EXPLORING INNOVATION OPPORTUNITIES IN:

1. Athletics
2. Career Connections
3. Community Engagement
4. Consortial Arrangements
5. Cost Containment
6. Curricular Reform
7. New Academic Programs
8. New Student Populations

A REPORT BY

Read the full report at www.cic.edu/InnovationsReport.
The signature activity of the Council of Independent Colleges’ initiative, Securing America’s Future, was a series of eight workshops hosted by CIC member presidents on campuses across the nation in 2016–2017. The goals of these workshops were to help member colleges and universities prepare for the future more effectively and become more engaged in promoting the value of the liberal arts and of independent colleges and universities. These gatherings brought together teams of presidents, chief academic officers, other administrators, and faculty leaders to explore key trends in higher education and society, the pressures that individual colleges and universities face, and potential solutions that can be pursued by their institutions. Approximately 500 campus leaders from more than 120 CIC member institutions participated in the workshops.

This module is part of a larger report, Innovation and the Independent College: Examples from the Sector. As a whole, the report presents an overview of the major points of discussion held during the workshops and references hundreds of examples of mission-driven innovations shared by the colleges and universities that sent teams to the workshops. Each module of the report is designed to be useful on its own, however, as a description of innovations in a particular area. I encourage you to distribute this module to trustees, faculty and administrative leaders, campus planning committees, and other constituents who might be aided in their efforts to lead change on campus—and then share the rest of the report. The full report and the other modules are available from the CIC website at www.cic.edu/InnovationsReport.

CIC staff members and I are well aware that many additional CIC institutions are improving the quality and efficacy of education in imaginative ways. I encourage CIC institutions to send these innovations to http://bit.ly/CICinnovates. These examples will be added to the online version of the report so that others may learn about these promising projects, too.

Richard Ekman
President
Council of Independent Colleges
March 2018
Prepare college graduates for successful entry into the labor market and promote the effectiveness of the liberal arts and liberal arts colleges for their graduates’ lifelong success in the labor force.

The role of higher education in preparation for employment has been a topic of debate in American culture since at least the time of the Civil War, when the Morrill Act established a system of public land-grant universities “to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and the mechanical arts…in order to promote the…practical education of the industrial classes in the several pursuits and professions in life.”

In times of economic downturn, concern for professional preparation has typically topped Americans’ expectations of a college education. In our current environment, the recession that began in 2007, coupled with rising tuition levels, has led to an over-riding emphasis—for both students and families—on the college degree leading directly to employment opportunities. Educators usually hold a more holistic view of college outcomes, including development of the “whole person” as an individual and as a citizen. Many colleges and universities today, however, have recognized and responded to the perceived need for pragmatic skills and “workplace readiness.” Moreover, such preparation can be integrated effectively with such goals as the development of critical thinking, problem solving, and effective communication skills. In fact, a recent survey of employers found that 93 percent agreed that “candidates’ ability to think critically, communicate clearly, and solve complex problems is
more important than their undergraduate major."**

Career centers have taken on an enhanced significance, often moving literally to the center of campuses, where they may bring opportunities for career exploration, internships and apprenticeships, community-based learning, entrepreneurship, and more. Many colleges also have seen the advantage of linking current undergraduates directly with alumni, forming a network that benefits the student, the graduate, and the institution. Purposeful career preparation efforts by smaller private colleges help explain why 91 percent of their graduates achieve a successful career outcome within six months of graduation, defined as meaningful employment, military or other public service, or further education.†

---


**Note: The current page is a continuation of a previous discussion and does not contain new content.

---

CHALLENGES: The opportunity to enhance career connections helps address several challenges for independent higher education: the increased public focus on career preparation and the related diminished public respect for higher education; the need to meet enrollment goals; and the proliferation of such competitors as online education, certificates, early colleges, and career “boot camps.”

Most of the following examples were provided by CIC member institutions and the expert presenters that participated in Securing America’s Future workshops in 2016–2017. They represent distinctive but adaptable responses to common challenges that independent colleges and universities face.

**Agnes Scott College**, a women’s college just outside Atlanta, Georgia, has been named one of the most innovative colleges in the nation for its newly implemented SUMMIT curriculum, which emphasizes both women’s leadership and global engagement. Each student forms an individual “Board of Advisors” and begins exploration of leadership and career paths from the first day of orientation.

**LEARN MORE:**

**Augustana College** in Rock Island, Illinois, offers a multi-pronged initiative called “Augie Choice” to help students identify what they want to do with their lives.
early in their college experience. For example, the institution gives students support to defray the cost of travel abroad, to travel to present papers, and to engage in other experiential learning opportunities that enhance their employability. The chaplain works in the career center to promote the concept of *vocational* and not just *career* exploration. The college also uses a “Viking Score” worksheet that tracks students’ level of professional preparation for life after graduation. The institution’s CORE (careers, opportunities, research, and exploration) office helps students discern their interests and goals.

**LEARN MORE**

**Blackburn College**’s identity as a “work college” shapes all of its career development efforts. Located in the small town of Carlinville, Illinois, it boasts a 99 percent placement of graduates into jobs or graduate school. The college attributes its success largely to the head start on careers that graduates gain from the student-run work program.

**LEARN MORE**

**Concordia University Texas** in Austin has created an Incubator for Innovation and Impact, developed partnerships with local businesses, placed students in internships throughout the community, invited businesses to rent university space, provided professional development programs for students, and brought career services together with the academic program.

**LEARN MORE**

To make clearer the connection between a liberal arts education and preparation for a career, **Connecticut College** in New London focuses its curriculum on problem solving and making connections among disparate subjects. For example, sophomores are asked to choose courses based on an issue that is meaningful to them, juniors pursue experiential education through internships or study abroad, and seniors are asked to integrate their prior learning through a capstone project.

**LEARN MORE**
During one of the Securing America’s Future workshops, the team from Culver-Stockton College in Canton, Missouri, asserted that two “non-negotiable features” of the institution were its experiential learning mission and an emphasis on preparing students for a changing world.

LEARN MORE

Drew University in Madison, New Jersey, takes advantage of the fact that world-class scientists from the state’s chemical and pharmaceutical industries often stay in the region when they retire. The university’s RISE program (Research Institute for Scientists Emeriti) enables students to do research with scientists who have extensive experience in the private sector. In 2015, RISE Fellow William Campbell was awarded the Nobel Prize in medicine.

LEARN MORE

After a decline in enrollment and retention in the early 2000s, Hampden-Sydney College in Hampden-Sydney, Virginia, refocused its attention on the connections among academics, career education, and student vocations. Participation in CIC’s Network for Vocation in Undergraduate
Education (NetVUE) provided benchmarking data as well as new resources and ideas for exploring issues at the nexus of education, career, and vocation. In 2012, the institution introduced C-Day (C stood for Career, Community, and Calling, among other things), a day-long program for all students that included different shared activities with the common goal of building a sense of belonging and guiding students’ personal and professional development. As a result of this and subsequent initiatives, recent sophomore retention has been the best in more than two decades.

**LEARN MORE**

**Hartwick College** in Oneonta, New York, works with the craft beer industry in upstate New York to help prepare students for jobs in that expanding industry by offering internships and undergraduate research opportunities.

**LEARN MORE**

**Heidelberg University** in Tiffin, Ohio, connects co-curricular opportunities with more traditional coursework to demonstrate to potential employers the value of both. The institution requires a co-curricular transcript that supports the curriculum and that shows a clear connection among coursework, experiential learning, and such skills as problem solving and critical thinking.

**LEARN MORE**

The Center for Experience and Opportunity at **McDaniel College** in Westminster, Maryland, connects students with experiences and opportunities designed to enhance classroom learning through career exploration and development, community engagement, and educational opportunities abroad.

**LEARN MORE**
**Lynn University** in Boca Raton, Florida, instituted “limitless learning,” an innovation through which the institution engaged several partners—including a web development boot camp and an institute for social entrepreneurs—to help provide real-world skills for students in such emerging careers as technology design, digital marketing, web development, social innovation, and entrepreneurship. This effort builds on the university’s earlier initiative to become an all-Apple campus.

**LEARN MORE**

**New England College** in Henniker, New Hampshire, is working hard to position its “graduates with the requisite skills and credentials needed to secure employment following graduation, and a key component of this focus is to ensure students have the educational experiences needed and that their experiences are in sync with employers’ and industry expectations.” One example is its partnership with Pegasystems, a regional software firm that specializes in cloud-based enterprise systems. A master of science program in computer information systems enrolls more than 400 students from India—but a software certification program developed with Pegasystems also has drawn strong interest among the college’s more traditional undergraduate student population.

**LEARN MORE**

A new collaboration with the Amazon Web Services Academy (part of Amazon) will help **Robert Morris University** in Moon, Pennsylvania, prepare students for certification in Amazon Web Services cloud computing architecture. Two RMU professors will be trained by Amazon engineers to offer this high-demand credential.

**LEARN MORE**
**Saint Michael’s College** reports that, as a result of having participated in the CIC workshops, this Colchester, Vermont, institution has become much more serious about career preparation and has implemented programs that prepare students for their lives immediately after college by greatly expanding research and internship opportunities.

**LEARN MORE**

The **College of Wooster** in Ohio has developed a new center, housed at the heart of the campus in the library, that brings together seven integrated offices where students can meet one-on-one with advisors, research internship opportunities, work on their résumés or interview skills, plan off-campus experiences, or obtain advice about pursuing entrepreneurial opportunities. The APEX (an acronym for Advising, Planning, and Experiential Learning) has become a popular hub on campus and has attracted visitors from around the country interested in emulating the concept.

**LEARN MORE**

**Wesleyan College**, a women’s college in Macon, Georgia, recently instituted “From Here to Career: Connecting the Liberal Arts to Professional Development,” an initiative that integrates a structured, four-year professional development plan—including a student e-portfolio, an internship, and a guided job search—into every liberal arts major.

**LEARN MORE**

**CONNECTING ALUMNI TO STUDENTS TO HELP PREPARE FOR THE WORKPLACE**

In launching its ambitious new SUMMIT curriculum, **Agnes Scott College** explicitly reached out to alumnae to serve as mentors and advisors to current students—and hundreds of alumnae responded.

**LEARN MORE**

**Augustana College** energized a new program in media and film production and created new internship opportunities for students by encouraging an alumni-run television production company to relocate from Chicago to the college campus in Rock Island, Illinois.

**LEARN MORE**
The Center for Creativity and Careers at Coe College in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is co-located with the alumni, development, and provost’s offices as a symbolic and practical way to “ensure that our [institutional] connections become your [student] connections, with alumni who are passionate about Coe and eager to connect with students, with businesses that support Coe events, programs and operations, and with Coe faculty who support experiential learning.”

**Learn More**

Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio, has developed a robust online database, the Kenyon Career Network, designed to assist students and graduates in making connections with more than 6,000 Kenyon alumni who have volunteered to provide information about their careers, workplaces, or the pursuit of advanced degrees.

**Learn More**

Heidelberg University and McDaniel College are among the many CIC institutions that regularly bring alumni back to campus to advise students about a wide variety of possible careers.

**Learn More**

St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, developed the SLU Connect program, first in Washington, DC, and then expanded to Boston, Albany, and the Mountain States. The program connects students to alumni who help students explore career paths and offer them mentoring advice. As with many such programs, an ancillary benefit is re-connecting alumni with their alma maters, as they engage with today’s students.

**Learn More**
University of Indianapolis in Indiana reaches out to alumni to prepare students to succeed in internships. The institution reports that alumni appreciate having a meaningful role to play with current students; according to one CIC workshop participant, “giving has gone through the roof, and alumni have become an active part of the college community.”

OTHER IDEAS AND ADVICE

Robert Morris University has a vocational orientation that goes back to its origins in the 1920s as a for-profit accounting college. According to President Christopher Howard, the informal mission statement of the institution is “RMU offers good programs that provide good jobs for good students.” During his presentation to one of the Securing America’s Future workshops, Howard turned a popular business mantra on its head and urged the participants to “go from great to good”—that is, good for the students and good for the community—in their thinking about student recruitment and preparation for careers in a rapidly changing economy.

Increasing numbers of liberal arts colleges and universities are providing students with opportunities to conduct research with faculty members as explicit preparation for careers in STEM or other fields. These opportunities may come as early as the first year of college. Because students acquire experience in the use of sophisticated scientific equipment that is often available only to graduate students in larger universities, they have an advantage during graduate school or in the job market. Among the many CIC institutions with especially sophisticated research programs for students are Allegheny College, Capital University, Carthage College, College of Wooster, Dominican University of California, Furman University, Hamline University, Hope College, Lehigh University, North Central College, Oberlin College, and Susquehanna University.

CIC institutions also are connecting internships, study abroad, community-based research, fieldwork, and other forms of experiential learning with a liberal arts education and touting the combination as the best possible form of
career preparation. Some, such as Mount Holyoke College in South Hadley, Massachusetts, even offer students stipends to make up for unearned wages when they accept internships.

LEARN MORE

The Liberal Arts Career NetWORK is a consortium of 39 highly selective liberal arts colleges, many of which are CIC members. The objective of the consortium is to share resources to provide a competitive advantage to liberal arts students in the marketplace, and all member institutions contribute to a database of employers that offer internships and employment.

LEARN MORE
• Liberal Arts Career Consortium, http://liberalartscareers.org

CIC prepared a research brief on “Career Preparation and the Liberal Arts” as part of the Project on the Future of Independent Higher Education. This includes additional examples of how independent colleges and universities help prepare their students for careers.

LEARN MORE
• CIC Research Brief, www.cic.edu/SecuringResources

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

• How can independent colleges and universities best promote the value of a liberal arts education for career preparation and success?

• How can student affairs and academic affairs be structured and function to provide career planning and preparation services to students?

• How can institutions based in the liberal arts and sciences equip students with the skills they need to find and succeed in careers in ways that are consistent with their liberal arts mission?

• How can institutions collaborate to provide career services to students?

• What are the most effective ways to integrate the academic program and career preparation?
ABOUT THE WORKSHOPS

CIC’s Securing America’s Future: Workshops for Leaders of Independent Colleges and Universities marked the final phase of an effort that included two earlier initiatives. The first initiative was Securing America’s Future: The Power of Liberal Arts Education, a public information campaign to highlight the effectiveness of study in the liberal arts and the contributions of the independent higher education sector. The second was a Project on the Future of Independent Higher Education, which brought together a steering committee of 22 CIC presidents to consider the challenges faced by the entire sector and fresh approaches for the future, in light of the particular qualities and missions of independent colleges and universities.

After two years of fact-finding and deliberation, the steering committee of the Project on the Future specifically called for a series of workshops around the country, viewing this step as “the most effective mobilization strategy.” The activities in 2016–2017 closely followed the plan the steering committee envisioned. This report draws upon both the formal presentations and informal exchanges that took place during the Securing America’s Future workshops.

CIC would like to thank the representatives of more than 120 colleges and universities who participated in the Securing America’s Future workshops. They provided most of the examples of innovation included in this report, through their comments at the workshops or in subsequent evaluation surveys. Whenever possible, all innovations have been independently confirmed using public sources. Any misstatements of fact or inadvertent mischaracterizations are the responsibility of CIC.

Generous support for the Securing America’s Future workshops and the preceding initiatives has been provided by the Arthur Vining Davis Foundations, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Endeavor Foundation, Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation, Jessie Ball DuPont Fund, Lumina Foundation for Education, National Endowment for the Humanities, Teagle Foundation, and TIAA Institute.

ABOUT CIC

The Council of Independent Colleges (CIC) is an association of 767 nonprofit independent colleges and universities, state-based councils of independent colleges, and other higher education affiliates, that works to support college and university leadership, advance institutional excellence, and enhance public understanding of independent higher education’s contributions to society. CIC is the major national organization that focuses on services to leaders of independent colleges and universities and state-based councils. CIC offers conferences, seminars, publications, and other programs and services that help institutions improve educational quality, administrative and financial performance, student outcomes, and institutional visibility. It conducts the largest annual conferences of college and university presidents and of chief academic officers. Founded in 1956, CIC is headquartered at One Dupont Circle in Washington, DC. For more information, visit www.cic.edu.

REPORT AUTHORS

Barbara Hetrick, Senior Advisor, CIC; Philip M. Katz, Director of Projects, CIC; and S. Georgia Nugent, Senior Fellow, CIC, and President Emerita, Kenyon College