annual May Conference, “Learning in Common: Creating Connections,” which gathered together faculty members from across campus to share insights about pedagogy and best practices, an activity that many of us wish for but don't experience during our busy days of teaching, research, and service. Finally, the Diversity in Excellence Initiative is inviting faculty from different disciplines to participate in a Faculty Learning Community, which will focus on increasing faculty's knowledge about issues of diversity and inclusion and help faculty identify best practices and strategies for incorporating diversity into their teaching and learning.



As Bates continues along this path of innovation, we can be proud that we are modeling the virtues of the liberal arts education that we extol to our students. I believe the statement by a faculty member in the *Choices for Bates* report applies equally to our efforts and those of our students: ***“A liberal arts education prepares individuals to realize the interconnectedness of the world today, and how action/inaction in one part of the world can lead to a series of events in other parts of the world. As a result, we need to act with considerable thought to the consequences of our actions.”***

Today, I share this report on the wonderful work in progress for the *Choices* initiatives with a particularly intense feeling of gratitude for the efforts and accomplishments of so many individuals and offices. Looking forward, I appreciate the fact that Interim President Nancy Cable, her Senior Staff, the Board of Trustees, and the cohort of faculty and administrators who have brought us this far are fully committed to supporting and encouraging these promising projects. Thanks to all of you, I move on knowing that Bates will carry these plans forward, and that from your collective work new ideas, programs, and partnerships will continue to unfold.

With warm regards,



Elaine Tuttle Hansen
President

Arts Collaborative

The Presidential Arts Initiative has had a busy and productive year. With two grants [the Mellon Presidential Award and the Mellon Faculty Innovation Grant] to help fuel our initial year as the Bates Arts Collaborative, we have made substantial progress on our major initiatives. Our newly formed group has met weekly over this academic year to discuss its purpose, mission, governance and potential. We have planned several events, spoken collectively and individually with a number of arts-interested constituents, established a presence on the web and in print, and created a firm foundation on which to continue advocacy for the arts in the future. We have also tried to remain faithful to the sometimes challenging goal of collaborating among ourselves--sharing ideas, programs, pedagogies and strategies to further our own work. Leadership was provided by **Kirk Read** and will continue with **Jim Parakilas** in July. Members will continue to represent arts faculty and staff from across campus with a commitment to a “buddy system,” whereby absent members will elect or assign colleagues in their area to attend meetings. The idea is for this occasional rotation of attendees to increase transparency and invite more voices into the conversation. The year will end with a facilitated retreat to set goals for the upcoming year.

New traditions

In honor of our inaugural year, the Arts Collaborative sponsored two events: the Bates Arts Summit and the First Annual Arts Crawl. At the summit we brought together several outside performers and scholars to engage the campus in discussions about supporting and sustaining the College arts community. The Arts Crawl was an all-campus open-door arts event where students’ work was showcased in several venues and along pathways for two hours during the evening of January 25, a date that coincided conveniently with the trustees’ visit to campus. This was also a propitious moment for encouraging student involvement more formally, as they worked closely with the Bates Arts Collaborative to create the event. Afterwards, two first-year students, Emma Timbers and Doug Welsh, continued to attend weekly meetings. Now that an arts-theme house has been accepted and populated for the next academic year, it appears we have a ready-made student group with which

to plan and collaborate. The Arts Roundtables and the CurricularArts events that brought faculty, students, and staff together at several key moments this year were also immensely helpful in our planning for the semester and year ahead.

Our public face

Our very successful first arts calendar was followed by a second one of equally high quality and impact. We hope it becomes an ongoing instrument for publicity and promotion. This spring, we have experimented with weekly arts updates that go out both electronically and on the web. In addition, we have experimented with the prototype for an interactive arts web page that will allow for discovery and publicity in the arts in a more playful way. Our full launch of this will necessarily wait for news on the broader redesign of the Bates site in general, but some exciting work has been done. Internally, we now have a listserv and email group from which to send announcements.



On the map

The Bates Arts Collaborative is now a part of the campus culture and an entity that will continue to help the arts flourish. People interested in feedback and input on arts issues now have a place to go. For example, in the current campus construction, the Collaborative was able to advocate for limited gallery space in the new academic buildings. Soon after that, the project manager for the upcoming residence halls contacted the Collaborative to meet with the newly hired architects to explore ways to infuse these buildings with art-making spaces or opportunities. Advancement has met with a number of us individually to discuss a list of priorities and contacts among students, alumni, parents, and friends of the arts at Bates. We continue to advocate for a Friends of the Arts affinity group, similar in goal and scope to Friends of Bates Athletics. The Dean of Students and the Vice President for Enrollment and External Relations have met with the Collaborative to discuss ways to come together around how the arts can work with their offices for richer, more artful programming and outcomes.

We have had an exciting and fruitful year. We look forward to building on our good track record thus far and to collaborating even more fully with entities from all over campus. Scientists, for example, were the first to answer the call for an arts sculpture contest at the Arts Crawl; the Learning Commons holds great potential for educating and advocating for infusion of the arts in curriculum and pedagogy; the arts are a natural link to diversity initiatives and can fuel these efforts in exciting and important ways. We look forward to building on these successes and building an ever more connected and robust arts community through the Bates Arts Collaborative in the years ahead.

Science and Math Initiative

The Science and Math Initiative team has moved forward on several important projects that are working toward the goal of developing an integrated math and science building.

Four rising sophomores will have the opportunity to conduct research with the one-on-one guidance of faculty in the Division of Natural Sciences and Mathematics as a result of support provided by the newly developed Early Career Student Research Opportunities in Mathematics and the Natural Sciences program.

Funded by the Presidential award from The Mellon Foundation, the program will offer students the chance to work with faculty directly on research projects without the burden of competing with upperclassmen; create opportunities for students from under-resourced high schools, multicultural students, or first-generation college students; expose students to the benefits of research early in their science studies; increase students' interest in science; and broaden students' graduate study options and career choices in the sciences.

The mathematics and science faculty are building on the pilot projects in multidisciplinary teaching and are continuing to develop and coordinate several courses for the fall semester. **Hong Lin** (physics) and **Rachel Austin** (chemistry) will lead separate first-year seminars ("Physics in the 20th Century" and "The Chemistry of Color," respectively) that will share a common lab. **John Smedley** (physics) will teach Classical Physics and **Adriana Salerno** (mathematics) will teach Calculus I as a linked pair of courses. A group of students will enroll in both courses during the fall semester and learn about the historically linked development of the two subjects. Because students will be enrolled in both courses, instructors will be able to synchronize carefully the presentation of topics so that ideas addressed in one class motivate and enhance those presented in the other. With the success of their course "The Unexpected Earth," **John Creasy** (geology) and **Eric Wollman** (physics) are teaming up to teach the course again in the winter of 2012. Students will explore how new discoveries about our home planet come about and how crucial but difficult measurements are conceived and made. Guided by discussions with colleagues in the natural sciences, **Meredith Greer** (mathematics) will teach a course titled "Math Across the Sciences." Her goal will be to help students investigate and become comfortable with some of the mathematical concepts and skills they will need in their science courses.

The Math and Science Initiative is intimately linked to another externally funded project on campus—the Bates-Bowdoin Quantitative Reasoning Collaboration. In a project funded by the Teagle Foundation and spearheaded by Bates College, Bates faculty and staff from a wide variety of disciplines, collaborating with faculty and staff from Bowdoin College, are exploring ways in which we can better assess the quantitative literacy of our students. The goal is to measure our success in teaching students to reason quantitatively, and to convey to our colleagues what we learn from those assessments so that our courses build on approaches that we know to be effective. This year in particular, the project has expanded from its quantitatively focused beginnings to seek links to reasoning from evidence in all contexts. The success of faculty workshops designed to explore this topic suggests that it will not only enhance our progress toward our quantitative literacy goals, but it may also provide an intellectually rich way to tie together the pedagogical goals of instructors across the liberal arts and sciences.



Residence Life

This semester Residence Life focused on strengthening the theme houses, working with students and faculty early in the proposal process to help develop themes that are intellectually engaging and are facilitated by living together. In addition to the Environmental House, which is offered at the housing lottery and sponsored by the Dean of Students Office and the Environmental Coordinator, **Julie Rosenbach**, students were invited to submit proposals for themes of their own design. Prior to developing their full proposal, an abstract of their theme house idea was required to be submitted to the deans of students. The deans then had the opportunity to provide feedback to the students on their ideas and to suggest faculty members whose academic interests align with the theme idea and could potentially serve as the theme house advisor. With the support of a faculty member, the students then submitted a full proposal for a theme house idea.

Of the 12 proposals received, four were approved and three are going forward in 2011-12. Through the Presidential award from The Mellon Foundation, we are able to offer a substantial programming budget and modest stipend for faculty advisors to each house. Each theme house faculty advisor will lend expertise to the topic and help guide the work of the students in the house. Each student group that submitted a successful proposal was assigned a residential building where students reside for a year and explore the topic in depth, literally living the experience in practical terms, with an expectation of sponsoring open events through which the entire community can benefit.

The “Social Justice House” (Nash House, 14 students) will be advised by **Emily Kane** (sociology). The idea for the house came about through Emily’s course, “Privilege, Power, and Inequality,” in which several of the students proposing the theme were enrolled. The house represents a great example of students taking principles learned in a course and applying it to their lives outside of the classroom.

The “Maine Culture House” (Frye House, 26 students), advised by **Gene Clough** (physics and astronomy) seeks, according to the proposal, to explore the “cultural and geographical distinctions that set [Maine] apart from other New England states,” by bringing programs to campus and organizing outings throughout the state.

Finally, the “Arts Co-op” (Howard House, 12 students), is linked directly to the Arts Collaborative, as described in above. The house will be advised by **Gina Fatone** (music), who is a member of the Arts Collaborative. The student organizers of this theme house joined the Arts Collaborative and have developed ideas for expanding the arts into the residential lives of students.

Learning Commons

The Learning Commons, now under the direction of **Hillory Oakes**, who is also director of writing, is committed to building a faculty community that is interested in pedagogy and who will see the Commons as a central resource. In May the Learning Commons, with funding from a Mellon Foundation grant, sponsored the Sixth Annual May Conference, “Learning in Common: Creating Connections.” Over 60 people—along with colleagues from Bowdoin—attended the full-day event. The morning panels showcased faculty and staff presenting effective teaching and learning methods, while the afternoon workshops asked attendees to imagine ways they could implement productive innovations in the classroom and across the curriculum. Guest speakers Nathan Grawe of Carleton College and the team of Terra Caputo and Vesta Silva of Allegheny College helped guide our conversations throughout the day. Attendees commented overwhelmingly that all faculty and staff at Bates need more opportunities like this to talk with each other about issues of pedagogy and best practices.

This semester the Learning Commons Initiative team worked on the planning phase for the renovations in Ladd Library for the Learning Commons space. We envision this space to be a resource center and workshop for academic collaboration, with peer-to-peer student learning as its central focus. After extensive review of architectural firms, we chose Barba and Wheelock and are impressed with how the conversations and plans for the combined use of space and technology for the Learning Commons are progressing. Construction is planned for summer 2012.

During the 2011-2012 academic year, the Learning Commons group will continue the planning for renovations in Ladd Library and will call on faculty, staff, and students throughout the process for input. We will also begin to refer to student support services as an integrated Learning Commons—rather than disparate services—so that our collaboration will strengthen resources for students. Finally, the Learning Commons will sponsor a number of conversations for faculty to talk about issues affecting our teaching, such as working with students with learning differences, tackling problems of academic integrity, and creating meaningful dialogue through group work within the classroom.

If you are interested in working with the Learning Commons as part of a faculty advisory board, if you have suggestions for programming that would benefit you and your colleagues, or if you want to know more about what the Learning Commons can offer you and your students, please contact learningcommons@bates.edu.

Diversity in Excellence

The Diversity in Excellence Initiative is working to engage faculty in diversity learning and professional development opportunities that identify educational practices and campus collaborations to help faculty, students, and staff make excellence inclusive.

This semester the planning team led by **Leslie Hill** and **Heather Lindkvist** developed goals for a Faculty Learning Community (FLC), an interactive learning opportunity that focuses on the transitions, social identities, learning paths and opportunities for engaging the diversity that our students face in college. This year-long faculty development seminar will engage participants in review of scholarship about relevant student transitions, intercultural engagements, and classroom dynamics; build a culture of collegial reflection on how students learn and what they experience in classrooms about differences, cross-cultural interactions, and the usefulness of inclusiveness; and begin development or modification of a selection of course content, materials, or instructional strategies to include attention to diversity-related issues. The FLC opens with a one-day off-site retreat in late August when participants will work with a faculty development facilitator to create appropriate entryways for faculty in various disciplines to develop inclusive pedagogies.

In April, the Diversity in Excellence Initiative invited AAC&U Senior Scholar Alma Clayton Pedersen to discuss diversity and inclusion in the educational mission of the College at the 2011 Presidential Symposium. A panel presentation reviewed Bates specific data from the NECASL project, interrogating the question: *Does College Really Change Students' Perspectives on and Experiences with Diversity?* Members of the campus community participated in the following small group discussions to identify concrete actions to leverage the various talents, expertise, interests, and institutional responsibilities of campus members in pursuit of inclusive excellence (materials from those presentations and discussions are available on the Bates website):



- Learning Outside of Classrooms
- Preparing Graduates for Diversity Beyond Bates
- Students Researching Diversity at Bates
- Staff as Catalysts: Linking Diversity and Inclusion to the Educational Mission

By articulating diversity and inclusion in the educational mission of the College in conceptual and practical terms, the Symposium provided an entry point for advancing toward more specific goals of the Diversity in Excellence Initiative to increase the number of faculty members who recognize the importance of diversity and inclusion in shaping the quality and direction of Bates' future, and to identify and develop faculty who will lead ongoing efforts to build capacity for and enhance practices that enrich intercultural learning, communication, and inclusion in the academic program and in campus life.

The planning team sees opportunities for collaboration with the Learning Commons and Residence Life planning initiatives. The Learning Commons planners have expressed willingness to discuss disseminating FLC-derived best practices, challenges, and lessons through its spring 2012 events. The FLC will include building skills for diversity engagements in various learning spaces in and outside of classrooms. This will support specific suggestions for intergroup dialogues and inclusive pedagogies made in several Presidential Symposium breakout discussions. The work of the FLC intersects as well with goals generated in a spring consultative planning retreat sponsored by the Special Assistant to the President, Equity and Diversity Resources, and the Office of Intercultural Education.

As we continue to make Bates' excellence inclusive by using diversity as a resource for learning and to cultivate a more inclusive campus climate, our objectives for 2011-12 include the following:

- Facilitate the Faculty Learning Community;
- Recruit a resource group of more experienced faculty whose research about difference or inclusive teaching practices equips them to interact, consult with, and/or mentor FLC participants;
- Ascertain the interest, capacity and wisdom of other campus professionals who can serve as resources to the FLC and contribute to defining excellence in inclusive terms and developing it throughout the operations of the campus
- Identify strategies and a timeframe for sharing knowledge and facilitating conversations with the campus community.