

2017

An Introduction on the Mellon Grant

Mary Hinton

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, mhinton@csbsju.edu

Michael Hemesath

College of Saint Benedict/Saint John's University, mhemesath@csbsju.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/headwaters>

Recommended Citation

Hinton, Mary and Hemesath, Michael (2017) "An Introduction on the Mellon Grant," *Headwaters*: Vol. 30, 60-63.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csbsju.edu/headwaters/vol30/iss1/7>

This II. Roundtable Discussion - From Intention to Action: Building an Inclusive Community is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Headwaters by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@CSB/SJU. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@csbsju.edu.

An Introduction on the Mellon Grant

In July 2015, the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University were awarded grants from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation to support professional development for faculty teaching an increasingly diverse student body. The CSB grant sought to help humanities faculty successfully teach, advise, and engage CSB/SJU's increasingly diverse student body. The SJU grant sought to provide resources for all faculty who teach in the First-Year Seminar (FYS) program to address classroom experiences, skills development, and navigating the available resources on campus in the critical first year for American Students of Color at CSB/SJU. As presidents, we served as Primary Investigators for the grants, and we thank Kyhl Lyndgaard, Director of FYS and the Writing Center, and Jean Keller, Associate Professor of Philosophy, for directing the work of these twin grants.

Our strategic plan, Strategic Directions 2020, commits us to liberal arts for life and to the transformational and holistic development of women and men. Our ongoing work to develop a new common curriculum and explore our key academic principles is rooted in our desire to provide a liberal arts education to *all* of our students.

We believe that every scholar at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University has a right to a complete Saint Ben's/Saint John's experience. We seek not to perpetuate inequity on our campus. And we commit unashamedly to teaching young women to lead in all facets of their lives, and young men to lead lives of significance and principled achievement. To accomplish these major goals, we need to ensure that our faculty and students dwell within an environment that supports and facilitates the success of all students.

To that end, the twin Mellon Grants have been guided by specific, measurable goals for both faculty development and for American Students of Color.

For Faculty Development:

- 1) Evaluate current state of Humanities and FYS faculty development in support of inclusive and effective teaching and mentorship for all students;
- 2) Understand the strengths, needs, cultures, and expectations of American Students of Color, and to help Humanities and FYS faculty incorporate this knowledge into their teaching and advising;
- 3) Understand and address the small but significant gaps in retention and graduation of American Students of Color on our campuses;
- 4) Provide development for Humanities and FYS faculty to improve advising techniques to help American Students of Color further engage in the liberal arts;
- 5) Create a more inclusive environment in and out of the classroom;
- 6) Create faculty cohorts better prepared to help students grow in their ability to express themselves clearly and effectively, listen to others “with the ear of the heart,” and challenge one another respectfully;
- 7) Create Humanities and FYS faculty cohorts who will serve as peer resources for one another during and after the grant period.

For American Students of Color:

- 1) Provide American Students of Color with a better understanding of the expectations and assumptions of Humanities and FYS faculty;

- 2) American Students of Color will have an increased appreciation for the value of a liberal arts education.
- 3) Ensure that the retention and graduation rates of American Students of Color and majority students are the same.
- 4) American Students of Color reflect similar rates of academic satisfaction as majority students.

The Mellon grants have been marked by significant accomplishments. And they were exceptionally well timed, as there is a great deal of important and needed conversation about inclusion, freedom of speech, and psychological safety on our campuses right now. All students, no matter their political or religious beliefs, their identities, and their experiences, deserve to feel safe and honored in all of the spaces on our campus. Our goal is to educate our students in inclusive classrooms, and to teach them about peaceful dialogue, the value of listening and acknowledging diverse perspectives.

The work of the Mellon Grants has nicely complemented other work at CSB/SJU to develop an “Inclusion Ecosystem,” a focused model to encourage, support, and build inclusion at the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John’s University. We believe that these efforts toward inclusion, including the work enabled by support from The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, will have transformational impact on the success of underrepresented and first-generation college students at CSB/SJU.

We are proud that CSB/SJU, and especially our faculty, are committed to educating a student body that reflects the great variety of gifts, experiences, and identities in the broader community. And we are grateful that the Mellon Foundation shares our commitment to the education and leadership development of American Students of Color, first-generation college students, and students from under-represented communities. The work of inclusion requires a number of partners and points of influence—and just a few of those points of influence were explored through the Mellon grants.

As you read and reflect on this edition of *Headwaters*, we hope not only that you see the important work we are doing and its transformational impact, but also that you feel encouraged to join us in this critical work going forward.

Mary Dana Hinton, Ph.D.
President, College of Saint Benedict

Michael Hemesath, Ph.D.
President, Saint John's University