

***Liberal Education:  
A Unifying Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century University***  
**University of Wisconsin System Conference**

**November 20-21, 2008  
The Pyle Center, Madison**

The modern university has become fragmented in its mission. It serves a number of competing constituencies, all of them understandably seeking their part of the collective pie. As a result, our students are often educated in a piecemeal fashion. They are apt to move from one course to the next with very little sense of continuity in the curriculum, or any awareness of the university's broader mission. Yeats' frequently-quoted line from the "Second Coming" seems especially appropriate in this context: "Things fall apart, the center cannot hold."

A liberal education offers a solution to this fragmentation. With its emphasis on the whole student, liberal education aims to encourage certain universally applicable learning outcomes. The Association of American Colleges and Universities' LEAP campaign has broadly defined these outcomes as "Knowledge of Human Cultures in the Physical and Natural World," "Intellectual and Practical Skills," "Personal and Social Responsibility," and "Integrative Learning."

In addition to these fundamental learning outcomes, a student with a liberal education should have developed three broader qualities: humanistic (the encouragement of introspection, the search for a meaningful life), civic (the fostering of social responsibility), and economic (the training to be a creative member of the workforce and to adapt to changing workplace demands).

The title of the conference--"Liberal Education: A Unifying Mission for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century University"--refers to a center that *can* hold, a center defined as the university's commitment to certain broad learning outcomes as well as the humanistic, civic, and economic qualities that are at the heart of these outcomes. This conference is intended to strengthen and celebrate liberal education as an integrative force within the university.

The conference is intended to appeal to a broad range of UW-System constituencies: Regents, Chancellors, Provosts, Deans, Admissions, Advising, Student Affairs, and Faculty. Some of the sessions will be designed specifically for these different constituencies, but the intent is for the various constituencies to also get a sense of how a liberal education functions throughout the university. We hope that attendees will come away from the conference with a heightened appreciation for the value of a liberal education. We also hope that they will go back to their respective campuses with clear ideas about how to reinvigorate liberal education as a unifying mission.

## **Conference Schedule**

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### **Thursday, November 20**

#### **1:00-1:45 Welcoming addresses**

UW-System President Kevin Reilly  
UW-System Board of Regents President Mark Bradley

#### **1:45–3:15 Best Practices—Plenary**

- Statewide Initiatives: *LEAP Forward Wisconsin*  
Rebecca Martin (Senior Vice-President for Academic Affairs, UW-System)
- Chancellor Initiatives: *Enabling University-wide Reform of Liberal Education: The Chancellor as Conductor*  
Richard Wells (Chancellor, UW-Oshkosh)
- Dean Initiatives: *Creating a College Agenda in Support of Liberal Education*  
Don Christian (Dean of A&S, UW-Eau Claire, and Chair of UW-System SAGLA Committee)
- Faculty Development Initiatives: *Advancing Liberal Learning through Lesson Study*  
Bill Cerbin (Professor of Psychology and Assistant to the Provost for Academic Affairs, UW-La Crosse)
- Faculty Initiatives: *Inviting Participation and Partnerships*  
Yolanda Vanderwal Taylor (Professor of German, UW-Madison) and Nancy Westphal-Johnson (Associate Dean for Undergraduate Education, UW-Madison)

#### **3:15-3:30 Break**

### **3:30- 4:30 Breakout Sessions**

- General Education: Elizabeth Hachten (Assistant Dean of L&S, UW-Whitewater)  
*Rethinking General Education in light of the LEAP Initiative*
- Writing Across the Disciplines: Brad Hughes (Writing Center Director, UW-Madison)  
*Supporting a Strong Culture of Liberal Education Through Writing Across the Curriculum*
- Advising: Helen Reynolds (Director of the Advising Center, UW-Platteville)  
*The "Relevance to My Life" Factor: Bringing Liberal Education into the Advising Conversation*
- Communicating the Value of a Liberal Education to the Public: John Koker (Dean of L&S, UW-Oshkosh)  
*Beyond the Institution: Working with the Community to Promote Liberal Education*
- Supporting a Culture of Reading: Joseph J. Foy (Assistant Professor of Political Science, UW-Waukesha) and Margaret Hankenson (Associate Professor of Political Science, UW-Waukesha)  
*Campus Common Read: Creating a Community of Literacy and Scholarship*
- Multicultural Competency: Fay Akindes (Associate Professor of Communications and Director of Center for Ethnic Studies, UW-Parkside)  
*The Challenges of Multiculturalism*
- Professional Education: Lois Smith (Dean of the College of Business, UW-Whitewater)  
*Liberal Education as a Foundation for Professional Education*

**5:00 Recognition Reception: *Liberal Arts Essay Scholarship Competition***

**6:00 Dinner on your own**

**Friday, November 21, 2008**

**7:30-8:30 Continental Breakfast**

**8:30-9:30 Speaker:** *Lee Knefelkamp*

L. Lee Knefelkamp, professor of psychology and education, Teachers College, Columbia University, teaches in the programs of social-organizational psychology and higher education, and she has also held administrative posts as program coordinator and department chair. She also directed the student development graduate program at the University of Maryland, served as dean of the school of education at American University, and as academic dean of the faculty at Macalester College.

For thirty years, she has researched and written about student intellectual, ethical, identity and intercultural development; curriculum transformation; issues of race, ethnicity, and gender; campus climate assessment; and the psychology of organizational change and resistance to change.

She is a senior fellow with AAC&U and has been a national panel member for the American Commitments and Greater Expectations initiatives.

**9:45-10:45 Breakout sessions for campus teams:**

Implementing the LEAP agenda on campus

**11:00-12:00 Leadership Panel:** *Moderated by Lieutenant Governor Barbara Lawton*

**12:00-1:30 Lunch and Plenary Address:** *Carol Geary Schneider*

Carol Geary Schneider is president of the Association of American Colleges and Universities. With more than 1,150 institutional members, AAC&U is the leading national organization devoted to advancing and strengthening undergraduate liberal education.

Under her leadership, AAC&U launched Liberal Education and America's Promise (LEAP), a ten-year public advocacy and campus action initiative designed to engage students and the public with what really matters in a college education for the twenty-first century.