

The Wabash Study Call for Participation

Since 2005, the Wabash National Study of Liberal Arts Education (WNSLAE) has been the primary mechanism by which the Center of Inquiry has implemented its mission to collaborate with institutions to gather and use evidence to strengthen liberal arts education. After working with staff, faculty, administrators, and students from 49 institutions, we have learned two important lessons about the Wabash Study. First, the study would have had greater institutional benefit if, in addition to surveys and standardized tests, it had included student work. Second, more than the assessment measures, the most effective component of the Wabash Study was the ongoing collaboration between Center of Inquiry staff, **Teagle Assessment Scholars**, and campus representatives during visits, meetings, conference calls, and other interactions that were designed to help institutions make good use of their assessment data. In response, we have developed a new version of the Wabash Study that incorporates both of these lessons.

At this time, we invite institutions to apply to be one of 15 selected to participate in the first round of the revised Wabash Study beginning this fall. The study will last three years, ending in the fall of 2013. The goal of the revised Wabash Study is for institutions to use evidence to identify an area of student learning or experience that they wish to improve, and then to create, implement, and assess changes designed to improve those areas. The study is not designed to overhaul existing structures or create revolutionary changes but to model a deliberative process for using evidence that an institution can build on for future improvements. This includes building institutional capacity and infrastructure that can support successful assessment efforts after the study is completed.

While each institution will focus on improving areas that are relevant to that institution, faculty, staff, and administrators from these 15 institutions will collaborate during the course of the study as a community of practice, sharing information, approaches, problem-solving strategies, and lessons learned. Although the Wabash Study emphasizes institutional collaboration, we will not make public comparisons of institutions. Institutions that share assessment findings will be expected to follow each other's wishes concerning the privacy of these findings. Institutions will be free to communicate their own findings as they choose, as long as they do not identify other Wabash Study institutions in these communications.

In the section below, we describe the activities and structure of the new version of the Wabash Study. If your institution is interested in participating, please complete the **application** and submit it to us, along with a letter of commitment signed by your President, Chief Academic Officer, and Chief Student Affairs Officer, by July 1, 2010. We will select 15 institutions for participation by July 16. If you have any questions about applying to or participating in the Wabash Study, please contact Charlie Blaich at 765-361-6331 or charles.blaich@gmail.com.

Structure of the Wabash Study

The Wabash Study is a three-year project designed to assess the following:

- Inputs – the attitudes and values that students bring into college
- Experiences – the experiences that impact students once they are in college
- Outcomes – the impact that college has on student ability and knowledge

Each Wabash Study institution will build an Assessment Portfolio that consolidates an institution's evidence about inputs, experiences, and outcomes. This portfolio will form a "knowledge base" from which institutions will work during the course of the study. Institutions that gathered data using any of the instruments we list below in the 2008–09 or 2009–10 academic years may apply those data to their Wabash Study Assessment Portfolios.

We ask institutions that participate in the Wabash Study to include data from the following measures in their Assessment Portfolio:

- *Inputs*
 - The Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) Freshman Survey, administered by the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI).
 - Institutional information, such as the following:
 - SAT/ACT scores
 - State and federal financial aid eligibility
 - High school GPA and/or class rank
 - Additional questions from the Wabash National Study Incoming Student Survey or other surveys may also be included in an institution's Assessment Portfolio.
- *Experiences*
 - National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) or the HERI Your First College Year (YFCY) and College Senior Survey (CSS).
 - Institutional information, such as the following:
 - Students' academic majors
 - Retention data
 - GPA
 - Successful completion of courses and progress towards degree
 - Participation in athletics, Greek life, etc.
 - Wabash National Study Student Experiences Survey or other measures of student experiences may also be included in an institution's Assessment Portfolio.
- *Outcomes*
 - Rubrics to evaluate student work.
 - Institutions may use or modify existing rubrics, such as AAC&U's VALUE rubrics, or develop their own.
 - Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) tests, or the Educational Testing Service (ETS) Proficiency Profile (formerly the Measure of Academic Proficiency and Progress or MAPP).
 - Institutions will evaluate their first- and fourth-year students with these outcome measures.
 - Institutions may choose to add additional outcome measures including those from the first version of the Wabash Study or information from other recent assessment projects.

In addition, we welcome institutions to include any other program, department, or institutional assessment evidence in their Wabash Study Assessment Portfolios.

Having good assessment evidence is only a first step toward making sense of and using that evidence to inform changes that improve student learning. The new version of the Wabash Study is designed to shift the emphasis from gathering evidence to working through a structured "change curriculum" that is designed to help campus constituencies:

1. evaluate the results of quantitative and qualitative assessment evidence;
2. use that evidence to identify specific institutional, course, and program elements they would like to strengthen;
3. develop, implement, and assess responses that are designed to strengthen these institutional elements.

Although the Wabash Study includes tests and surveys that will help an institution meet accountability standards, the study focuses on the formative use of evidence to promote institutional changes. We will accomplish this through a series of structured site visits, meetings, and workshops that we developed in the first iteration of the Wabash Study. These activities are staffed by the Director and Associate Director of the Center of Inquiry and Teagle Assessment Scholars. Teagle Scholars include faculty and administrators from institutions across the country with expertise in assessment and institutional improvement.

Wabash Study Timeline

May 2010

- Call for participation in the Wabash Study
 - Institutions can apply until July 1, 2010.
 - In their applications, institutions will identify one or two institutional representatives to serve as Wabash Study Campus Leaders. Campus Leaders will have the primary responsibility on campus for ensuring that their institution engages in the work of the study, including the collection of student work, and they will serve as the main contact for the Center of Inquiry. These individuals may come from the administration, faculty, or staff. Regardless of their specific role on campus, it is essential that the Wabash Study Campus Leaders:
 1. are interested in using evidence to promote improvement in student learning and experiences;
 2. have sufficient social and political capital on campus to communicate with and gather faculty, staff, administrators, and students together to work on this project;
 3. have sufficient administrative support to work with campus constituencies on developing formative responses to assessment evidence.
 - If institutions have individuals who feel they lack sufficient knowledge about assessment but are otherwise interested in and capable of fulfilling the role of Wabash Study Campus Leaders, we suggest that institutions designate these individuals as Campus Leaders and that they join our Teagle Assessment Scholar Development Program. This program is designed to help individuals, regardless of their disciplinary background, develop their skills at using evidence to promote changes in complex campus environments. For more information on this program and

how it can be linked with an institution's participation in the Wabash Study, please see the Teagle Assessment Scholar [website](#).

- If the Campus Leader leaves the institution during the study, the institution will need to designate a replacement.
- Institutions will also commit to setting aside a total of \$10,000 for responding to the assessment evidence gathered in the study. (We have included more information on this requirement [below](#) in the section covering costs.)

July 2010

- The Center of Inquiry selects participating institutions.

July–September 2010

- Center of Inquiry staff work with institutions via email and phone calls to catalog assessment data they already possess to create a first draft of their Assessment Portfolio. These conversations will also help institutions determine what additional surveys or outcome measures they will administer in 2010–11 as well as how they will use rubrics to evaluate student work.
- Teams of Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Scholars begin visiting each Wabash Study campus to meet with campus representatives. The purpose of these visits is to work with campus representatives to audit relevant assessment evidence the campus already has, to review the impact of previous assessment work, and to learn about the campus governance and faculty/staff development resources.
- Representatives from Wabash Study institutions participate in a kickoff meeting at Wabash College on September 24–26, 2010.
 - Each institution will send a team of three people, including the Wabash Study Campus Leader, to the kickoff meeting. The team should include at least one representative of academic affairs and one representative of student affairs.
 - The purpose of the meeting 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 the 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.

Fall 2010

- Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Scholars continue visits to study institutions to meet with campus representatives.
- Those institutions that do not already have CIRP or Wabash Study incoming student data will administer the CIRP Freshman Survey.
- Institutions that want to include the CLA in their Assessment Portfolio, but that do not have recent data, will administer the CLA to first-year students.
- Institutions begin to collect student work for the rubric component of the study.
- Institutions send data for their Assessment Portfolios to the Center of Inquiry as they become available.

Spring 2011

- Institutions that do not have recent data will administer NSSE or YFCY/CSS and CAAP, the ETS Proficiency Profile, or CLA.
 - CAAP and the Proficiency Profile (MAPP) to first- and fourth-year students, CLA to fourth-year students.
 - Institutions that select CAAP or the Proficiency Profile may conduct their administration for first-year students in fall 2010 instead.
- Institutions continue collecting student work for the rubric component of the study.
 - Institutions continue to work with the Center of Inquiry and Teagle Assessment Scholars as needed to develop campus mechanisms for gathering student work and using rubrics.
- Institutions continue to work with the Center of Inquiry and Teagle Assessment Scholars as needed to develop mechanisms for disseminating, discussing, and making sense of assessment data on campus.
- Institutions continue to send data for their Assessment Portfolios to the Center of Inquiry as they become available.

Summer 2011

- Workshops are held at institutions to apply rubrics to student work.
- Institutions send the final data components for their Assessment Portfolios to the Center of Inquiry, including the rubrics and information generated from the rubric workshops.

Fall 2011

- Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Scholars continue site visits and conversations as needed to collaborate with faculty, staff, administrators, and students to evaluate evidence collected in the first year of the study for the Assessment Portfolios.
 - Possible activities include merging quantitative data from different sources, mining data for patterns and trends, and conducting student focus groups or interviews to follow up on quantitative data.
 - The specific activities will be customized for each campus, with the overall goal being to use the evidence in a campus's Assessment Portfolio to identify actionable areas for improvement.

Spring 2012

- Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Scholars continue site visits and conversations with institutions on an as-needed basis.
- Two workshops, either hosted regionally or at the Center of Inquiry, will be held to help campus representatives develop plans to work with their colleagues to identify actionable items in their Assessment Portfolios.
 - The first workshop in late 2011 or early 2012 will focus on helping institutions identify and prioritize a small number of actionable responses from their Assessment Portfolios.
 - Institutions will most likely act on only a small number of the changes that their assessment evidence suggests. However, the goal of the Wabash Study is to help campuses create a recursive process for using evidence to promote improvements, and items that are not addressed during the study can be revisited in the year or two after the study.
 - The second workshop later in the spring will focus on helping institutions develop assessable action plans that they will implement in fall 2012 in response to their Assessment Portfolios.

- Wabash Study Campus Leaders and campus representatives who attend these workshops will work at their campuses to conduct retreats, meetings, workshops, and other activities to help staff, students, and faculty connect assessment findings to courses and/or programs and develop action plans for change.
- Wabash Study Campus Leaders continue to communicate with Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Assessment Scholars about the retreats, workshops, and other faculty/staff activities that are taking place at their institutions.

Summer 2012

- Institutions continue retreats, workshops, etc., to help faculty and staff translate assessment findings to courses and programs and to develop action plans for change.

Fall 2012 and Spring 2013

- Faculty and staff implement changes in their classes and programs based on the assessment findings in order to improve student learning. These changes should be sufficiently targeted so that they can be implemented and assessed during the 2012–13 academic year.
 - Wabash Study Campus Leaders continue communication with Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Assessment Scholars about changes that are being implemented and the subsequent assessment of these changes.
- Institutions assess the impact of course and program changes. Wabash Study Campus Leaders communicate their findings and send related reports or analyses to Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Assessment Scholars.

Fall 2013

- Final meeting of all Wabash Study institutions at the Center of Inquiry to review the changes that made a difference at institutions and to discuss how institutions will continue to gather, evaluate, and use assessment data to improve student learning.
 - Each institution will send a team of three people, including the Wabash Study Campus Leader, to the final meeting.
 - Institutions will share the lessons learned from the project about using data to promote campus change.

Spring 2014

- Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Assessment Scholars will review documents and results of the activities of the Wabash Study in order to generate a report for all institutions highlighting the successes, failures, lessons learned, and possible future activities for the collaborative.

Costs

Institutions will cover the following costs:

- Administering the CIRP Freshman Survey, NSSE or YFCY/CSS, and CLA, CAAP, or the ETS Proficiency Profile as necessary.
- Campus activities to support gathering samples of student work and evaluating them using rubrics.
- Travel for teams to and from Center-sponsored meetings identified in the timeline.
- Lodging and meals for Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Assessment Scholars on site visit teams.
- Allocating \$10,000 for responding to the assessment evidence gathered in the study.
 - These are dollars that the institution will "pay itself" to cover the costs of faculty development workshops, institutional meetings or retreats to review the data, follow-up student interviews, or any other institutional activity that helps the institution respond formatively to the assessment data.
 - These dollars cannot be counted toward covering travel costs for institutional teams or meal and lodging costs for site visit teams, or for administering standardized surveys and rubrics. However, they can be used to cover the costs of meetings or other activities that are designed to help faculty, staff, and students engage already gathered assessment evidence. This includes working with rubrics to evaluate student work.

The Center of Inquiry will cover the following costs:

- Travel for Center of Inquiry staff and Teagle Assessment Scholars to and from institutions for site visits.
- Food, lodging, and transportation to and from Indianapolis International Airport for representatives from Wabash Study institutional teams at Center-sponsored meetings identified in the timeline.
- Teagle Assessment Scholar stipends and all other consulting costs.