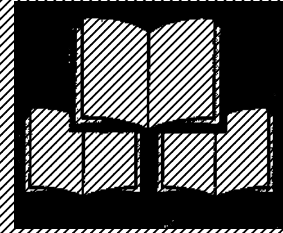


AALE

NEWSLETTER



AALE Awarded Major Grant by U.S. Department of Education

AALE has received a major grant from the U.S. Department of Education's **Learning Anywhere, Anytime Project (LAAP)**. Totalling nearly \$900,000 over three years, this grant will enable the Academy to conduct the first intensive study of the increasingly important issue of liberal arts learning in internet-based distance education. Dr. George Lucas of the U.S. Naval Academy and Dr. John Baker, Jr. of Louisiana State University will co-direct the project for the

Academy. The proposal was one of only 12 selected for funding from approximately 600 submissions. Funds received from **LAAP** will be matched by an equal amount raised from foundations and other sources.

The Academy's **LAAP** project has three closely linked objectives. First, to develop appropriate means and standards for assessing teaching and learning in the context of internet-based coursework and degree programs. Second, to conduct

controlled studies to evaluate the learning effectiveness of liberal arts courses and programs conducted through this medium, with an emphasis on general education. Finally, using the results of these initial phases of the **LAAP** project, the Academy shall develop special distance education accreditation standards capable of ensuring the quality and rigor of liberal arts courses and programs delivered over the internet.

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AALE Liberal Learning Assessment Project Update

A new cohort of AALE Fellows in Learning Assessment has been appointed at six distinguished liberal arts institutions. Noted scholars and educators Dr. Cathy Pons of the **University of North Carolina at Asheville**, Dr. Robert Wigton of **Eckerd College** (St. Petersburg, FL), Dr. Ronald Mawby of the **Whitney Young Honors College at Kentucky State University** (Frankfort, KY), Dr. Nicholas Smith of **Lewis and Clark College** (Portland, OR), Dr. Anna Brownell of **Chapman University** (Orange, CA) and Dr. James Lenburg of **Mars Hill College** (Mars Hill, NC) will conduct pilot projects in learning assessment at their respective institutions. This project is generously supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts and The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

Fritschler Speaks at May 16 AALE Accreditors' Meeting



Assistant Secretary of Education Lee Fritschler addressed a recent AALE hosted meeting of regional accreditors on learning assessment. Other leading higher education organizations were also represented. Story on page 3.

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According to AALE Board member John W. Harris, the Academy's LAAP project will be the first to develop a comprehensive alternative to "the graveyard of makeshift efforts to put new wine into old wineskins that is distance learning accreditation for the liberal arts." To assist in the development and execution of this groundbreaking project, the Academy has assembled a distinguished National Advisory Panel comprised of experts in higher education learning assessment, presidents and project directors from universities that are pioneering the delivery of on-line liberal arts courses and programs, leaders from the burgeoning web-based education industry, and high-ranking state education officials.

The Academy expects that its work in the field of distance learning assessment and accreditation will constitute a significant advance in quality assurance for this exponentially growing area of higher education.

For more information on the Academy's LAAP project in distance learning assessment and accreditation, visit the LAAP project page on the AALE website at: www.aale.org.

Partial Roster of AALE LAAP National Advisory Panel Members

Dr. Geoffrey Cox, Vice-provost, Stanford University; incoming Vice President for Academic Affairs and Continuing Education of Unext.com

Dr. Douglas Johnstone, Provost, Western Governors University

Dr. Wayne Williams, President of Regents College

Dr. Bruce Chaloux, Director of the Southern Regional Electronic Campus

Dr. Robert V. Antonucci, President and CEO of Harcourt Learning Direct

Mr. Jon Dobrin, Vice President for Technology and co-founder of eCollege.com

Dr. John Harris, Associate Provost, Samford University

Dr. Inez Giles, Director of Distance Education Technologies, University of Maryland-University College

Dr. Judith Eaton, President of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation

Dr. Warren Evans, Director of the Collegiate Approvals and Research Unit, Commonwealth of PA

Dr. Karl Schilling, Deputy Director of the State Council on Higher Education of Virginia

Dr. Peter Ewell, Senior Associate, National Center for Higher Education Management Systems

Dr. Peter Williams, Director of Institutional Review for the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in Great Britain

AALE NEWSLETTER

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The American Academy for Liberal Education is recognized by the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education as a national agency for the accreditation and pre-accreditation of institutions and programs within institutions of higher education that offer liberal arts degrees at the baccalaureate level. The AALE is a non-profit, non-sectarian and non-partisan organization incorporated in the District of Columbia.

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AALE Hosts Accreditors' Conference on Learning Assessment in Accreditation

Executive directors and other representatives of the six regional accrediting agencies met at the Cosmos Club in Washington D.C. on May 16 to discuss key issues in student learning assessment and accreditation at a meeting convened by the American Academy for Liberal Education (AALE), with the support of The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Also participating in the meeting were Judith Eaton, president of the Council on Higher Education Accreditation, Samuel Hope of the National Office for Arts Accreditation in Higher Education, and John Nichols and Carol Schneider, both of the American Association of Colleges and Universities.

The meeting opened with remarks by Dr. Lee Fritschler, assistant secretary for Post-Secondary Education at the Department of Education. Dr. Fritschler called attention to several critical questions facing the nation's accreditors and commended the efforts of AALE and the Pew and Knight foundations in bringing together the nation's accreditors to confront squarely the increasing public and political demands for educational accountability. Dr. Fritschler also hailed AALE's draft protocols for learning outcomes-based accreditation as a unique and significant contribution toward achieving

greater levels of accountability in liberal arts education. Other significant issues addressed by the assistant secretary included the long-standing problem of the transferability of credit between accredited institutions and the challenges and opportunities posed for educational assessment and accreditation by the advent and explosive growth of internet-based distance learning.

Following Dr. Fritschler's remarks, Jean Avnet Morse, meeting co-chair and executive director of the Middle States Association of Schools and Colleges, invited representatives of each accrediting agency to present its own efforts and initiatives in higher education accreditation reform. Presenters included Executive Director Charles Cook of the New England Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, Ann Chard of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commissioner Richard Dunn of the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges, Steve Spangehl of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, and Dean Elias, director of Special Projects for the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Each presentation was followed by a period for questions and conversation, marked by lively and collegial exchanges of information and experiences in charting new approaches to

higher education accreditation.

During the closing session of the day-long symposium, representatives of the nation's accrediting agencies engaged in a fruitful and wide-ranging discussion of questions and problems. Russ Edgerton, director of the Pew Forum on Undergraduate Learning, urged all present to recommit their agencies to bringing learning assessment to the fore of higher education accreditation and commended AALE for its achievements in this regard. This discussion was led by Peter Ewell, senior associate at the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), and John Harris, associate provost for Quality and Assessment at Samford University.

*What's new at
www.aale.org*

*Visit our website for
additional information on:*

AALE's Newly Awarded LAAP
Distance Education Grant

AALE's WASC Presentation
on its innovative *Key
Performance Indicators
and*

AALE's Presentation at the
16th Annual Distance
Teaching and Learning
Conference

AALE Calls for New Focus on Student Learning at *CHEA 2000* Conference

AALE Executive Director Michael Poliakoff addressed a workshop panel on the concept of the “academic audit” for the **Council on Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA) 2000 Conference**, “Sharing Responsibility for Quality: Institutions, Programs, and Accreditors.” Dr. Poliakoff was joined by Dr. Frank Murray, executive director of the Teacher Education Accreditation Council (TEAC) and by Thomas Suh, AALE research and policy analyst. Dr. Poliakoff’s presentation focused on the Academy’s continuing efforts to make evidence of student learning a central feature of the accreditation process and was followed by extensive discussion.

Dr. Poliakoff briefly recounted the history of the “academic audit,” noting that as originally developed by the distinguished American educator Fred Harclerod, the concept referred to the systematic use of archived evidence of student learning to gauge the educational effectiveness of institutions of higher learning. When the idea of the academic audit was later adopted by education authorities in the United Kingdom, it was transformed into a bureaucratized process focusing on issues of governance, administration, finances, and hiring procedures. One irony of this transformation, Dr. Poliakoff observed, was that the Oxford Colleges, which had

long nurtured a culture of evidence of student learning, were among the institutions most fearful of the new process-oriented auditing system, precisely because its standards and methods were so far removed from substantive questions of student learning. “The challenge facing accreditors today,” he argued, “is to return to the original conception of the ‘academic audit’ as a systematic approach to the evaluation of teaching and learning effectiveness.”

Dr. Poliakoff went on to describe the Academy’s contribution to this renewal of the academic audit concept, an ongoing project called “A New Model for Accreditation in the Liberal Arts.” Developed with generous support from The Pew Charitable Trusts and the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, this project’s goal has been to develop a new set of evidence-oriented standards suitable for use in liberal arts accreditation. Dr. Poliakoff stressed that these new guidelines were being carefully integrated with AALE’s hallmark Education Standards and would retain the academic rigor distinctive to the Academy’s accreditation process.

Dr. Poliakoff stressed that the Academy’s implementation of the academic audit concept affords institutions great flexibility in defining their own approach to the gathering, evaluating, and

reporting of evidence of student learning, emphasizing that the new instrument corresponds well to the sophisticated and complex aims of a liberal education. An early version of these evidence-oriented standards was successfully tested in the accreditation review of Tusculum College (Tusculum, TN) in 1999, and five distinguished liberal arts colleges have recently agreed to take part in pilot projects this coming year using the new standards in their fully revised and final form. *[See the AALE Learning Assessment Project Update on this newsletter’s cover page.]*

At the same panel, AALE Research and Policy Analyst Thomas Suh discussed the Academy’s innovative **Key Performance Indicators (KPI)**, a streamlined financial and institutional reporting form. Using a highly focused version of the rating system developed by **Moody’s Investor Services**, the Academy’s **KPI** reporting system quickly and effectively weighs critical financial and institutional data in order to determine the sustainability of a college or university degree program. Now in use among new applicants and current accredited members, the KPI form frees the Academy’s accreditation teams to focus even more of their time and effort on an institution’s educational programs.

ACCREDITATION UPDATE

The Thomas More College of Liberal Arts – Merrimack, NH

Thomas More College was founded in 1978 by a group of lay Catholic educators to offer “a Catholic education to students of all faiths,” and to form a unique and highly personal education based on a renewed understanding of the classroom experience as “a kind of high celebration.”

The heart of the College’s degree program is a four-year core sequence in the history, literature, and philosophy of *The Ancient World, The Early and High Middle Ages, The Renaissance and Reformation, Early Modern Studies, American Studies*, and finally the *Late- and Post-Modern Era*. Students also pursue core studies in classical languages, theology, modern science, and mathematics, complemented by advanced study in one of the major disciplines. A sophomore semester in Rome forms an integral part of the educational experience at Thomas More.

The classroom is the center of campus life at Thomas More: “its limits of time, place, subject, teacher and class members provide the circumstances for both individual insights and common understanding not available outside its peculiar economy.” Both in

the classroom and beyond, students as well as faculty contribute to the teaching and learning process “which is dependent on the formation of harmonious friendships among all participants in the life of the institution.”

Ultimately, Thomas More College seeks to convey to its students “a love of learning, a spirit of abundance and generosity, and a well-founded sense of hope in what they may accomplish throughout life.”

Southern Virginia College – Buena Vista, VA

Originally founded in 1867, Southern Virginia College is today an independent, four-year liberal arts college designed to serve the higher education needs of members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and others of similar beliefs and values. The College is committed “to providing rigorous instruction in the arts, letters, and sciences through a superior faculty, and to assisting individuals to fulfill their spiritual, intellectual, and social potential as sons and daughters of God.”

Accordingly, the liberal arts curriculum at Southern Virginia College is designed to “educate the whole being.” To further intellectual development, the academic program at the College aims to help students “appreciate the theoretical and creative achievements of the past and present, including political, so-

cial, artistic and scientific achievements.” Similarly, social development “requires an understanding of one’s own cultural tradition as well as of the ideas and practices of other traditions.” Southern Virginia’s rigorous general education requirements ensure that students acquire the necessary foundation in these studies before pursuing specialized studies in their majors.

To foster spiritual development, Southern Virginia encourages its students to “reflect on their studies in light of the gospel of Jesus Christ” and provides access to LDS classes and activities both on and off campus. Extensive programs in community service and varsity athletics enable students to develop the virtues associated with social service and cooperation.

The educational experience at Southern Virginia features a low teacher-student ratio (average class size is sixteen), an accessible faculty, small seminar-type classes that ensure student participation, and an honor code which holds honesty and virtue in the highest regard.

Ave Maria College – Ypsilanti, MI

Ave Maria College was founded in 1998 in response to the call of Vatican II for
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“greater lay witness in contemporary society.” To this end, Ave Maria College has developed a liberal arts curriculum dedicated “to the advancement of human culture, the promotion of dialogue between faith and reason, and the formation of men and women in the intellectual and moral virtues of the Catholic faith.”

The curriculum of Ave Maria College consists in a core of selected studies which introduce students to the most important authors, texts, and ideals of the Western tradition of liberal arts learning. These studies are organized according to the different disciplines of knowledge beginning with and acknowledging the central role of theology and emphasizing the unity of truth as evidenced additionally by reason and imagination. Accordingly, the core curriculum includes courses in theology, philosophy, literature, music, Greek or Latin, a humanities seminar, mathematics, and sciences. Ave Maria also provides its students with the opportunity to spend an interim term in Rome, undertaking “an intensive study of the theological, historical and artistic development of the Eternal City.”

As an institution committed to Roman Catholic principles, Ave Maria College seeks to create and maintain an environment in which faith informs the life of the community and takes expression in all its programs.

AALE Keynote at PA Governor's Institute for Life Science Educators

AALE Executive Director Michael Poliakoff addressed life science public school teachers gathered at the Milton S. Hershey Medical Center (Hershey, PA) for the **Governor's Institute for Life Science Educators**, an intensive, week-long professional development program. Founded by Pennsylvania governor Tom Ridge, the Governor's Institutes seek to deepen the knowledge and skills of school teachers through intensive and focused study of the subjects they teach, and through one-on-one contact with leading academic researchers and practitioners in those fields. These institutes, together with dramatically higher standards for teacher preparation and certification, form an integral aspect of Governor Ridge's efforts to ensure that the state's public schools are staffed by the best and brightest teachers and teacher candidates.

Dr. Poliakoff praised the Governor's Institutes for their uncompromising standards and congratulated participants for taking part in a demanding program that would bring them into contact with research at the cutting edge of their fields. A ten year veteran of college teaching himself, Dr. Poliakoff noted that students continuously observe and grade their teachers on their own commitment to scholarship and learning. Teachers who bring to their classrooms the fruits of intensive graduate level

work at the Governor's Institute for Life Science Educators, he added, “model for their students the energetic pursuit of science and can show their students the *habits of the scientist* in addition to teaching them the *skills of science*.” Dr. Poliakoff reminded his audience of the words of Max Born, 1955 Nobel laureate in physics: “‘Uncompromising, indefatigable pursuit of truth is the hallmark that distinguishes the scientist from the charlatan. It constitutes the indispensable ethic of science.’ Science teachers need to continually walk the walk of science in order to retain and enhance their effectiveness in the classrooms.”

Dr. Poliakoff's keynote address noted past failures of vision that impeded progress in science and medicine and the new challenges for scientists and teachers of scientists. Citing Dr. Lewis Thomas' reflections on the progress of medical science, Dr. Poliakoff observed that scientific progress depended on “meticulous, disciplined, and painstaking observation and pursuit of knowledge,” often conducted in the face of daunting obstacles and opposition. Dr. Poliakoff reminded his audience that in their classrooms might well sit the young man or woman who would make the next great breakthrough in medical science. But even if they were not so fortunate as to have one of these

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rarest of students, there would "certainly be young men and women whose earnest and careful work would build the knowledge base for the next great breakthroughs." Equally important, as citizens in a democratic society all students would one day participate in the decision making process that shapes public policy regarding science and research. The role of the effective teacher of science is in each of these cases an urgent and irreplaceable one.

Dr. Poliakoff commended the Pennsylvania State College of Medicine (PSCM) for hosting this Governor's Institute, praising it as an institution that sought to forge a vital link between scientific research and practice at the highest level. PSCM, he added, is committed to teaching the foundations of scientific methods reasoning to new generations. At the same time its laboratories were developing a key component of the artificial heart, PSCM funded a major initiative to bring the tools and excitement of science to elementary schools throughout the state and especially to disadvantaged urban school districts. PSCM was also one of the first medical schools in the nation to develop a department of humanities, thus affirming the fundamental connection between the health sciences and the study of ethics.

Dr. Poliakoff noted that in opposition to prevailing trends in higher education, AALE's accreditation standards strongly support education "in the sci-

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Spotlight on AALE Board Member Sheldon Rothblatt

As an internationally recognized expert and writer on higher education and the liberal arts, Sheldon Rothblatt is ideally qualified to serve on the Academy's Board of Trustees. Beginning with his doctoral thesis, which examined "The Revolution of the Dons: Cambridge and Society in Victorian England," and was later published by Faber and Faber in 1968, Dr. Rothblatt has written extensively on the history of liberal education in both the United States and Great Britain. His many publications include *Tradition and Change in English Liberal Education: An Essay in History and Culture* (Faber and Faber 1976), *The Modern University and Its Discontents: The Fate of Newman's Legacy in Britain and America* (Cambridge University Press 1997), and *The American and European University since 1800* (coedited with B. Wittrock, Cambridge University Press 1993). He is currently professor of history emeritus at the University of California at Berkeley, where he continues to direct doctoral students. Dr. Rothblatt also regularly teaches graduate courses at Stanford University.

Dr. Rothblatt has been honored with numerous fellowships and appointments throughout his career. He has held Guggenheim, American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and Royal Historical Society

fellowships, was a Rockefeller Foundation scholar-in-residence, and is a permanent fellow of the Society for Research in Higher Education (in the U.K.). Most recently, Dr. Rothblatt completed a three-year appointment at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm, Sweden as STINT Professor of History in the Department of the History of Science and Technology. This coming academic year Dr. Rothblatt has an appointment as visiting professor in the Department of History at the University of Oslo in Norway where he will teach the comparative history of universities. Dr. Rothblatt has also been engaged to lecture in Denmark and Italy during the course of the year.

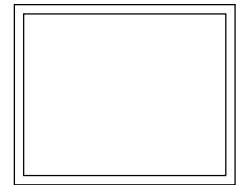
Other current activities include writing a regular column for the *Times Higher Education Supplement* and completing a substantial contribution to a forthcoming collection entitled "The Wealth of Knowledge," which addresses the complex roles modern universities play in national economies.

Asked to comment on the Academy's own role in the American higher education community, Dr. Rothblatt replied that "no subject is more noble or vexed than liberal education. Each generation, each nation in fact, struggles to define it. By devoting thought and energy to the issues, the Academy has undertaken a himalayan task. Anyone who cares about the survival of education for living has a duty to support it."

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ences as well as the humanities, as both are indispensable to modern life." Students at institutions and programs accredited by the Academy must all receive instruction in mathematics, as well as in the principles and practice of natural science.

In conclusion, Dr. Poliakoff drew participants' attention to the Taoist diagram of Yin and Yang to illustrate the constant challenge facing the educator. He or she must demonstrate at all times "rigorous mastery of content and the ability and willingness to make that mastery available to all learners. True excellence in either area is impossible without attention to the other."

Upcoming Events

October 3: *AALE Charter School National Advisory Board Meeting*, Washington, D.C.

October 24-25: *Accreditors Retreat* at the Wye River Conference Center, Queenstown, MD

November 16: *LAAP National Advisory Board Meeting*, San Diego, CA

December, 2000: *Board of Trustees and Council of Scholars* meetings, Washington, D.C.

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AALE invites public comment on all pending application for accreditation. For a complete list of institutions and programs under review please visit the Accreditation News page on our website.