Center of Inquiry

WABASH COLLEGE

Using the Wabash National Study to Promote Assessment and Improvements in Student Learning
Teagle Foundation Grant Report – Year Two
July 2009–June 2010

The Teagle Foundation grant to the Center of Inquiry in the Liberal Arts at Wabash College, *Using the Wabash National Study to Promote Assessment and Improvements in Student Learning*, provided funding for fourteen of the twenty-six institutions in the 2008 cohort of the Wabash National Study. The Teagle-funded institutions include Alverno College, Augustana College, Blackburn College, Carleton College, College of the Holy Cross, Community College of Rhode Island, Drew University, Millersville University, New College of Florida, Oxford College of Emory University, Prescott College, Ripon College, Wabash College, and Warren Wilson College. In this report we will summarize our work on the Wabash National Study during the past year, with special emphasis on the institutions in the 2008 cohort funded by the Teagle Foundation. We will also discuss upcoming activities in the study, reflect on lessons learned from our work with the study over the past year, and review the budget from the second year of the grant.

REVIEW OF ACTIVITIES

First-year reports

We distributed first-year data reports for 2008 in two phases so that we could get data back to institutions earlier than we have in the past. For the first phase, we sent out data tables from ACT with means, standard deviations, and frequencies for outcome measures, good practice scales, and individual questions. These reports were quite long and detailed—each one was over 210 pages. In addition to the data tables from ACT, we included an introduction that summarized the information provided in the reports and suggested ways to work through the tables, and we added information about the good practice scales and outcome measures to help people interpret their results.

For the second phase of reporting, we created overview reports for each institution summarizing how their students changed on the outcome measures and the level of good practices that their students reported. We also pointed to specific areas where their results appeared especially strong or weak to suggest first places of inquiry for institutions.

We sent the data tables out in late October 2009. The 2008 cohort had a number of partially completed surveys in the spring 2009 administration, and the frequency reports initially included a large number of blank responses, which made it difficult to interpret the reports. This had not been an issue with previous cohorts. We asked ACT to modify the frequency reports to exclude blank responses and sent revised data tables to institutions in February 2010 (see sample report in Appendix A).

We also sent most of the overview reports out to institutions in February 2010 (see sample report in Appendix B). We followed a standard format and used templates when possible to streamline the reporting process, but it still took around two months to create the bulk of the overview reports. A few institutions required specialized reports (e.g., institutions who participated in multiple cohorts of the Wabash Study), and those reports took much longer to create.

Most of the people we've spoken to found the overview reports quite helpful. Many people felt that the ACT reports contained too much information and said they did not have time to dig into the data tables. They appreciated the overview report because it created a narrative about what the data meant and gave them areas to focus on. However a few institutions did not find the overview report useful because it did not address the specific areas of student learning or experience their campus cared about. Overall, most of the feedback we received on the overview reports was quite positive. Based on this feedback, it will be important for us to continue to provide overview reports as the fourth-year data comes back and to find ways to further streamline and automate the reporting process.

We also created the reports in Google Docs this year, whereas in the past we have used Microsoft Word. Formatting the reports in Google Docs was challenging at times because Google Docs did not have all the features of MS Word, and some of the formatting quirks could only be resolved by modifying the HTML code. We wanted to distribute the reports through Google Docs so that we could track the number of users who viewed the documents and allow people at institutions to add comments in the reports so that other users could see their comments and respond to them.

The tracking capability worked fairly well and provided valuable information for us. We saw much variability by institution in the number of people who accessed their overview report. Some institutions had few visits to the report, while other institutions had 40, 80, or 150 hits to the report. We could also see that hits to the overview reports increased prior to site visits.

Enabling people to comment on the overview reports was not a success. One or two of our campus contacts added a few comments to the reports, but no one else did. People may be hesitant to share comments publicly like this, or this may not be their preferred method for commenting on information.

Workshops

We held two Wabash Study workshops during the past year: a workshop for Davis-funded institutions at Lasell College in December 2009 and a retention workshop at Wabash College in March 2010.

On December 1, 2009 teams of administrators, faculty, and staff from eight of the Davis-funded institutions in the 2008 cohort of the Wabash Study participated in a meeting at Lasell College to discuss data from the first year of the study. Institutional teams spent the day working with Teagle Scholars, Center staff, and groups from other institutions to review and begin to make sense of study data, to identify other sources of data that could supplement and help them understand Wabash Study data, and to develop a plan for communicating study results on their campuses and for engaging groups across their institutions in discussions about what the data means and what actions should be taken in response to the data (see Appendix C for the agenda).

During this meeting, the Center tested out a new model for multi-institutional workshops. In most of our previous Wabash Study workshops, we brought together groups of institutions to the Wabash College campus, but this meeting had a more regional focus because participants were all from the Northeast and within driving distance of Lasell College. Also, the meeting was scheduled for one day only, so most participants did not require lodging. Both of these factors significantly reduced the costs associated with the meeting. We believe that this workshop format provides a useful model for further exploration. Institutional teams valued the opportunity to meet with people from other schools, and they appreciated being able to hear how other people were working with the Wabash Study data. The one-day format was a bit of a challenge, and some participants said they wished they had had more time; however, other people indicated that they were only able to attend because it was a one-day commitment. While we can certainly refine and tune the length and format of the workshop, we want to continue to explore this model of bringing teams from institutions located near each other together for shorter regional workshops. We have found that workshops with teams from multiple institutions are beneficial because they create time and space for people to work through and make sense of data and then begin to plan for ways they might use this data to improve student learning. However, it is often challenging for institutions to send a team of two to four people to Wabash for our usual three-day workshop. Holding shorter, regional events might be one way to make it easier for institutions to participate in our workshops.

On March 11–13, 2010, we held a workshop for Wabash Study institutions on using study data to address issues related to retention (see Appendix D for agenda). This is the second time we have offered a workshop on retention. Six institutions participated: Augustana College, Oxford College of Emory University, Franklin College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Lasell College, and Community College of Rhode Island. All of the institutions except for Franklin were from the 2008 Wabash Study cohort. Seven Teagle Scholars assisted with this workshop: Michael Reder, Catherine Andersen, Scott VanderStoep, Kathleen Goodman, Ryan Padgett, Mark Salisbury, and Bruce Colwell. Mark and Catherine gave presentations, and all the Scholars worked with an institutional team to help them explore their data and identify factors that might be influencing their students' persistence. Institutional teams created a short report on their findings and possible next steps in the form of a memo to their CAO that they could share when they returned to campus (see sample memo in Appendix E).

In working with Paul Sotherland (Kalamazoo College) on a workshop at the Center on triangulating data last December, we came up with a new workshop format that asked institutional teams to begin the meeting by creating informal posters to highlighted key points from their data. Posters were displayed in Trippet Hall, and people circulated around the different stations, asking questions about the poster and discussing the data. The poster session format was a great way to share data, and it was much more engaging than asking teams to stand up and present their data to the group. We thought the poster sessions worked so well at the Kalamazoo meeting that we decided to include them in our workshops whenever possible. The March retention workshop provided the first opportunity to incorporate poster sessions into our workshops, and we asked teams to create posters summarizing the key points of their memos to their CAOs for discussion on the last day.

Feedback on the retention workshop was mostly quite positive. Participants appreciated having time away from campus to focus on one issue and work with their data. They felt that the Teagle Scholars were helpful in this process because they brought a fresh perspective to the data. They also thought the workshop was structured well, with a good mix of presentations and time for teams to work on their own and to share with other institutions. Participants valued the formal and informal opportunities to talk with people from other institutions, and they liked the poster session, describing it as “collegial” and “creative.” Institutions appreciated the emphasis on creating a product by the end of the workshop because it helped them maintain focus and gave them a sense of accomplishment. People said they left the workshop with concrete ideas and plans. Overall, participants described the workshop as “intense” and “hard work,” but they also said that it was very helpful and even “fun.”

Participants had a few suggestions for things that we could improve. They would have liked the presentations to have included more specific examples of how institutions have dug into and responded to their data. A few people were unsure about what to do during the poster session, and they suggested we provide guidelines to help organize future poster sessions. Finally, some people said it would have been helpful to receive information about the workshop earlier so that they could have better prepared for the workshop.

Site visits

Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Scholars conducted seventeen site visits to fourteen institutions during the past year. Eleven of these institutions were from the 2008 Wabash Study cohort. Thirteen Teagle Scholars assisted us with these site visits. See Table 1 below for more information about the site visits.

Table 1: Wabash National Study site visits from July 2009-June 2010

Date	Activity	Center Staff/Teagle Scholars
September 2–3, 2009	Lasell College, site visit to discuss fall 2008 data	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise
September 4, 2009	Worcester State College, site visit to conduct data audit	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise
September 14–16, 2009	Coe College, site visit to discuss first-year data (2006 cohort)	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise, Mark Salisbury
October 7–9, 2009	North Carolina A&T, site visit (2007 cohort)	Charlie Blaich, Frank Boyd, Autumn Harrell
October 28, 2009	Franklin College, site visit to conduct student focus groups (2007 cohort)	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise, Kyle Long
November 11–20, 2009	Hampshire College, site visit to review Center for Teaching and Learning	David Schodt, Frank Boyd
January 12–13, 2010	Wabash College, site visit to conduct student/faculty focus groups	Kyle Long, Autumn Harrell, Tim Garner
January 28–29, 2010	University of Rhode Island, presentation at Faculty Summit	Charlie Blaich
February 9–11, 2010	Oxford College, site visit to discuss first-year data	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise, Jon Christy
February 24–25, 2010	Franklin College, site visit to discuss findings from student focus groups (2007 cohort)	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise

Date	Activity	Center Staff/Teagle Scholars
March 17–19, 2010	Bennington College, site visit to discuss first-year data	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise, Bruce Colwell
March 24–26, 2010	Oxford College, site visit to conduct focus groups	Charlie Blaich, Karen Hornsby, Scott Simkins
March 30–31, 2010	Hobart & William Smith Colleges, site visit to discuss first-year data	Charlie Blaich
April 5–7, 2010	Lasell College, site visit to discuss first-year data	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise, Michael Reder, Jim Gubbins
April 21–23, 2010	Wheelock College, site visit to discuss first-year data	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise, Steve Bloom
May 19, 2010	Blackburn College, site visit	Frank Boyd
June 2–3, 2010	Millersville University, site visit to discuss first-year data	Charlie Blaich, Kathy Wise

Most of the site visits we conducted over the past year were to discuss an institution's first-year study data with faculty, staff, and students. As we have mentioned in the past, we have learned that it is critical to talk to students to develop a deeper, more nuanced understanding of assessment data, including data from the Wabash Study. Quotes from students can also be more compelling than means or frequencies in a report. Beginning this past year, we made sure that we talked to several groups of students first when we visited an institution. That way, we could incorporate comments from students into our discussions of study data.

Several institutions have found the information from the informal focus groups during our site visits so interesting that they asked us to devote an entire visit to focus groups. In January, three Teagle Scholars visited Wabash to talk to students and faculty about proposed changes to the all-college course *Cultures and Traditions*. We spent a day at Franklin College in February talking to students about their college experience, especially their classes and their faculty. In March, students from North Carolina A&T went to Oxford College to conduct focus groups to investigate relatively high levels of hostile, tense, and otherwise negative interactions with diverse peers that came out in the Wabash Study data. Visit teams wrote reports summarizing what they heard during the focus groups for each of these visits (see Appendix F for a sample report).

Fourth-year assessment sessions

This past spring, institutions in the 2006 cohort held the first fourth-year assessment sessions for the Wabash National Study. As a two-year institution, Oxford College (in the 2008 cohort) also held their third assessment session this spring. We were pleased with the overall return rate—fifty percent of the students who participated in the study in the fall of their first year of college returned for the final assessment session (see Appendix G for details). Of course, some of the students who participated the first time are no longer enrolled at their institutions. When we look at only the students who were still enrolled this past spring, the fourth-year participation rate was 66% for the 2006 cohort. Participation rates varied widely across institutions—Coe College, Whittier College, and the University of Notre Dame had the highest participation rates (94%, 83%, and 82% respectively) while Hamilton College and Butler University came in on the lower end with 53% and 55% participation rates respectively. Participation rates for the two community colleges in the 2006 cohort were even lower, both below 40%.

We encouraged institutions to invite all the students who participated in the first assessment session to return for the third session, regardless of whether they had participated in the second session or not. We were not sure if this would significantly increase the number of students who returned for the final session, and we were surprised by the results. Looking at four-year institutions only, sixteen percent of the 2,212 students who participated in the third assessment session had missed the second session (see Appendix H for details). We would have lost these students if we had only allowed students who took the second battery of surveys to return for the third set. The impact of allowing anyone from the first session to return for the third session varied by institution. Whittier College increased their final participation rate by twenty percentage points, while other institutions only gained a handful of students. Overall, we have seen that opening the final assessment sessions to all students who participated in the beginning can significantly increase participation rates, and we will be sure to emphasize this point when we talk to institutions in the 2007 and 2008 cohorts about recruiting students for their fourth-year administration.

The 2006 cohort had an advantage in recruiting students for the fourth-year assessment sessions because we provided funding for student incentives. Students who returned received $50 for their participation. We are not covering student incentives for the 2007 or 2008 cohorts, and while institutions might choose to provide incentives on their own, it is highly unlikely that they will be able to afford anything near $50 per student. Cohorts without student incentives had a harder time recruiting students for the second survey administration, and we expect that this will continue to be the case in the fourth year. Oxford College did not pay student incentives, and they struggled to get students to participate in their third survey administration. Oxford's overall participation rate for the third administration was just under forty percent. We will interview on-campus coordinators at institutions with high fourth-year participation rates to develop a list of suggestions and best practices for student recruitment for the 2007 and 2008 cohorts.

Wabash Study 2.0

Last year we noted that institutions in the Wabash National Study usually already had a great deal of data about student learning and student experiences before participating in the study. As one administrator at a study institution described it, institutions are often "awash in data." Furthermore, findings from the Wabash Study typically mirror data the institution already has. In response to this situation, we developed a new version of the study, Wabash Study 2.0, which focuses on using the data institutions already have rather than on collecting new data. We posted a call for participation this summer and received thirty-two applications from a wide range of institutions, some that we worked with in the past and some that we have never worked with (see Appendix I for the call for participation and application, and Appendix J for a list of institutions that applied). Much to our surprise, eleven of the applications came from institutions that are participating in the first version of the Wabash Study, including seven institutions from the 2008 cohort, four of which are funded by Teagle: Carleton College, Community College of Rhode Island, Millersville University, and Oxford College of Emory University.

All of the applications to the Wabash Study were thoughtful and showed a desire to get better at using data to improve student learning. Applicants were also eager to be part of a collaborative group in which they could share experiences and learn from colleagues at other institutions. Due to the high quality of the applications, we accepted all but two of the institutions who applied. We felt that these two institutions are not yet in a position to benefit from the structured, three-year process of the revised Wabash Study because they are still in the very beginning stages of assessment (in one case, the institution is still determining learning outcomes). One institution withdrew their application when they could not find the funding to participate. This leaves us with twenty-nine institutions in Wabash Study 2.0, eighteen new institutions and eleven institutions from the previous version of the study.

In reading through the applications from current Wabash Study institutions, we realized they viewed the new version of the study as a sort of course correction. Their applications showed they had considered data from the first version of the study, along with other information about student learning and student experience, to focus in on particular areas of their institution they wanted to improve. Because of this focus, some of the activities of the first version of the study may no longer be a priority. We will work with the eleven institutions switching from the previous version of the Wabash Study to the new version to figure out the best way to blend both versions of the study to meet the goals they identified in their recent applications.

Even with the overlap between the first and second versions of the study, it will be a challenge for our small staff to kick off Wabash Study 2.0 and launch the new Teagle Scholar Development Program this fall while continuing our work with institutions in the first version of the study. Teagle Scholars' participation in site visits, workshops, conference calls, and other activities will be vital to our success.

LESSONS LEARNED

We continue to call institutional contacts, workshop participants, and Teagle Scholars after site visits, workshops, meetings, and presentations to get feedback on our work. This summer, we also contacted all of the institutions in the Wabash Study to see where they were in terms of disseminating, discussing, and using study data to make changes on their campuses to improve student learning and to ask them to evaluate our work on the study overall. So far, we have talked to twenty-three institutions from the three cohorts of the study. Below we summarize lessons learned from our work in the Wabash Study, based on these conversations and on feedback from our activities over the past year. This information is broken into two parts: (1) our partners' evaluation of our work and (2) an update on Wabash Study institutions' progress toward using data to improve student learning. You can also view complete notes from these evaluation phone calls at the following links:

- Feedback on site visits, workshops, presentations, etc. – click here or go to https://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=0AbiPURdABOnAZGN6Mzc1OWtfNTBueGc0aGZjdA&hl=en
- Follow-up and evaluation conversations with Wabash Study institutions, Summer 2010 – click here or go to https://docs.google.com/Doc?docid=0AbiPURdABOnAZGN6Mzc1OWtfNTZmczhxNHpmOQ&hl=en&authkey=COrkhsUG

Overall evaluation of the Center

In general, faculty, staff, and administrators at the institutions with whom we have worked are exceedingly positive about their experiences working with the Center. When asked to evaluate our work, people discussed three main areas: our general approach, site visits and workshops, and the Teagle Scholars. We will report on each of these areas below.

The Center's approach

People described Center staff as responsive, supportive, and flexible, and our partners value these qualities. One administrator said that we are objective and nonthreatening. Faculty and staff can see that we do not "have an agenda," and this helps people ask questions and be curious. People also appreciate that we help them think about what they might do in response to the data, not just focus on what the data means. We try to be transparent in our work—for example, providing all the study data to institutions, being up front about our successes and failures, and acknowledging the limitations of data and assessment—and institutions appreciate this. One campus coordinator said the transparency in the Wabash Study has "modeled a new way" for them to work with data. Many people commend Charlie's interactive and engaging presentation style, commenting on his ability to make people feel comfortable and keep their defensiveness down. People also commented on his skill at "diffusing resistance" and "handling naysayers." They appreciate Charlie's ability to distill a large amount of data into salient points, to push people to figure out practical strategies for responding to data, and to craft messages for different audiences and different purposes.

The impact of site visits and workshops

Participants from institutions typically felt that workshops hosted by the Center were very helpful. One of the consistently cited benefits was the ability to have time away from the day-to-day demands of their jobs so that they could focus on a specific topic. Workshop participants also value opportunities to talk to and learn from people at other institutions. While some of our workshops have been structured better than others, overall people appreciate the format of our workshops and the structure that we provide to help institutions work toward a goal. Participants state that being asked to develop an action plan or a memo at the end of the workshop helps them maintain focus and gives them a sense of accomplishment. We have found that it is useful to provide templates and guiding questions to help institutional teams create these products. Institutional participants and Teagle Scholars also value the social opportunities and time for informal conversation that we try to build into our workshop schedules. Our recent move toward using poster sessions at workshops has received a positive response as well. Participants report that poster sessions are a good way to share data because they are more engaging than listening to one presentation after another. People also commentated that sharing seems to happen naturally during poster sessions.

Our institutional partners remarked that site visits are helpful because they bring "credible outsiders" to campus to introduce and discuss data with different constituencies. Outsiders can also help deliver less than positive news in the data. Before a site visit, we sometimes have conference calls with campus contacts to discuss and dig into the data. As part of these calls, and in our preparation for site visits, we often do customized data analysis for an institution. People appreciate this additional data analysis and our efforts to identify institution-specific areas of strength and weakness, which may differ from the national data. We believe that it is important to continue to help institutions with customized data analysis in order for them to see how they can dig into and unpack data themselves. Finally, some of our partners commented that site visits help to support and affirm people at the institution who have been working to improve student learning. These people may feel their work is not recognized or things are not changing, and they may be dealing with resistance from their colleagues. Getting a chance to talk to our visit team allows them to vent, gives them a chance to brainstorm about new approaches or ideas, and can help them remember why they got involved with this type of work in the first place.

Many people commented that site visits and workshops are valuable because they help build interest and energy around assessment—they're motivating events. However, people also remarked that it is hard to sustain this momentum after the workshop ends or the site visit team leaves an institution. Our follow-up phone calls are one way we try to keep the good ideas from these events moving forward. We would like to find ways to help institutions sustain the positive energy from these events themselves.

Teagle Assessment Scholars

Although we did not ask our institutional contacts to comment on the Teagle Assessment Scholars specifically, several people mentioned the role that the Scholars play in our work. As outsiders, Teagle Scholars can bring a new perspective to an institution. People also appreciate when Scholars share examples from their own institution of things that have worked and of things that have not gone as well. At least one institution feels that continuity is important when Teagle Scholars work with institutions. When a Scholar works with the same institution over a period of time, he or she develops a sense of the campus and how things have changed. We can see how long term relationships between a Teagle Scholar and an institution could be valuable, but we need to balance the benefits of this approach with our need to train all of the Scholars and spread opportunities to work with institutions across the group.

Areas for improvement

The areas where our partners think that we can do better fall into two main categories: getting information out to people earlier and clarifying roles/expectations.

Disseminating information in a more timely manner came up in several contexts. Several institutions mentioned they would like to receive study data sooner. We realize this is an issue, and we continue to try to find ways to streamline and accelerate this process. Unfortunately, ACT and the University of Iowa need to do a lot of work before we receive the data—cleaning the data, scoring surveys, merging data from various sources, and auditing the data. It's unlikely that we can do much more to speed up this process. We distributed the data to institutions in two parts this year so that institutions would receive data faster. We knew it would take a while for us to create the overview reports, but the data tables could be sent out fairly quickly. Unfortunately, many people find the data tables overwhelming, and they wait for the summary report. We will keep looking for ways to streamline our reporting process, but we expect that this will continue to be a challenge as our staff is the smallest it has ever been (two-full time and two part-time people) while the number of institutions we work with continues to grow. Moreover, as we have continued to modify our reports in response to campus concerns, we are beginning to wonder whether these concerns are as much about the structure of the reports or reflect a deeper anxiety about distributing and making sense of complex assessment data. The decision that many institutions make to delay disseminating assessment evidence until they get the "right report" may, in some cases, actually be a decision to avoid addressing the data.

Institutions and Teagle Scholars also said they would like to receive information for workshops and site visits earlier—e.g., agendas, participant lists, data for workshops, and presentations for site visits. Again, we realize this is an issue. We try to get information out to people as soon as we can, but we are often finalizing agendas and presentations a day or two before an event. We have begun sharing draft agendas and presentations with people; and we always try to schedule preparatory meetings with key constituents, such as coordinators and campus leaders for site visits or Teagle Scholars for workshops, at the beginning of events to get everyone on the same page. Due to our small staff size we anticipate that we will continue to struggle with this issue.

From our conversations with institutional contacts and Teagle Scholars over the past year, it appears that we need to further clarify the purposes and potential structure of site visits and the role of Teagle Scholars. We have already taken several steps to address these issues:

- Before site visits, we send institutional contacts guidelines and sample agendas to help them develop their own agenda.
- By phone or email, we clarify an institution's goals and expectations for a site visit. We also discuss the agenda and structure of the visit prior to arriving on campus.
- We schedule phone calls with Teagle Scholars prior to site visits to review goals and prepare.
- We include preparatory and debriefing meetings with visit coordinators and campus leaders at the beginning and end of site visits.
- We are more intentional in our explanations of the role of Teagle Scholars during site visits.
- We developed more detailed information about the Teagle Assessment Scholar Program, including a description of the program's core values, the problems that Teagle Scholars help solve, and the Scholars' approach. We sent this information to the Teagle Scholars and posted it on our website.
- During our follow-up phone calls with Teagle Scholars, we can address any lingering questions about the visit, including ways that Scholars might follow up with the institution.

Institutions' progress toward using evidence to make changes

As we have reported before, the more we involve students in our work, the more we see institutions move toward using data to make changes. However, disseminating and discussing evidence on campus remains a challenge for many institutions. We can continue to refine the format of our reports, but the larger issue—one we cannot control—is whether institutions will distribute those reports to their campus community. At our most recent meeting, we saw that some institutions in the 2008 cohort are still struggling to figure out how to disseminate study data on their campuses, and they have had this data since October 2009. We are beginning to see the "search for the perfect report" as an excuse for not disseminating, discussing, or using the data, similar to the "search for perfect data," which we have identified as an obstacle in previous reports.

We are still working through and evaluating the notes from our calls with Wabash Study institutions, but it appears that across the three cohorts there are a few institutions that have worked a lot with the data, sometimes in ways that surprise us. These institutions tend to be ones we have had a lot of contact with. However, many of the institutions are still not using their data.

This highlights a challenge that we face going forward. Even though we provide more individualized institutional support than any national assessment project we are aware of, only about half of the Teagle-funded institutions in the 2008 cohort are engaging the evidence and considering responses. This is substantially greater than previous cohorts of the Wabash Study, but it is still depressingly low considering all the customized support that we provide.

We have begun to wonder if we are reaching a point of diminishing returns in our work given current institutional structures. Is this the best we can achieve in the existing system? Do we have to rethink our expectations about how long it will take for institutions to move from getting evidence to making changes in response to that evidence? Do we have to be far more selective about which institutions we work with and screen them on their capacity for change? Or, are we confronting the limits of what assessment evidence can do within current governance structures, faculty prerogatives and incentives, and institutional priorities? Our evolving sense of the answers to these questions will have implications for our future work with institutions.

UPCOMING EVENTS

August planning meetings

We have two planning meetings for the 2008 cohort scheduled in August, one on August 2–4 and the other on August 10–12. The goal of these meetings is for institutional teams to describe and refine their plan to respond to Wabash Study data over the next year and a half. Given what institutions have learned from the Wabash Study data so far, what one or two areas will they target for changes to improve student learning? Institutions' plans should describe the programs, faculty development workshops, initiatives, etc., that they would like to deploy in the 2010–2011 academic year and in the fall of 2011 to improve the frequency of teaching practices and conditions that have proven effective at their campuses during the Wabash National Study. Plans should also include how the $10,000 improvement budget, which was specified in the call for participation, will support these activities.

Fifteen institutions are coming to the August planning meetings: Bennington College, Warren Wilson College, New College of Florida, Millersville University, Brandeis University, University of Rhode Island, Oxford College, Alverno College, Lasell College, Hobart and William Smith Colleges, Marlboro College, Prescott College, Carleton College, Worcester Polytechnic Institute, and Augustana College. We invited, and encouraged, all of the 2008 institutions to attend these meetings, but some institutions were unable to find two people who were willing and able to attend, while other institutions never even replied to our invitation. This has been a pattern in our work with the Wabash Study. In every cohort, there are some institutions who are highly engaged, some who are moderately engaged, and others whom we almost never hear from despite our efforts to engage them.

Site visits

We have four site visits scheduled so far this fall:

- Warren Wilson, September 7–9
- Brandeis University, October 6–8
- Salem State College, October 12–14
- Millersville University, October 18–20

Other institutions may request site visits after they attend the August planning meetings.

Workshops

We have scheduled two workshops for current Wabash Study institutions next year. The first workshop, on involving students in assessment and conducting student focus groups, is scheduled for November 11–13, 2010. Many institutions have expressed interest in training students to conduct focus groups, and we expect that this workshop will be popular. The second workshop is tentatively scheduled for the beginning of April 2011. This workshop will focus on connecting faculty development to Wabash Study data, and it may be held at the University of Rhode Island.

Wabash Study 2.0 activities

As mentioned earlier, we are going to launch the new version of the Wabash Study this fall. We have scheduled two kickoff meetings on September 17–19 and September 24–26. The purpose of these meetings is to

1. introduce teams from different campuses to one another;
2. begin identifying the contents of an institution's Assessment Portfolio;
3. identify specific learning outcomes or areas of student experience that each institution would like to improve;
4. identify and discuss concerns and possible obstacles at each campus;
5. begin the processes necessary to gather student work and use rubrics.

We will also begin scheduling data audit site visits with the new Wabash Study institutions soon.

BUDGET SUMMARY

We had a total budget of $96,250 for the second year of this grant. As of June 30, 2010 we still have almost $47,000 of this amount remaining, largely because we did not spend as much as expected on site visits. Also, the budget for the second year includes money for the August planning meetings, which have not yet occurred (see Table 2 below).

Table 2: Budget summary, as of June 30, 2010

Budget item	Yr 1 Remainder	Yr 2 Budget	Yr 2 Expenditures	Yr 2 Remainder	Yr 1 + Yr 2 Remainder
ACT Survey Administration	$0	$0	$0	$0	$0
Academic Year Meetings	$0	$15,000	$9,460	$5,540	$5,540
Kickoff and August Planning Meetings	($1,516)	$18,000	$3,678	$14,322	$12,806
Site Visits	$26,525	$33,750	$6,470	$27,280	$53,805
Center of Inquiry Staff, Teagle Scholars, Data Consultants	$7,250	$26,500	$29,853	($3,353)	$3,897
Misc Expenses	$981	$3,000	$0	$3,000	$3,981
Total	**$33,240**	**$96,250**	**$49,461**	**$46,789**	**$80,029**

We had around $33,000 remaining from our Year One budget. Adding this to the amount remaining from Year Two leaves us $80,000 under budget for the first two years of this grant. We had fewer site visits to the 2008 cohort institutions than expected this year. This may, in part, be due to when we distributed overview reports on findings from the first year. We did not send these reports out to institutions until February, and institutions may have been waiting to see what the data said before scheduling a visit. Our site visits to the 2008 institutions picked up in March and April, and we scheduled several visits for fall 2010 because we could not work further visits into our calendar in the spring. After the August planning meetings, we may receive additional requests for site visits. Furthermore, we expect that the August planning meetings will cost more than the original projections because more institutions will be attending these meetings. The budget for the August planning meetings was developed with expenses for only the Teagle-funded institutions. The institutions funded by the Davis grant received funding for two years, but we did not feel that we could stop working with them after the Davis grant ended. We committed to working with these institutions for the full four-year period of the study, and we invited them to the August planning meetings along with the Teagle-funded institutions. This could almost double the size of the August meetings. (See Appendix K for the full budget report for years 1–4.)