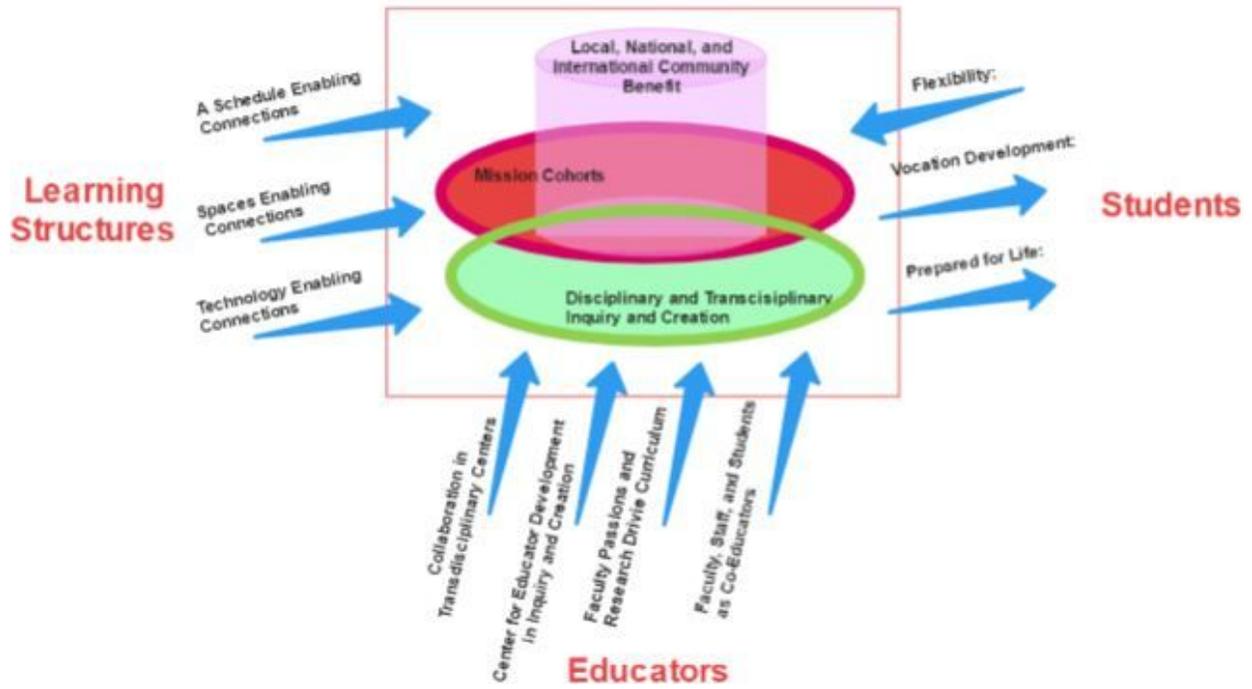


# An Education Based Upon Inquiry and Creation



## **Working Group 2 - How We Teach and Learn Final Report**

**Membership** - Co-chairs: Anne Crecelius (Health and Sport Science) , Danielle Poe (College of Arts and Sciences, dean's office); ECAS-nominated faculty representative: Connie Bowman (Teacher Education); Student member: Alon Zelong Li; Other faculty and staff members: Ryan Allen (E-Learning, UDiT), Kelly Bohrer (Fitz Center), Shannon Driskell (Mathematics), Kevin Hallinan (Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering), Steve Wilhoit (English and LTC); President's Council liaison: Deb Bickford (Academic Affairs and Learning Initiatives)

**Guiding Question** - How will we teach and learn 20 years hence, and what will this entail for curricula, pedagogies, academic programs, and educational structures?

### **PRIMARY OBSERVATIONS**

1. Across UD, faculty, staff, and students have a desire for a more diverse and connected community. We want to see more opportunities for connection across areas of disciplinary expertise. People recognize that in order for this to happen we need to rethink workload policies, who is contributing to the educational mission and how that work is recognized and valued, and provide opportunities for engaging in, rewarding, and celebrating transdisciplinary work and education.
2. Very closely related to observation one, people have a desire for flexibility in our educational structures that will allow UD to truly "read the signs of the times" and more quickly adapt to changing technological, economic, social, political, religious, and environmental climates.
3. The Catholic and Marianist Spirit of UD is reflected in two ways that we want to more intentionally cultivate. First, UD students should be educated as a whole persons such that they have the skills necessary for graduate school and careers, but they also have a sense of purpose for their lives. Second, UD students should be educated in Catholic Social Teaching so that they have a respect for the dignity of the human person, human rights, care for the earth, and responsibility to the poor and the vulnerable.

The strategic aspirations developed in our report reflect strong consensus in the visioning meetings we hosted and in the data available from drop-in sessions, visioning meetings hosted by units and other working groups, and from the visioning day. Two areas that frequently came up and led to divergent views are the role of technology and whether a UD education ought to focus more on the local or the global. Technology as a pedagogical tool is viewed by many as a means to reach a more diverse pool of students and educators, to offer more educational flexibility, and to stay competitive in the marketplace. For others, technology as it stands today erodes our core identity as a residential campus, risks undermining relationship building and makes it more difficult to cultivate a rich community experience. The other debate that we noticed is whether a UD education should be more focused on the local community or the global community. Those who advocate for a local focus note that our local community (UD and Dayton) reflects global problems and opportunities and allows students to more easily see the implications of global policies and actions. Those who advocate for a global focus note that UD students could benefit from a less centrist view of themselves and the

world. We have not attempted to resolve these debates; rather, we are putting forward aspirations that can allow the flexibility for both sides to develop and to be in conversation with each other.

## **STRATEGIC ASPIRATIONS**

### **Aspirational Goal 1: In 2036, students, faculty, and staff at the University of Dayton will engage in inquiry and creation designed to benefit local, national and international communities.**

The University will emphasize the common good and individual vocational discernment in this process. Appropriate resources (human, time, monetary) must be provided by the institution to realize an inquiry-minded community because curiosity must be kindled and is not an innate or ever-lasting skill. The overarching model of inquiry we propose will be founded on several distinctive, defining characteristics:

- Creative. Cultivating imagination and curiosity allows students, staff, faculty, and alumni to ask questions, solve problems, and create novel possibilities.
- Reflective. Inquiry is not only an externally-facing process; self-inquiry is an important component of vocational discernment and professional development.
- Purposeful. Inquiry that results in specific, timely, and effective solutions to problems will be a defining feature of a UD education.
- Responsible. Inquiry acknowledges and is guided by two learning outcomes central to the University's Marianist identity: critical evaluation of our times and practical wisdom.
- Diverse. Recognizing and valuing discordant perspectives, life experiences, and approaches to understanding and ways of knowing are critical to a meaningful inquiry process.
- Balanced. There must be a balance between discipline-specific and transdisciplinary inquiry, with both working toward the common good.

To work towards this aspiration, the University will invest in transdisciplinary centers and programs for applied knowledge and inquiry-based outcomes. Leveraging current university assets, resources, expertise, and community partnerships, a few example Centers (or Schools) could be:

- Center for Community Health and Wellbeing: provides low-cost primary care, rehabilitation, and education services to the Dayton community. Working with current community partners (Greater Dayton Hospital Association, Premier Health, CareSource) and integrating expertise from across campus (the arts and humanities, public administration, health communication, business administration, and the health sciences) this center will provide opportunities for inquiry that can positively impact the Dayton community.
- Center for Creative Arts and Community: welcomes the public and can highlight expressions of creative work produced by the campus community. Rotating exhibits can display creative work and the outcomes of inquiry-based projects with students managing and designing the space.
- Center for Social Justice and Civic Engagement: partners with (or incorporates) existing campus entities (Fitz Center for Leadership in Community, Hanley Sustainability Institute, Center for Social Concern), to lead campus-wide initiatives that focus on Marianist and Catholic aspects of inquiry with particular emphasis on themes of Catholic Social Teaching in learning, research, and creativity.
- Center of Inquiry for Professionals: provides support to help staff, faculty, and community partners serve as practitioner scholars when working with students. The institute would be

dedicated to developing the skills, values, and aptitudes for this approach to learning, practicing, and mentoring.

To achieve this aspiration, it will be necessary to consciously distinguish content-based learning, necessary for overall development and achievement of future goals and aspirations (e.g., graduate and professional schools) from skills, practice, and process-based learning experiences. Along these lines, technology could be used for the primary delivery of content, leaving face-to-face interactions for development of inquiry-based thinking, discussion, skill and practice development, and mentoring.

**ASPIRATIONAL GOAL 2: By 2036, all students at the University of Dayton engage experientially in Mission Cohorts of teaching, learning, and creation, responsive to real needs in communities impacting both students and the world.** This innovative approach to teaching and learning will call for every student to have a major and participate in a Mission Cohort. Faculty and staff will propose Cohorts in response to the signs of the times to address specific needs, concerns, and callings. Each cohort will provide interested faculty, students, and staff an opportunity to study and become actively engaged in addressing specific local and/or global community needs together. Faculty, students, and staff, working with community partners and alumni, will contribute to the purpose-driven goals of each cohort, work designed to connect learning in the classroom with experiential learning, community engagement, reflection, and vocational discernment. This education features:

- Students as Inspired Learners: The Mission Cohorts enable students to commit to a self-transcendent purpose. Learning inspired by purpose is learning that is deep and sticky.
- Students as Seekers: The Mission Cohorts offer students opportunities to explore and find their passion, to see the inspiration of others, and to reflect on and discern their own vocation and profession.
- Students as Contextual Learners: The Mission Cohorts will challenge students to see the value of their learning, both within and outside of their discipline, in a purpose-driven context. Their learning will not be merely theoretical. It will be anchored in their mission.
- Students as Creators/Scholars: The Mission Cohorts challenge students to continually leverage a body of learning and scholarship within the cohorts to work cooperatively with the communities they are serving to innovate and test new solutions.
- Students as Silo Breakers: The Mission Cohorts rally together diverse students toward a common purpose; the learning and solutions both leverage and transcend disciplinary knowledge and ways of doing.
- Students as Community Champions: The Mission Cohorts positively impact the supported partner communities through a sustained and evolving commitment to the partner.
- Students Prepared for Success in Life: The Mission Cohort experiences engender life transferrable skills including self-learning, problem solving, collaboration, conflict resolution, and leadership.

Structurally, these experiences will be scaffolded to nurture the students' exploration of mission and vocation in their first year through their participation in at least one cohort; during their middle years through continued meaningful involvement linked to courses in their common academic experience and their major; and during their final year through peer leadership and the pursuit of their vocations. Individualized courses of study will strongly support and be supported by student involvement in the

cohorts. The Mission Cohorts will leverage the expertise of faculty, staff, students, community members, and alumni in different disciplines who can inform students' understanding of the issues integral to their missions, such as community, social justice, ethics, politics, sustainability, entrepreneurship, health, and more. Students will be challenged to contextually relate their mission experiences to their course work in the common curriculum and major.

Action toward this aspiration must begin by gauging the value of Mission Cohorts to alumni and employers. This type of education should help to graduate students the world values as well as needs. Step two would involve piloting Mission Cohorts to better define their structure and assess their effectiveness compared to the current curriculum and academic requirements. For example, Dayton Public Schools (DPS) could benefit from a Mission Cohort focused on urban education and adolescent well-being. Working with community partners, the staff in the Fitz Center for Leadership and Community, the Learning and Teaching Center, the Division of Student Development, students and faculty from the School of Education and Health Sciences could develop and run programs that benefit underserved students in DPS. Students and faculty in the social sciences could then seek to understand the impact of these programs on the community and engage with School of Business Administration and the Master of Public Administration students and faculty to explore the financial feasibility and practicality of implementation of similar programs outside the Dayton region including working with international partners. Because they bring in experience from their professional lives and can help to form relationships in Dayton, alumni would be a valuable resource for those engaged in this Mission Cohort. This type of Mission Cohort builds from existing structures and amplifies their potential by allowing for deeper and broader impact with the community and within University of Dayton and thus makes an attractive pilot program.

**ASPIRATIONAL GOAL 3: By 2036, the University of Dayton is known for structuring learning and teaching environments that allow faculty, staff, and students to engage in intentional holistic development of the self, participate in transdisciplinary inquiry and creation, and connect with the community.** The current structure of and pace of life at the University of Dayton does not allow sufficient time to participate reflectively in activities which are central to the mission of the University of Dayton and distinctive educational experiences. Creative, innovative, and bold changes are needed across the university (for example, in the weekly calendar, definition of curricular and co-curricular, structures and reward systems, technologies, physical spaces and human resources) to broaden the campus community and counter these barriers. Some examples:

Schedule: the University of Dayton could reserve Wednesday as a day for alternative learning and research, a day that will provide time and opportunity for faculty, staff, and students to creatively engage in reflection, research, and collaborative and project-based learning. Likewise, the University will not schedule committee meetings or other administrative activities on that day to allow for flexibility in pursuing course work, research, professional development, and advising. Benefits of this schedule include:

- Faculty: time to be part of transdisciplinary communities engage in mentoring student research, professional development, and experiential learning. This schedule should also be

part of a more flexible workload policy, which will reflect greater flexibility for different ratios of teaching and research.

- Staff: opportunities to partner with faculty, other staff, and students in transdisciplinary inquiry and creation. A staff workload policy will be created to create more flexibility and empowerment for staff to be practitioner scholars and co-educators in the work they do on campus and in the community.
- Students: allows for shared time with faculty and staff to engage in activities that support their disciplinary and vocation-driven goals.
- Community: dedicated time in which collaboration with UD faculty, staff, and students can take place.

Physical Spaces: Combined offices and learning spaces that accommodate inquiry and creation that may span across current divisions, units, and departments. Dedicated parking and meeting spaces for collaboration with the community.

Technology:

- Without the appropriate record of inquiry and creation of students, staff, and faculty, an opportunity for reflective growth and long-lasting impact may be lost. University of Dayton students, staff, faculty and alumni would have a digital portfolio that tracks both disciplinary work and vocational development so that they can link their skills, learning and outcomes to their purpose.
- Faculty, staff, and students should be collaborating with the faculty and staff in the LTC and UDiT in order to continually promote effective engagement with the newest forms of technology that can be used to overcome barriers of distance and accessibility. This collaboration would increase efficiency and promote sustainable (environmental and fiscal) practices.

## **CONCLUSION**

The strategic aspirations we present are intended to work synergistically. On their own, each aspiration would likely result in positive effects on the way we teach and learn. Taken together, these aspirations represent a new approach to our attempts to fulfill the University of Dayton mission to educate the whole person and link learning and scholarship with leadership and service. Further, these aspirations would allow UD faculty, staff, and students greater flexibility to work according to their passion and calling by providing appropriate recognition, structure, and support.

In twenty years, how and what we teach will be guided by the disciplinary- and mission-based needs for inquiry and creation. The university community of educators (faculty, staff, and community) will provide disciplinary training that prepares students for what the world requires. We will rely on students to bring their passion, and we will develop their skills in self-learning and vocational discernment. Our approach will be transdisciplinary when appropriate and emphasize creative and critical thinking in order to solve problems. In order to support these approaches, we must add flexibility to our current academic structures, learning spaces, and method of documenting learning. These aspirations could create a University of Dayton that distinguishes itself amongst its peers for innovation and excellence in its approach to fulfilling its institutional mission. The value these experiences would add to the experience of students, both during their time as a University of Dayton

student as well as lifelong experience as an alumnus would provide the necessary interest in and support of the institution for many years to come.