EXPLORE 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

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](http://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](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.

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**Richard Ekman**  
President  
Council of Independent Colleges  
March 2018
Establish strong, enduring, and multifaceted relationships with regional businesses and organizations

Many CIC colleges are among the top employers and economic drivers in their communities. This is an inherent characteristic of even the smallest colleges because of the staff they employ, the services they purchase, and the faculty, students, and visitors (often drawn from a broad geographical range) who contribute dollars to the local economy. Recently, however, colleges and universities have begun to be more intentional and collaborative in building relationships with their local communities. These relationships take many forms: responding to a local educational or research need; collaborating to re-invigorate civic culture; partnering to build mutually beneficial facilities; and developing experiential learning opportunities that both enhance students’ educational experience and offer needed assistance to local businesses and organizations. The theme of community engagement was a particularly rich vein among the examples of innovation brought forward in the Securing America’s Future workshops.

CHALLENGES: This opportunity can address such challenges as diversifying revenue streams; meeting student and public concerns about career preparation; increasing public respect for higher education; promoting the value proposition of independent colleges and universities; and sometimes lowering capital expenses.
Most of the following examples were provided by CIC member institutions and the expert presenters who participated in Securing America’s Future workshops in 2016–2017. They represent distinctive but adaptable responses to common challenges facing many independent colleges and universities.

Adrian College in Adrian, Michigan, overcame steep declines in student enrollment and unprecedented operating deficits by instituting “innovative partnerships with businesses that could advance the college’s educational mission while meeting talent needs in the business community,” according to Adrian College President Jeffrey Docking. Students work with faculty members to conduct research studies with local business leaders and create business plans with nearby startup companies, for example. While doubling enrollment in eight years, the college integrated the liberal arts with workforce preparation so students will be better prepared to enter the local workforce.

LEARN MORE
• Adrian Website, http://adrian.edu

Augustana College in Rock Island, Illinois, has a dynamic relationship with Deere & Company and the John Deere Foundation, whose headquarters are located in neighboring Moline. In addition to manufacturing farm equipment, the company offers a series of financial and business services. In 2016 the company endowed a chair in data analytics so the college could offer a program in this emerging field to support existing programs in management, marketing, finance, international business and management information systems, economics, biology, and public health. Over the years, Deere and its leaders have supported construction of science facilities, a library, and a planetarium. According to Augustana College President Steven Bahls, “Hundreds of Augustana students and alumni have benefited from internships and jobs at Deere … [and this partnership] will provide opportunities for hundreds of students well into the future.”

LEARN MORE

Hartwick College in Oneonta, New York, created a Center for Craft Food and Beverage in 2014 in response to the expanding craft brewing industry in upstate New York. The center includes programs for testing the quality of malt, water, soil, and grains. The center also provides testing, research, and technical assistance to farmers who want to cultivate such beer-related crops as malting barley and grains, and to other small businesses, such as craft maltsters, who process the necessary raw farm products.
Other activities that connect teaching and learning with service to regional industries include market research, professional development, and research collaborations with community partners.

LEARN MORE

Linfield College in the Willamette Valley of Oregon has an evolving partnership with the local viniculture industry. Among many other aspects of the mutually beneficial collaboration are the establishment of a wine industry archive, an annual international celebration of pinot noir, and summer programs that engage students in the wine industry. Linfield established the intensive, year-long Oregon Wine Industry Experience (OWIE), graduate certificate programs, and a minor in wine studies. Linfield also is working toward a wine and sustainable systems major. Undergraduate programs as diverse as theatre and communication arts, sociology, and anthropology have incorporated wine-related themes into the curriculum. These programs are intended to provide students with unique academic experiences and preparation for work in wine-related industries.
Augustana College established an Upper Mississippi Center to leverage a connection with the river. Faculty members also work on Mississippi River-based community projects such as one that studies lead paint remediation.

**Augustana College**

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Brevard College in Brevard, North Carolina, has developed a number of community partnerships: a collaboration with a well-known community music program, targeting community needs that can be met with summer programs; and a partnership with a private research facility to undertake joint projects in astronomy and physics.

**Brevard College**

LEARN MORE
- Brevard Partnership with PARI, www.pari.edu

Concordia University Texas in Austin created an Incubator for Innovation and Impact, which partners with local businesses. The Incubator’s framework enables entrepreneurs to discover and execute business practices and ventures that are designed to make a positive impact on both local and global communities. The Incubator offers several services to local businesses, including co-working spaces, entrepreneur training, academic classes, audio-visual production facilities, and onsite professional printing and mailing services.

**Concordia University Texas**

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Hood College in Frederick, Maryland, has initiated a new program, “Growing for a Healthy Future,” that will work with the local interfaith community to develop community gardens to supply fresh food to low-income residents. The program will partner with the Center for Watershed Protection, a nonprofit organization in Ellicott City, Maryland, to design environmentally sustainable gardens that use excess storm water runoff for irrigation.

**Hood College**

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When an investigation revealed that many students were interested in a career in nursing but the region faced a shortage of nursing programs and nurses, Tusculum College in Greenville, Tennessee, collaborated
with area health care facilities to develop several nursing programs and now has a new health science building and a School of Nursing, Health Sciences, and Human Services to support them.

**LEARN MORE**

After the **University of Charleston** expanded to include a campus in Beckley, West Virginia, it developed a new associate’s degree program in nursing that leads to the RN certification. The program was designed to meet the needs of an underserved part of the state.

**LEARN MORE**

The **University of St. Francis** is in its second year of a “downtown program.” Corporate partnerships have grown significantly. For example, a Free Enterprise Center opened in April 2017 in downtown Joliet, Illinois. USF also operates arts and design programs and a gallery at the Rialto Square Theatre in downtown Joliet near the university’s St. Bonaventure Campus.

**LEARN MORE**
- St. Francis Free Enterprise Center, http://bit.ly/2s6MmT0
OTHER IDEAS AND ADVICE

Mark Roberts, vice president for academic affairs at Reinhardt University in Waleska, Georgia, suggested that independent institutions should identify the “knowledge needs” in the community or region. Doing so increases the probability that institutional innovations will have a real impact and be well accepted on and off campus. He further advised that faculty members “put data points in the context of real people’s lives.” “Knowledge,” he added, “is the primary asset of a college or university. It is our cultural capital and we should connect it with community needs.”

In a report commissioned by CIC, Strategic Change and Innovation in Independent Colleges: Nine Mission-Driven Campuses (2016), James C. Hearn and associates identified several common characteristics of independent colleges and universities that succeed at innovation. One characteristic is “a drive to connect locally, regionally, and beyond.” The report includes several practical examples of engaging external stakeholders, campus constituencies, community supporters, and current and potential markets in the quest for regional impact.

LEARN MORE

• CIC Research Report, www.cic.edu/SecuringResources

QUESTIONS TO EXPLORE

• What opportunities are available in the community for student internships, community-based research, or volunteering that might help students apply what they learn in the classroom or add valuable job skills?

• What newly emerging industries in the region could become partners in developing attractive new academic programs? Are there legacy industries in the community or region that may deserve less attention and resources from the institution?

• What real social or economic needs could be met through connecting student organizations and the curriculum with community needs?

• Are there established businesses or nonprofit organizations that might gain from a mutually beneficial relationship with the institution?

• What populations—for example, children, older adults, immigrant communities, or the incarcerated—could give students valuable perspectives in return for their services?
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](http://www.cic.edu).

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